

REDUCTION IN POVERTY AND RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A PUBLIC PHYSICAL PLANNING PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

This paper studies physical planning perspectives to poverty alleviation and rural economic development in Nigerian. Major issues examined are the proliferation of slums, citizen participation and globalization as they affect urban and regional planning practice and the consequences for both environmental and economic development. The study observed that environmental degradation and urban congestion can be controlled when the poverty level of the people is reduced. Rural economic development initiatives serve as opportunities for the planner to practice bottom-up planning as against the top-down planning of traditional approaches. It is also important for planners to take into consideration the economic status of those they are planning for. Globalization presents new economic opportunities and risks for cities, regions and nations, therefore the contemporary planner must ensure that new town development and urban regeneration exercises be aimed at developing globally competitive, visitor and business friendly communities.

Keywords: *Rural Economy, Poverty Alleviation, Economic Development, Physical Planning, Globalization*

INTRODUCTION

The major goal of physical planning is the enhancement of efficient functioning of the urban system through effective coordination of various land uses (Adeagbo, 2000). Planning carries with it two distinct meanings. One is the logical arrangement of activities in space, and the other is the reasonable ordering of developmental activities over time in pursuit of strategic ends (Clarke, 2006). Contemporary urban and regional planning insists that the planner be trained to intervene in several aspects of life especially those which concern man as a social being and his interactions with his environment. Of special interest is the connection between physical planning and issues of poverty alleviation and economic development, especially at the community or micro scale.

On numerous occasions, the planner has found himself in situations where his decisions have consequences on the economic capability of the people he is planning for. It is therefore imperative he understands the local economy of the community. He must ensure that both environmental sustainability and local economic development are enhanced.

Rural Economic Development (RED) is one of the key features of our contemporary era. In a world characterized by constant change, the overlapping forces of globalization, decentralization and democratization have led to the situation in which local decision-makers and citizens have gained an increasing say over economic and social development in the localities in which they live. RED occurs when communities, government and the business sector, usually acting in partnership engage in activities to improve local socio-economic conditions.

Planning has a direct effect on people, their environments and their livelihoods, therefore this paper will seek to highlight issues of poverty and local economic development and how they affect urban and regional planning in Nigeria.

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION

It is apparent that poverty is an outcome of economic, social and political processes that interact with and reinforce one another in ways that either reduce or worsen the deprivation poor people face. The World Bank (2001) suggested that countries should implement policies aimed at accelerating economic growth, improving the distribution of income and wealth and accelerating social development in order to achieve sustainable poverty reduction. One of such policies is Local Economic Development (LED, henceforth would be used interchangeably with RED).

Zaaijer and Sara (1993) defined Local Economic Development (LED) as a process in which local governments and/or community-based groups manage their resources and enter into partnership arrangements with the private sector, or with each other to create jobs and

stimulate economic activities in an area. Blakely (1994) also defined LED as a process in which local governments and community-based organisations engage to stimulate or maintain business activities with the principal aim of stimulating local employment opportunities in sectors that improve the community, using existing human, natural, and institutional resources. Helmsin's (2001) defined Local Economic Development as a process in which partnerships between local governments, community-based groups and the private sector are established to manage existing resources to create jobs and stimulate the economy of a well-defined territory. According to the International Labor Organization (2006) LED strategies empower local societies and generate local dialogue; help to make local institutions more transparent and accountable and contribute to the development of the local civil society. They also make economic activity dependent on the specific economic conditions and comparative advantages of a defined territory, generate sustainable employment in firms more capable to withstand changes in the global economic environment while contributing to a general improvement in the quality of jobs as a result of the involvement of local stakeholders and of the rooting of economic activity in a territory.

LED encompasses different disciplines including planning, economics, and marketing. The practice of local economic development can be undertaken at different geographic scales, rural and urban. Three broad categories of LED initiatives have been identified. They are community based economic development, business or enterprise development and locality development, which involves both physical planning and economic development of an area.

