

THE NATURE OF PERI-URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN LAFIA, NASARAWA STATE

Emankhu, Sunday Etemini and Ubangari, Ahmed Yakubu

Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Nasarawa State Polytechnic,
Lafia, Nigeria West Africa.

ABSTRACT: *This paper examines the characteristics of peri-urban areas in Lafia, a relatively new town by Nigeria's account, but an important state capital, whose mineral resources, hospitality, administrative and educational status continue to drive its urban expansion. Peri urban areas in Lafia are by no means homogeneous, but area characterized by market-led medium density sporadic housing developments, lacking in basic infrastructure and facilities, employment opportunities and are poorly linked to the main town by transportation facilities. It is recommended that there is the need for more proactive involvement and intervention by various stakeholders in the management of peri urban areas to enhance their potentials and to address their peculiar problems.*

KEYWORDS: Urbanization, Peri Urban Areas, Lafia, Facilities, Challenges.

INTRODUCTION

There is increasing interest in peri-urban areas and this evident from the studies and researches that have been carried out on this area in the last twenty years. The interest stems from various reasons, perspective and views that different people and researchers have on peri-urban areas. For many, peri-urban pose great challenges for resource use and management. To others, it is an area of potential conflicts (social, economic, environmental). There is also concern on the sustainability of peri urban areas, and if indeed the delicate balance between rural and urban areas within this interface which appears to be collapsing in the midst of an ever increasing pressure of urbanization and urban growth into the urban hinterlands. Yet, there is no acceptable definition of what peri-urban areas means, their nature, changing dynamics and the factors propelling change and challenges in these areas, how they may change in the future and if –universal policies and measures can be borrowed from other regions and countries in dealing with peri-urban areas in the cities of developing countries. The objective of this paper is to examine the characteristics of peri-urban areas in Lafia, within the context of rapid urbanization and urban growth in Nigeria, the ‘peculiarities’ of peri-urban areas in Lafia and to draw some lessons for policy on managing urban growth.

THE CONCEPT OF PERI-URBAN AREAS

Many terms are used to describe the zone between urban and rural areas. Some of these terms are ‘urban periphery’ ‘urban edge’, ‘urban fringe’, ‘urban-rural interface’, among others ‘Peri urban’ is commonly used today, because the region is not a fixed boundary, or a line but rather a ‘zone of

transition' characterized by a mixture of urban and rural resources, uses, systems and patterns. According to Nagot (2008) the peri urban area is a district undergoing demographic changes, characterized by the deconcentration of population and jobs from the city to sparsely populated areas; a process which she describes as 'peri-urbanization'. To her, peri-urban residential location is a trade-off between housing cost, rising transport cost and a decreased in facilities available in the district of residence with distance from the city. Peri-urban areas are not however, for residence alone, but as the SCOPE 5th Regular Meeting in Beirut in 2004 has pointed out, peri-urban environments mean different things to different people. To the poor, it is the place where it is easier to build shelter and to occupy land for agriculture. For industry; it provides sources of materials essential for urban life, water, bricks, clays, sand and gravel, timber, fuel wood, etc. To the middle class, it provides the potential zone for houses in a rural setting with golf courses and other recreational facilities.

USAID has described per-urban areas, as areas characterized by uncertain land tenure, inferior infrastructure, low incomes and lack of recognition by formal governments (USAID,1993). It is observed that third world cities are made of two distinct elements, the formal and informal; with the peri-urban areas constituting the informal section where planning and control of development is outside formal public institutions, but where traditions institutions are still strong. Ayorinde who examined peri-urban areas in Ibadan Nigeria points out that peri-urban areas contain substantial but continuous areas of urban development's mixed with stretches of more extensive and traditional rural areas utilized for agriculture and forestry (Ayorinde, 1994).

According to Pasquini and Maconachie (2005) studies on peri-urban areas have been influenced by the optimistic or the pessimistic schools. The optimistic school view peri-urban areas as capable to evolving in a sustainable way promoting urban and rural livelihoods and coping with the pressures and dynamics of population and land use changes. The pessimists however argue otherwise. Using Malthusian gloom and doom analysis, they argue that peri-urban areas lead to progressive degradation of the environment, collapse of institutions and put unnecessary pressure on natural and human resources.

The varying views expressed by different authors above, show the difficulties in defining the concept of per-urban areas. It should be noted that although peri-urban areas may exhibit similar characteristics, they tend to be quite different in origin, history and functions, and hence the important of this study in Lafia.

METHODOLOGY

Information for this paper was collected from a number of sources:

1. Internet search and downloading of relevant materials on peri-urban areas.
2. Literature search from books and journals
3. The author's personal knowledge and research in Lafia, particularly on land management, land values and slums.

