URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING DEMOLITION IN ABUJA CITY: THE BENEFITS OF ADOPTING THE PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABILITY

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ABSTRACT

In the last thirty years, Abuja the Federal Capital of Nigeria has experienced rapid urbanisation in a formerly agrarian community. The city has been developing prior to the emergence of the master plan, which is influenced by the rapid rate of construction. The critical need of vital infrastructure for the ever-increasing population in Nigeria's capital has led to an increase in informal settlement and demand for more housing and other associated services. The present city differs from its initial master plan so far, as there is a real spatial segregation between low and high-income groups. And it's relegates the low income earners to informal settlements which do not meet people's basic needs. This journal paper critically analyses the impact of different planning policies and the schemes under which the city has been expanding, which includes housing demolitions to maintain the master plan. This result shows a clear demonstration that the policies regarding the demolition of informal settlements are not the best solution to the Abuja master plan and it is socially/economically unsustainable but rather there are potential benefits in the adaptation of sustainability principles in the urban development of Abuja city.

Keywords: Abuja, Housing, Policies, Slums, Sustainability, Urban Development.

INTRODUCTION

The world is urbanising at a rapid pace with cities having to accommodate more people than normal. At the moment more than half of the world's population lives in towns, suburbs, and cities (Daramola, 2010). This explosion in population has affected the way in which urban areas have developed within the past years therefore having the population of people living in urban areas on a continuous rise (UN-Habitat, 2007). This process has resulted to opportunities like economic growth, and drastic developments as well as challenges like extreme urban poverty, urban sprawl, increase in health problems and lack of job opportunities amongst others (Oladinjoye, 2005). At the moment developing countries are not left behind in this process and

Job Momoh, Isabel Martins Buta & Benachir Medjdoub, 2018, 4(2):1-12

highest amount of urban population increase would take place in Africa, Asia and South America of which at the moment they are not prepared to manage (UN-Habitat, 2007).

Informal settlement is the major issue in which great nations such as Nigeria face even as the transit into developed nations. The rate at which the number of people living in urban spaces continues to increase is tremendous and to be able to achieve a successful transition, urban growth would have to be accepted and managed using sustainability framework (Ya *et al.,* 2009). Current research has suggested that proper implementation of sustainability could lead to economic enhancement, reduced poverty, improved quality of life/quality of space and other positive outcomes (UNDPI, 2008). But in order to adopt sustainable planning strategies and framework we would have to consider the possibilities of problems and challenges through analysing the impact of different planning policies which would then be used in recommending strategies with regards to improving the socio-economic, cost benefits of urban housing development (Kyrkou et al., 2011).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT

The genius loci of Nigeria's urban cities has experienced one of the fastest rates of urban growth in Africa and the entire globe which is extraordinary in size, scale and context. This rate has increased exponentially at approximately 5.8 each year (Daramola, 2010; Oyesiku, 2011). At the moment the urban population is 48.2 percent and from prediction it has been forecasted that by 2025 about 60 percent of Nigerians will be living in urban centres with an estimated growth of 400 million and proposed to be the third largest country in the world after China and India (Daramola, 2010). Four cities in Nigeria within the next ten years will attain mega cities status. With this explosive growth rate Abuja will continue to have human settlements problems, therefore placing high demands on infrastructure development, basic services, housing, sanitation, waste management, health, social conflict and governance issues (Alkali, 2005; Oyesiku, 2011).

In a nation's life and development, the capital city plays an essential role. In most countries, the capital serves as the largest city and also a central repository of political/economic power in its role as the seat of government (Edward, 2003). And in the past years, big and small countries either constructed new capital from the ground level or redeveloped major cities to help reduce the cost of re-investing in new structures. Some countries have tried to merge political power and economic development in the present capitals. Abuja, Abu Dhabi, Brasilia, New Delhi, Prague and Islamabad are some cities capitals that were built from the scratch (Hall, 1993). Other countries still maintained their capital, this is because they have old historical development and are pre-existing cities chosen to be the capital. Examples are Berlin, Rome, London, Paris, Accra, these were capitals because they were set up from the foundation as the heart of the development and as the seat of government.