The role of local economic development within a community includes setting up, running, and supporting an endogenous network able to catalyse development. The essential mission of LED agencies is to create jobs, promote and support small and medium-sized enterprises, improve the economic context and opportunity of the territory and use businesses as a weapon in the fight against poverty. LED initiatives include ensuring the functionality of local investment climate in order to boost local businesses, the encouragement of new enterprise, attracting outside investments and investing in physical infrastructure. Other strategies involve human resource development and institutional support systems, supporting the growth of particular clusters of businesses, targeting certain disadvantaged groups and particular parts of the city for regeneration and supporting survivalist businesses.

While LED cannot be dissociated from poverty alleviation, Pieterse (2006) is of the opinion that unless one is able to disaggregate what an LED initiative is for, what it seeks to achieve and who will benefit, it is unlikely to benefit the poor at all. He highlighted the need to assess the quality and impact of LED strategies, especially with regards to its redistributive effects. According to him, LED is fundamentally about generating economic growth that is

sustainable and rooted in the local economy. However, economic growth does not equate poverty alleviation, and in fact strong economic growth can be accompanied with increasing inequality and poverty

LED can fulfil an anti-poverty role only when there is a clear understanding of the impact of the LED strategy on the poor. This can only be based on an assessment of specific areas in which the poverty problem can be distinguished and quantified.

Pieterse (2006) suggested a framework for linking the LED strategy to the anti-poverty framework of the municipality using the followings steps

1. Perform a Poverty audit of the study area. A poverty audit broadly consists of an analysis of the causes of poverty in terms of economic, political, cultural, natural and social terms; an identification of the different forms of deprivation and vulnerability and its prevalence in numerical, spatial, gender and race terms; and a broad strategy to address the various dimensions of poverty, vulnerability and deprivation
2. Build a consensus between the council, the municipality, the private sector partners and civil society on the process and findings of the poverty audit
3. Translate the findings of the poverty audit into strategies that are measurable and can be translated into clear targets
4. Prioritise the strategies on the basis of the development vision and strategy of the municipality
5. Prepare a feasible budget for implementing the different strategies
6. Develop time-specific indicators and criteria for monitoring the strategies
7. Ensure the strategies complement national and provincial policy frameworks
8. Establish dedicated institutional mechanisms and processes to drive and monitor the implementation and incorporation of the anti-poverty strategy into all aspects of the municipality operation.

PHYSICAL PLANNING DIMENSIONS TO LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Poverty alleviation and local economic development, while being interrelated have implications for the environment. Dewar (2006) advocates a stronger link between physical planning and economic growth. Emmanuel (2006) also advanced the opinion that poverty alleviation when not properly executed impacts negatively on the environment. Therefore, the physical planner, as the custodian of the environment must identify inherent relationships and address pertinent issues in order to ensure sustainable development. Some of them are discussed as:

Environmental Degradation and the Proliferation of Slums

Poverty puts pressure on people to engage in unsustainable and ecologically damaging practices. Environmental degradation and poverty are inextricably intertwined, resulting in a vicious cycle in which poverty causes environmental stress, which in turn perpetuates more poverty. Environmental degradation creates slums, shantytowns and squatter settlements. Akinbode (2002) corroborates this by saying that the concentration of the poor in unplanned settlements leads to the emergence of slums and shantytowns. Slums, shantytowns and squatter settlements exhibit similar characteristics. These include poor sanitary surroundings, dilapidated structures, high occupancy ratio, poor landscaping and social amenities, inadequate provision or complete lack of public facilities, absentee landlords, low rent, haphazard architectural design and general features of vandalism. Hague (2006) speculates that if poverty and urbanization persist at present rates, around one-third of the world population will live in slums by year 2030. It is common that urban regeneration exercises precipitate the emergence of new slums and squatter settlements. This is because displaced settlers are compensated with amounts below that which can afford an ideal housing in the market (Gillman, 2006). An example is the Maroko slum evacuation that resulted in the Ilasan village squatter settlement in Lekki, Lagos.