4. A rapid field survey was carried out through which general information was collected on dominant type of land uses/activities, growth drivers, housing types and density, infrastructure and services, employment opportunities, health and sanitary conditions in the different peri-urban areas of Lafia.

URBANIZATION, URBAN GROWTH AND PERI-URBAN AREAS IN NIGERIA

It is estimated that in many third world cities, more than half of their population live in the peri urban areas. In Nigeria, the share of the urban population has increased from 10% in 1932 to about 20% in 1963 when Nigeria became independent. After independent in 1960, the rate of urbanization and urban growth has been unprecedented as urban areas offered better standard of life than the rural areas, and the policy of industrial location, provision of infrastructure and jobs opportunities has favoured the urban areas against the rural areas (urban bias). In the 1991 census, the urban population has risen to 37% of the total population, with the average rate of growth at about 5% per annum (NPC, 1998). The 2006 population and housing census showed that the country had a population of about 140 million people with about 45% living in towns and cities of over 20,000 inhabitants.

Rapid urbanizations have changed the urban landscape of most Nigerian cities. There have been the processes of concentration and congestion in inner cities and the opposite process of suburbanization and dispersal at the urban fringes, the peri-urban areas. The process of peri urban growth was stimulated during the colonial period as new towns were planted adjacent to traditional cities (to avoid direct contact with the indigenous people based on the policy of indirect rule and residential segregation). This led to the development of *sabon garis* (new towns) in Kano, Zaria, etc. There were also the Tudun Wadas, which were laid out for 'non-natives'. These led to the development of polycentres. Government policies of locating institutions and industries away from cities (for example Ahmadu Bello University at Samaru, Zaria, the airport in Jos and recently in Gombe, Federal University of Lafia etc) have reinforced the processes of spatial de-concentration and peri urban growth. Pasquini and Maconachies (2005) have point out that structural adjustment policies of the 1980s' forced many people to move to the peri-urban areas for agricultural purposes to supplement their meager incomes.

The work of Mortimore (1975,1993,1998) and Binns and Fereday (1996) had shown that there exist a zone of intensive agriculture in most northern cities in Nigeria, which rings the cities. This zone fosters active flow of resources, materials, people between the rural villages and their parent cities. Over the years, there has been increasing intensification of agriculture in the close settlement zone

(CSZ), especially in Kano. As the cities have expanded, the CSZ has also expanded outwards. It is reported that by 1990, the inner CSZ around Kano had extended to a radius of about 30 kilometers and the outer close settlement zone had extended by between 65 to 95 kilometers Dung-Gwom (2007). Due to urban expansion in Kano about a quarter to a third of the agricultural land has been lost to urban uses in Kano between 1996 and 2001 and about five out of the seven vegetables sites were under threat Lynch, Binns and Olofin (2001).

Ayorinde (1994) has showed that cities in South Western Nigeria (Yoruba cities) were no different to those in the north, only that they have high population densities even in the rural villages. Urban growth had led to even higher densities of population and physical developments in the peri-urban areas. The peri-urban zone of Ibadan is characterized by a mixture of residential developments, agriculture, forestry, and exhibited weak and ineffective planning control. The built up area of Ibadan had increased from 136 square kilometers in 1981 to 176 square kilometers in 1984, an increase of 40 square kilometers in period of just three years. Factors responsible for the ineffective planning and development control at the peri-urban areas of Ibadan were: absence of a master plan to guide development of Ibadan and the urban regions, frequent changes in the model of local government administration, lack of coordination between local planning authorities, constant boundary disputes among the local planning authorities, sharp practices among officials, inadequate funding of the local planning authorities and labour constraints facing local planning authorities Ayorinde (1994). These factors are common to other cities in Nigeria. However, it should be noted that even where a master plan may exist, as in Lafia, this has not helped matters in terms of proper planning or coordination of developments at the peri-urban areas.

PERI-URBAN AREAS IN LAFIA

Lafia is the state capital of Nasarawa State and its history and early growth is closely tied to her solid mineral. From a small town of less than 5,000 in 1930, 10,000 in 1950, the population grew to over 100,000 in 1973 and to over 400,000 in 1991 (NPC, 1998). Today the population of the city is estimated to be about 1.3 million people.

Lafia is a poly-nucleated metropolis due to the several settlements from which it has grown from, which have grown and changed over the years. This makes it very difficult to clearly define and demarcate its peri-urban areas. Although, in general terms, peri-urban areas are characterized by sporadic developments, there exist high density settlements in various locations, such as in, Bukan Sidi, Umbi I, Umbi II, Shabu, Sabon Pegi Shabu, Azuba Bashayi, etc.