Abuja city was set up as an economic, social and cultural capital for Nigeria's unification but ended up as being a city for the wealthy, a city that neglects social and economic sustainability and a city that reflects more of class divisions between people and society. The present city of Abuja differs from the initial plans, so far it segregates low and high income groups creating a huge gap within this class of people in the society (Oladinjoye, 2005). This resulted into gentrification and inequality in the social status of the inhabitants of the people in Abuja. The city was planned to present an orderly gloss on Nigeria vibrant but chaotic reputation but ended up excluding a larger part of the population. The Federal Government of Nigeria under the influence of the former F.C.T Minister Sir El. Rufai approved a demolition programme because of the formation of informal settlement and proposed a relocation scheme (Abuja Journal, 2006). But these did not solve the problem instead it led to the relocation of people to live outside the

Job Momoh, Isabel Martins Buta & Benachir Medjdoub, 2018, 4(2):1-12

city because of housing affordability. Also the housing policies were not efficient because they kept on changing the policies to suit the Government and the Abuja master plan. Between 1976 till date the government has changed housing policies for four consecutive periods, this is to show how inefficient they were due to the high cost incurred in carrying out these policies (Jibril, 2000).

At present the government continues with more construction, beautification and development of the city without resolving housing problems. Rather more access routes into the city is being constructed to reduce road congestions during working hours. They cost of land and basic amenities are really expensive and no plans have been done to reduce the high cost of living. The city has the highest budget allocation, good buildings, roads, infrastructure and holds most headquarters/sectors of major organisation that develops the country and as a result of this quality of life becomes very expensive for most habitants. Instead of having a concentration of multiple cultures at the centre of the territory, Abuja has segregated most Nigerians by creating a wealthy, well protected elites within the city.

Historical Development of Abuja

Nigeria needed to choose a geographically neutral location between the most significant territories see figure 1 (AGIS, 2006). This particular concept was done to overcome influence of pre-existing city capitals and help regulate demographic imbalance in the country (Dascher, 2000). Abuja became the national capital on 12th December, 1991. It was carved out of Kaduna, Kwara, Jos and Benue (Abuja Journal, 2006). Abuja also features a 400 metre monolith rock called Aso rock where the Presidential Complex, National Assembly Complex, and Supreme Court are located. Some other popular buildings, among others, are the Nigerian National Mosque, National Centre Cathedral, Nnamdi Azikwe International Airport and headquarters to Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Jibril, 2000). The city was developed prior to the need of relocating the country's capital from Lagos state by the former Military Governor, Late General Murtala Muhammad. Lagos is known as the centre of commerce. More than half of Nigerian's industries and commercial activities are located in this state because of the sea ports, population and it being the nation's former capital. Also it's the smallest state in the Country and has a landmass of about approximately 3577sq.km with population as at 2007 of about 9.5million, making Lagos the second most populous city in Africa (Abuja Journal, 2006). As at then and present, Lagos was becoming over populated and congested which resulted to slums, traffic congestion, high increase in crime rates, pollution, land dispute cases and expensive housing development.

FIGURE 1: Map of Nigeria showing the location of Lagos and the new Federal Capital Territory Abuja (FCT).