Urban and regional planning as a profession is geared primarily towards the development of a healthy and sustainable environment. The mitigation of environmental degradation and the need for urban regeneration are paramount. Based on Bartone (1991) summation that the urban poor, confined to economically fragile and ecologically vulnerable areas, contribute to the incidence of environmental degradation and urban congestion, one can safely conclude that environmental degradation and urban congestion can be controlled when the poverty level of the people is reduced. It is therefore important that planners perform their duties taking into consideration the economic status of those they are planning for.

Citizen Participation

Planners deal with a diverse mix of races, cultures, communities, ethnic groups, faith groups and innumerable interest groups of all kinds in the course of their work. As such, the need to involve the public in the development process is essential. Creating a sustainable city must integrate both settlement improvement and poverty eradication, as enunciated in local economic development. Engaging a community to come together as a unit to affect change is a formidable task. Yet, mobilizing a community is an effective and sustainable way to improve the quality of life of its citizens (Lawanson, 2006). According to Ogundele(2000) poverty alleviation can be achieved by empowering the poor to contribute to the social, economic and political life of their

urban neighbourhoods. Olanrewaju and Okoko (2000), corroborate this stance by recommending that effective poverty alleviation can only be achieved through the empowerment of the poor to initiate, design, execute and manage their own priorities

Citizen participation is an integral part of Urban and Regional Planning (Faludi, 1973), therefore the activities of community based organizations, the main actors in LED initiatives serve as opportunities for the planner to practice bottom-up planning as against the top-down planning of traditional approaches.

Globalization

The process of globalization is rapidly altering the economic status quo and presenting new economic opportunities and risks for cities, regions and nations all over the world. Globalization seeks to integrate the world into a global economy and its impacts vary in extent and intensity over time and space, within and between cultures and socio-economic strata (Oduwaye, 2006). In the face of globalisation, there are feedback linkages between economic development and physical planning. Global competitiveness and industrialisation has produced environmental consequences, which the planner is obligated to resolve. (Dewar, 2006). Can government economic objectives be achieved in the context of globalisation, demographic pressure, environmental change and natural resource consumption? It therefore behoves the planner to be aware of the vagaries of economic development intricacies of local, national and international dimensions.

Most Nigerian cities lack the pre-conditions for globalization to thrive; however, in spite of obvious shortcomings, Lagos, Nigeria's commercial premier city has benefited from globalization to a large extent. Notable gains include improved telecommunication and transport infrastructure, cultural integration and the emergence of new employment opportunities Other benefits include the inflow of capital and rapid development of the economic structure of the city, increased revenue for government and improved local capacity(Oduwaye, 2006)..

The contemporary physical planner must make adequate provision for the effects of globalization. In fact new town development and urban regeneration must be geared towards developing the following

- a. globally competitive, visitor and business friendly cities
- b. city economies which experience substantial and rapid economic growth, vibrant entrepreneurship, job creation and increasing per capita income
- c. cities where rapid improvements in the quality of life and standard of living are guaranteed, especially for vulnerable groups - particularly the poor
- d. cities where participatory decision making is practiced among key-role players.

PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Sustainable development ensures economic development, employment opportunities and social progress, in harmony with the environment (ICLEI, 1996). Human settlements policies and institutions have a significant role in providing the infrastructure, services and planning and management framework for economic growth and diversification which in turn helps provide the resources and higher incomes that allows needs to be met (DFID/ UNHABITAT, 2001). Urban and regional planning has a significant role to play in ensuring that communities continually upgrade to improve their global relevance and local standards. Planning strategies to enhance local economic development, poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability include the following strategies:

Settlement Upgrading and Urban Regeneration

The planner must carry out his diagnostic responsibility within the living environment, with all seriousness. This is what he does in identifying areas of environmental degradation, decay and degeneration; and suggesting strategies for intervention. He also has the responsibility of designing affordable housing, especially for the low-income cadre of the society. It is one of the ways by which he can reduce poverty. After all, one of the indicators of poverty is lack of access to the basic needs of life such as housing (Ajakaiye and Adeyeye, 2002; World Bank, 1996).