The major drivers of peri-urban development in Lafia are:

The development of major roads.

Lafia is a major town in the North Central area of Nigeria, and inter-city roads linking urban areas to the south, north and east have attracted development along their corridors. The city is thus expanding rapidly along the Lafia-Jos Road axis; the Lafia-Shandam road axis, and the Lafia-Makurdi Road. This axial growth corresponds closely to the master plan of the city. This growth pattern has increased the commuting distance from the city and also the cost of providing infrastructure.

Availability of land for residential development.

Peri-urban areas of Lafia provide land for residential development. In the last 15 years, the price of land at the urban peri areas has been rising very steadily. The highest rates are found in the Shandam area due to their proximity to the Government House.

Communal Crisis of 2013.

There was a major communal crisis in Lafia environs in 2013 which had religious and ethnic undertones. This created mistrust and even fear among the major contending groups in Lafia.

Location of Public Institutions and Facilities.

The location of public institutions, for example, the Federal University of Lafia, the Polytechnic, Lafia and College of Agriculture, Lafia etc are all located at the peri-urban areas, and these institutions have become propellers of peri-urban expansion and attracted growth in the localities where they are located. Various industries have also moved out on the city-centre area to the urban periphery.

Land Tenure

Most of the land in and around Lafia is under customary tenure. So, cultural norms and rules still govern land transactions and management. Culture forbids permanent alienation of land; however, this has changed due to the pressure of urban expansion. So, although there is a vibrant and flourishing land market in Lafia, a true free land market does not exist. In some areas, land owners are more willing to sale land than in other areas. This attitude to land sale has influenced the patterns of urban expansion and nature of developments in peri-urban areas.

Large acquisitions of land by the rich and land speculators.

In the peri-urban areas, many rich people have acquired large tracts of land which they are not ready to develop, but would rather hoard until prices are attractive enough for them to dispose of. This tenure pattern affects continuous developments and creates pockets of vacant and undeveloped lands at the peri-urban areas.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PERI URBAN AREAS IN LAFIA

The characteristics of per-urban areas in Lafia are summarized and the following conclusions can be made of the peri-urban areas in Lafia:

1. Peri –urban areas are found in all directions and at various distances from the city.
2. Peri-urban developments are more dynamic and more mixed in terms of land uses and functions to the south and west of the city.
3. They are characterized by very diverse land uses. However, each peri-urban area seems to have a character of its own.
4. Contrary to many studies that peri urban areas offer cheap land and are inhabited by the poor at high density, this is not the case for most per-urban areas in Lafia which are inhabited by the middle class and the new rich at medium and low density.
5. There is low level of infrastructural services in the per-urban areas.
6. Most per-urban areas do not have waste collection systems and do face some environment problems.

7. Transport facilities are very critical in many peri-urban areas. They have to rely on commercial motor cycle (popularly called *going*). These commercial motor cycle operators are known to be involved in many anti-social activities such as theft, rape, drugs, etc, and have been banned from operation in the city from the hours of 8pm to 6am. This in effect means that people living in peri-urban areas and who do own private cars are seriously constrained transportation wise and particularly so at night time.
8. Job opportunities are in very short supply in the peri-urban areas. Most of them are commuters' zones.
9. There is very little planning and development control efforts in the areas. The local government authorities still grant land titles and approve building plans in the areas contrary to the official policy that land management in 'urban areas' should be under the control of the state governments.
10. Many peri-urban areas are in dire need of upgrading and re-planning.
11. Government policy of scattering developments without due regard to the master plan of the city and without the provision of necessary infrastructure, promotes urban uncoordinated expansion to peri-urban areas, and to areas that are not ripe for development, and so creates a variety of physical, economic and social stress.
12. Land cost in the peri-urban areas is beyond the reach of most urban dwellers, especially the poor. The type of housing being built at the peri-urban areas is far beyond the affordability of the urban poor. So, the housing plight of the urban poor will continue.
13. Many fertile agricultural lands, *fadama* lands and forests are being lost in the peri-urban areas to urban uses.
14. In most peri-urban areas, the local communities have formed community associations to provide basic facilities in their neighbourhoods.

OPPORTUNITIES AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Peri-urban areas in developing countries pose many problems, un-intensive use of land, low level of services and infrastructure, few job opportunities, uncoordinated development and high cost of providing services, lack of clear jurisdictions and weak planning control, etc. They manifest the deep seated problems that face third world cities and societies. Some of these causal factors are unsustainable urbanization and urban growth, poor economic policies and poor management of available resources, etc. These areas, on the other hand offer many positive opportunities by absolving the overspill populations and jobs from the cities and therefore relieving them of serious problems of congestion, overcrowding and pollution. Peri-urban areas also offer land for agriculture for food production for the urban dwellers and a means of living for many of the urban poor, cheap land for housing, industry, etc.