Source: AGIS, 2006

Job Momoh, Isabel Martins Buta & Benachir Medjdoub, 2018, 4(2):1-12

Realizing the problems of the former capital, the government decided to relocate the capital to a region with easy accessibility from various states which could help enhance the administration of Nigeria (Abuja Journal, 2006). The physical location of cities is a major factor to which region the capital is to be sited which leads into developing divergent histories and the genesis from the growth processes of towns to help instigate their development (Katznelson 1993). The choice of Abuja as the capital city resulted into the displacement of the people who were already settled and living within the city. Relocation of people can be forced or by choice for examples relocation due to earthquake and wars. But in this case people where moved by force rendering them homeless and depriving them of their rights, basic need and adequate shelter because the government needed land for development projects (Jibril, 2000). Before selecting Abuja as capital the federal government agreed that some people in this area had to be resettled for planning purpose. At worst, resettlement is much better than forced eviction with no attempt of consultation or consideration of the socio-economic consequences of moving people to distant, often peripheral, sites without access to urban infrastructure or transport. Despite the original vision for Abuja as a city for all Nigerians the government wanted a principle of equal citizenship within the territory, but decades have shown that both indigene and non-indigene dwellers have been classified as obstacles in the implementation of the master plan.

The master plan estimated about 264 dwellings involving approximately 60,000 people assuming the entire regional plan in the master plan was to be relocated. It was also visualized that the large relocation scheme could be executed over some periods of years. Also it was strongly noted that the master plan supported the choices of relocating people within the FCT to existing villages which had basic community amenities (Abuja Master Plan, 2016). Between 1978 till 2003, four FCT administrations for more than two decades have implemented four different policies which are inconsistent and sporadically unsustainable.

The Master Plan

The planning act done by the Federal Capital Development Authority and the Abuja master plan have resulted to the present development of the capital city. The Master plan was designed by International Planning Associates (IPA) within 18 months period, which involved the selection of the capital sites, city plans, preparation of regional plans, designs and development manual (Abuja Master Plan, 2016). On the 15th of February 1979, the Master Plan for the capital city was submitted to FCDA for approval. The master plan for Abuja was designed such that it could take long term guidance for proper implementation of the capital (FCDA, 1979; Abuja Master Plan, 2016; Abuja Journal, 2006). The master plan was to undergo three major phases within 25-years including a period which will focus on changes as well as foreseen growth/transition and unforeseen developments. The plan was initiated to cover land use, housing, transport, social amenities and infrastructures in a cost-efficient and sustainable approach (Abuja Master Plan, 2016).

Planning Policies

The first policy in 1978 was that the government as at that time plan to resettle people outside in places of their choice, at the expense of the Nigerian Government (FCT Act, 1976). The concept was to bring about equal citizenship where no one claims special privilege. They took census of assets of all inhabitants in the city and paid compensation to their owners. In the master plan all villages located five kilometres radial from the proposed Federal Capital City including several support areas, like the game reserve, water shed and the green land plains needed to be resettled in other relocation sites or state in Nigeria (FCDA, 1979; Abuja Master Plan, 2016). The villagers never received any documents for allocated plots given to them (Galuwyi, 2006). The land now became alienated to the indigenes under the FCT Act/Land Use Act, this Acts gives rights to the

Job Momoh, Isabel Martins Buta & Benachir Medjdoub, 2018, 4(2):1-12

indigenes in the capital to be resettled and compensated for loss of agricultural lands/dwellings. Because of the expense of this policy, the government had to change the policy (Mabogunje, 2001).

The second policy took effect in December 2, 1992 the government did the opposite and proposed the integration policy. Some areas where not demolished within Garki District, while some areas where being affected by the construction of primary/secondary roads and buildings. Hence some houses were demolished while other houses were left. The third policy was in 1999 and emphasises that the second policy should be reversed no more integration. Rather full resettlement of some selected districts areas Kado, Jabi, Gwanrinpa where selected for resettlement outside the FCT. The government then initiated the fourth policy in 2003, knowing that it would be very hard and expensive to achieve this policy they had to fall back to the original master plan. The restoration of the initial proposals of the master plan was the next step following strictly how it was supposed to be planned from inception (Jibril, 2003). The Federal Government has realized that the implemented policies were inconsistent, without focus and seriousness on the part of the officials which led to the serious problem of squatters, slums and unplanned settlements within the Federal Capital Territory. This has in turn facilitated the improper planning of Abuja compare to the initially proposed master plan.