Omole (2000) advocates economic revitalization as an effective approach to urban renewal. He claims that when the poor are economically empowered, they can be removed from slum areas and established in better living environments. He proposes employment generation, a core aspect of local economic development towards achieving this.

The planner must also be politically active as this is when he is able to influence policies. His involvement with the local authorities is vital as he is able to recommend the most cost effective and feasible methods of achieving environmental goals. He is also able to act as a facilitator of joint ventures among the local authorities and private investors for providing affordable housing and other services.

Community Development and Pro-Poor Planning

Community Development is the empowerment of people, of organizations and of communities to attain or restore viability. It does so by motivating change in the nature and stocks of both social and economic capital. Such an approach is tantamount to a sort of indigenous development, in which local resources are assembled to kick-start the progression that would bring prosperity to places where it is initially in short supply. Community Development is a

means for evoking participation of community members to muster resources and coordinate their strategic usage in support of community-based goals. Community development aims not only to elicit the character of a desired future through community involvement in decision-making, but also seeks to harness the community in attracting needed resources and nurturing social capital gains.

Pro-Poor Planning is a marriage of Community Development and Urban Economic Development. Communities suffering economic insufficiency, stagnation or decline often seek remedies for these shortcomings through strategic economic development planning. Such activity aims to amass within communities and regions the resources needed to insure employment opportunity, to supply necessary public and private goods and services, and thereby to sustain or improve the quality of life. Healthy, safe and sustainable communities require means to amass wealth and resources, and the wisdom to invest these for the common good. As a public sector enterprise, however, Pro-poor Planning addresses the totality of a given jurisdiction rather more than it does the disparate individual communities that compose it. Both though concern geographically delimited spaces. Of course the smaller the jurisdiction, the more homogenous and unified may be its internal social and residential configuration and hence the more similar and cohesive may be the populations served, and the more likely it will be that Community Development will be enhanced.

Entrepreneurial Planning and Economic Development Consultancy

Entrepreneurial planning, also called leverage planning is action oriented planning that seeks to involve both the public and private sector in urban development. It aims at creating opportunities, stimulating investments and promoting development. Entrepreneurial planners who are required to work with speed, creativity, flexibility and informality seek to work alongside market operators, understanding their priorities, imitating their behaviour and influencing their decisions. Successful entrepreneurial planning depends on choosing the right site, developing a strategy, exploiting available subsidies, spotlighting successful schemes and assembling a team of people with all the relevant skills. Stock and Young (1993) identified 5 major stages in the entrepreneurial planning process-

1. Local authority secures access to a redevelopment site by acquiring ownership, or going into an agreement with the owner
2. Urban renewal and provision of roads, services etc
3. Public sector invests in demonstration projects or pilot scheme so as to convince private investors of governments interests and the workability of the development or redevelopment project

4. Development packages are made available to private investors often at a discount to encourage them.
5. Implementation of the public –private sector project

Planners increasingly practice leverage planning by providing economic development consultancy services. In fact, according to the Planning Service Directory of 2006, 46.7% of planning firms in the United Kingdom provided such services. Economic Development services include the following

1. Business development
 - Provision of Affordable Business Infrastructure
 - Procurement and Tender Advice
 - Informal Trading
 - Entrepreneurial / Technical Skills Training
 - Tourism Development Initiatives
2. Marketing
 - Investment and Trade Promotion
 - Hosting of Major Events
 - Tourism Promotion

CONCLUSION

Local economic development requires a synergy among government, local businesses and citizens to evolve a community with global standards in which the quality of every citizen's life is guaranteed. Urban and regional planning is essential to achieving this. The planner is expected to deploy his professional skills towards ensuring both environmental sustainability and economic viability and consequently, the community arrives at a place of poverty alleviation, economic growth and civic engagement.

However, globalization presents new economic opportunities and risks for cities, regions and nations, therefore the study recommends that the contemporary planner must ensure that new town development and urban regeneration exercises be aimed at developing globally competitive, visitor and business friendly communities.

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