What are the policy options for dealing with the problems of peri-urban areas in developing countries and in Lafia in particular? Should the *lazier faire* continue?. In other words, should peri-urban areas be allowed to continue to grow and develop in the present form and manner or should some policies of containment be introduced, for example, restrain measures to check the haphazard growth and expansion of the city? Britain after the Second World War introduced many growth restrain policies, such as the introduction of green belts, the development of satellite and new towns

which absolved population overspill from the major cities. These policies and measures had worked fairly well in Britain because of their popular support, the strong planning and development control system that existed, etc. However, in developing countries with their weak institutions and planning systems coupled with too frequent policies summersaults, such containment policies may not really succeed.

The options that are available are a combination of containment and growth policies that can foster sustainable urban development and sustainable rural livelihoods. Sustainable urban development will required that materials and human resources from governments, public and private institutions, NGOs', CBOs' are deployed and properly used to tackle problems at the peri-urban and urban areas. The rural areas must also be managed sustainably to stem the tide of rural-urban drift, through the provision of services, jobs and housing. In Lafia, the commuter zone is extending further and further away from the city and is about a radius of 20 to 35 kilometres. There is need to plan and manage the urban region through the establishment and development of small towns, dispersal of industry and employment in a coordinated manner to reduce pressure on the main city of Lafia. The challenges facing housing experts, urban planners and policy makers in the developing countries is how to evolve and implement appropriate policies and measures that will foster sustainable management of peri-urban areas, manage conflicts and threats that face these areas and maximize the great potentials and resource endowments that peri-urban areas offer.

REFERENCES

- Ayorinde, D. (1994), Controlling development at the urban fringe: A case study of Ibadan, Nigeria, **In Urban Management and Urban Violence in Africa**, Vol 2(ed) by I.O. Albert, J. Adisa, T. Agbola, and G. Herault, IFRA-Ibadan.
- Binns, T. & Fereday, N. (1996), Feeding Africans urban poor; urban and peri-urban horticuilture in Kano, Nigeria, *Geography* 81, 380-384.
- Dung-Gwom, J.Y (2001), 'Delay in obtaining planning permission by private developers in Jos, *Journal of Environmental Sciences* Vol 5(1), 103-124.
- Dung-Gwom, J.Y. (2007). Urban renewal in Jos Bukuru metropolis, paper presented at the Nigerian Institution of Estate Surveyors and Valuers MCPD Workshop, on October 25th 2007.
- Dung-Gwom, J.Y. & Oladosu, R.O. (2004), 'Characteristics and physical panning implications of slums in Jos', *Jrl. of Envron. Sciences* Vol 8(2), 118-127.
- Goffette-Nagot, F. (2008). 'A residential location model in Peri-urban areas' downloaded pdf file from the Internet.
- Lynch, K, Binns, J. and Olofin E. (2001), Urban agriculture under threat, the land security question in Kano Nigeria, *Cities* 18, pp159-171
- Mortimore, M. (1975). Peri urban pressures, In *Population Factor in African Studies*, R.P Moss & R.J.A.R Rathbone (eds),, UK University of London Press. Ltd, pp188-197.
- Mortimore, M.J. (1998), *Roots in the African dust: sustaining the Sub-Saharan Drylands*, Cambridge, UK. Cambridge University Press, 219p

- Mortimore. M.. (1993), The intensification of peri-urban agriculture in the Knao Close Settlement Zone 1964-1986, in Turner, B.L.; G. Hyden & R.W. Kates (eds), *Population Growth and Agricultural Change in Africa*, Univ. Press of Florida, Gainville, pp358-400.
- NPC (1998), *Population Census of the Federal Republic of Nigeria: Analytical Report at the National Level*, National Population Commission, Nigeria.
- Pasquini, M.W & Maconachie, R. (2005), Peri-urban systems under stress in Jos and Kano Nigeria? New perspectives on resource management and degradation, In Parrot, L. (ed) *Proceedings of the International Workshop on Agriculture and Urban Developments in Central Africa*, University of Yaoude, Cameroon.
- SCOPE (2004), Environmental change in peri-urban areas, 5th Regular Meeting, Beirut, Lebanon 18th -18th March 2004.
- USAID (1993), The unique challenges of improving peri-urban sanitation, WASH Technical Report No 86, July 1993.