Demolition of Housing in Abuja

Some parts of the city were already developed before Abuja became the new modern capital. It was later reconsidered that resettlements would not be within Abuja but outside the urban areas of the designed Federal Capital City. The master plan proposed that 40 villages are to be resettled during the construction and then 85 villages will be resettled later on as the population increase to 3.3 million (Umeh, 1993: pg18). Since 2003 the Federal Capital Development Authority has destroyed churches, businesses, hospitals, houses and educational facilities without meeting the owners, displaying notice for evictions, compensation and relocation sites. It was accompanied with heavily armed soldiers and security personal. This has led to the displacement of more than a thousand people which affected their health, education, jobs and even family problems (Nworah, 2015).

Forced eviction process was done under the regime of the FCT minister, Nasir El- Rufai in 2003 but it finally took place in 2005. There were forced demolitions in Idu, Karmo, Wuse, Gwarinpa, Lugbe and Gariki. In 2007, the minister was replaced by Dr. Umar Aliyu as the preceding Minister of FCT who then averted the demolition act. In the demolition act most buildings analysed as illegal does not indicate that the buildings were poorly constructed (FCDA, 1979; Abuja Master Plan, 2016). They structures were stable with Aesthetic/Architectural values which led to the conclusion that the illegality of most demolished buildings was due simply to their location within Abuja's site. Most of the buildings are situated on the sewage/water lines, green areas and unplanned/inappropriate land uses (Galuwyi, 2006). The irony of the problem is that most of the buildings had approved planning permissions, legal certificates as well as approval to build from the government. The government officials gave out these certificates to build at various Government policies regime (Daramola, 2004). Most of these houses where demolished even with the authenticity of the certificates. The Federal Capital Development Authority carried out the demolition of 32 settlements. The analysis of an aerial image of Idu settlement counted about 9704 dwellings which were destroyed bringing the amount of people displaced to 4.7 persons per structure. On this particular area alone about 47,675 people approximately was affected. A total of 900,000 people were evicted, this analysis was based on site visits, interviews, satellite images, collected from organisations and the Federal Capital Development Authority (Ike, 2006).

Job Momoh, Isabel Martins Buta & Benachir Medjdoub, 2018, 4(2):1-12

RESULTS IN THE IMPACT OF THE HOUSING DEMOLITION

Forced eviction in Abuja city affected most dwellers living thousands of people homeless and relocated outskirts of the town. The poverty rate in the country is alarming and has had made most Nigerians very difficult to rent or own a decent house. It is estimated that about 35% of the country's population do not have enough funds to get proper housing (Ike, 2006). The effects of demolition have paved the way to human right violation, effects on health, jobs, education, environmental pollution, building materials wastage, loss of property investment and high crime rate. Destruction and forced eviction has caused children's not to have access to schools in the sense that the parents had no time to take them to alternative schools. Also other important demolished facilities include clinics and retail parks which are very important in the sustenance of urban neighbourhood (Galuwyi, 2006). Also families have to be separated because they have no alternative place to take shelter so the divide themselves into various home until they can secure a good accommodation. The housing demolition that took place was carried out without considering factors like the presence of the dwellers, housing contents, notice period, temporary housing /shelter or relocation facilities (Abuja journal, 2006).

HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE IN ADOPTING SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is known to be a broad concept that has to be interpreted and adopted into various contexts which have created many definitions globally. There are more than 70 different definitions for sustainability across various subjects and disciplines that have their approach (Tippett *et al,* 2007). For this research they are few areas of consensus which creates a holistic perspective towards sustainable development which are as follows

•   Brundtlands defines sustainability as "developments that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meets their own needs" This definition is the foremost accepted definitions and underpins most interpretation of this concept (Boyko *et al,* 2006).

•   Brundtlands definition also creates a knock-on subsets of sustainable development to meet various sectors needs such as sustainable housing, sustainable communities, sustainable business, sustainable construction, sustainable agriculture and so on.

To achieve a sustainable society it requires action which is divided into time (How long it is to be achieved whether it is intergenerational or intragenerational, 10, 100, 1000 years) and scale in regards to the area or size (whether it is international, national, regional, business or local and individual) (Hill, 1998: Moffatt, 2001). For a sustainable approach to be adopted and used in developing a sustainable framework for cities like Abuja a series of principles which involves managing the environmental resources; recognition of the importance of economic success; social equity; take responsibility for actions; poverty reduction and ensuring a strong healthy and just society (DEFRA, 2011). The three dimension of sustainability are needed in order to create a balance and to obtain a desired outcome of sustainable development. This includes;

- **Environmental Sustainability:** This dimension aims to attain a stable base for resources, managing excessive use and exploitation of natural resources and depleting non-renewable resources thereby creating a means where this resources are replenished (Harris, 2000).
- **Social Sustainability:** This dimension looks at attaining the needs and desires of the society and local communities by improving quality of life, quality of space, provision for social self-determination and cultural diversity and promoting human health by creating a healthy safe working environment (Cooper and Stewart, 2006). This dimension is extremely important because in order to achieve sustainability people must be able to experience safety,

Job Momoh, Isabel Martins Buta & Benachir Medjdoub, 2018, 4(2):1-12

wealth and high quality of life. Successful implementation of social sustainability requires the involvement of stakeholders which are citizens, workers and public officials (Litman, 2011)

- **Economic Sustainability:** Economic sustainability is an aspect of sustainability known to be the capacity and ability to put local and regional resources into productive achievement for the much long-term gains of the context (Alleni, 2009). Economic sustainability tries to ensure that there is fair distribution and efficient division of our resources, which then creates an economic growth and maintains a healthy balance and unity with our ecosystem.

Hence, with these three dimensions sustainable development can be known to be an integrated concept, which involves all human actions down to the local level and targets to improve the quality of life of both current and future generations and provide a long-term vision for the society (Said et al, 2009).

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLEMENTATION AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Sustainable Urban Land Development

This paper has established the fundamental problem to be attributed to the inconsistency of the policies and planning instrument. In response to this pressing issue the use of sustainable urban land development would encourage a functional and integrated understanding of the urban land dynamics and to demonstrate the effectiveness in the use of policies and planning instruments to manage urban growth and achieve sustainable, equitable, and efficient development outcomes (WBI, 2011). This scheme is concerned mainly on the following:

- Understanding how land use planning contributes to sustainable urban development
- Institutions, polices and tools for effective land use planning
- How to integrate land use planning and infrastructure
- How to manage growth in peri-urban areas
- How to promote local economic development through land use planning.
- Social equity and land use planning
- Reduce the growth of new slums by providing sustainable, affordable, new land development (WBI, 2011).

The provided land to be developed should be located in areas within reach of employment and basic services which can affect and influence poverty reduction, improved infrastructure, job opportunities, services and housing. To make this scheme work there should be strong political will towards upgrading developments that could undergo such process and provide suitable relocation sites/facilities for area that needs redevelopment by providing mass housing and loan facilities aid development. These measures can be actualised by creating policies or framework that encourages social and economic sustainability for the settlers.

Enquiry by Design

Good governance entails that in promoting sustainable urban development in the country, greater emphasis should be placed on community participation in decision-making or EBD. Enquiry by design techniques encourages the involvement of the people and local communities alongside with the appropriate partnership between stakeholders (Nsiah, 2005). Participation of communities, local authorities in urban development and regeneration is very important as this gives an opportunity for the end users to have a say on how there urban environment would be design for the present and future generations. The communities, local authorities, community leaders, professional bodies and non-governmental organisations, government service providers

Job Momoh, Isabel Martins Buta & Benachir Medjdoub, 2018, 4(2):1-12

and private sector are supposed to work hand in hand in promoting sustainable urban land use development (UN-Habitat, 2003; UN-Habitat, 2006).

CONCLUSION

The relocation scheme for dwellers was not implemented appropriately but rather led to the further development of slums and urban sprawl around the outskirts of Abuja city. Slums are inevitable but can be contained and minimised by other functional, viable, efficient and sustainable methods. Adopting demolition and relocation scheme by the government of Abuja has incurred lots of tremors that people will not forget for a long time. Therefore, urbanisation through sustainability development frameworks should be encouraged and adopted across the country looking at regional, national and transnational perspectives.

Urbanisation is the key in solving social and economic growth in Nigeria. The implications of urban gentrification can be seen in countries that has high standard/cost of living, unsustainable polices, planning framework and instruments and poor measures used in managing urban sprawl and slum growth (Oladinjoye, 2005). Informal settlement is a major problem facing developing nations as they transit into developed nations. The rate in the number of people living in the urban spaces continues to grow which is inevitable, and to be able to achieve global sustainable development we would have to depend on imitating urban development in a sustainable method (Dixon, 2011). Urban growth that is properly managed and controlled could lead to economic enhancement, reduced poverty as well as improved quality of life and quality of space for every individual; but for planning strategies to be adopted we would have to consider the possibilities of associated problems and challenges to sustainable development agenda (Idowu, 2013). Urban growth and urbanisation within developing countries is known to increase within the next couple of decades and in order to manage the rate of urban development sustainability should be used as a guiding principle in achieving a truly sustainable urban future. This would help improve the livelihood of people and promote social, economic and environmental sustainability. In conclusion sustainability can be adopted by following this approach;

• Restoring and maintaining urban environmental quality, enhancing human wellbeing and promoting highly efficient through effective urban and industrial planning, design and management systems

• Provision of appropriate and affordable housing.

• Using resources more efficiently which includes individual or human capacity, which refers to the attributes and resources that individuals can contribute to their own well-being and to the well-being of the community as a whole, such as skills, education employment, lifelong learning.

• Social community or capacity which is defined as the relationships, networks and norms that facilitate collective action taken to improve upon quality of life/quality of space and to ensure that such improvements are sustainable (i.e. social interaction; public spaces; culture and the arts).

• Promoting security through new land development by using tenure systems

• Physical planning is necessary for urban/rural places in association with social, economic and environmental studies where the national government, local authorities participate in, stakeholders and local communities can work in urban planning.

• Implementation of institutional and legal reforms strategies

Job Momoh, Isabel Martins Buta & Benachir Medjdoub, 2018, 4(2):1-12

•   Enquiry by design planning process

•   The use Neighbourhood Sustainability Assessment schemes in urban planning

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND ADVANCEMENT OF RESEARCH

Sustainability is a broad topic that encompasses various fields across all sectors. Within the built environment sector the most efficient method of implementing sustainability is through the use of sustainability indicators and sustainability assessment tools/framework (Ya *et al*, 2009). Sustainability assessment has emerged as a vital decision and support process in the development of assessment tools/ methods in response to the growing need of the impacts of global change. The emergence is in response to a growing environmental crisis and to vast social inequalities in global development. The conceptualisation and contextualisation of the effectiveness of sustainability assessment method is synthesised by the processes or methods used in developing this tools and the most appropriate sustainability indicators adapted in it development (Yigitcanlar *et al*, 2015). Sustainability assessment and sustainability indicators are known as powerful supporting tools that aid in achieving sustainable development and sustainable urban development by addressing three many sustainability decision making challenges which are interpretations, information-structuring and influences (Kyrkou, *et al,* 2011). At the moment developing countries are lacking behind in the development of neighbourhood sustainability assessment used in measuring the degree of sustainability achieved in both new developed or existing urban neighbourhood. The implication of the research in current practice would be to develop a neighbourhood sustainability assessment tool designed for developing countries more especially the Nigerian urban environment. With this initiative there would be a much robust approach in adopting the principles of sustainability in the development of urban spaces.

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Job Momoh, Isabel Martins Buta & Benachir Medjdoub, 2018, 4(2):1-12

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