

IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGING PHASES OF PROPERTY AND LAND OWNERSHIPS ON THE PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT OF AKURE, ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: The paper focuses on the implications of changing phases of property and land ownership on the physical development of Nigeria cities with special reference to the core area of Akure, Ondo state. Cities in Nigeria are characterised by multiplicity of conversion, which is now threatening the peaceful co-existence of in Nigeria. This alarming situation is calling for the immediate attention of the spatial planner to address its attendant problems. Method implored in the study includes direct observations, measurements and oral interview. The study reveals rapid urbanisation, competition for property at the city centre for locational advantage, diverted interest, poor density, inadequate and poor implementation of land development policies in the state as some of the factors responsible for changes in phases of property and land ownerships. The paper advocated for quick domestication and implementation of Ondo State Urban and Regional Planning Law that has been underway for sometimes, public enlightenment campaign, strict enforcement of existing Urban and Regional Planning Laws, proper monitoring of development projects among others with a view to ensure strict compliance of the laws towards sustainable city development.

KEYWORDS: Implication, Change, Property, Physical development.

INTRODUCTION

In spite of the increasing knowledge of modern planning techniques and number of planners, physical development management in cities of the developing countries remaining an array of chaos and disorder. The rates of changing phases of property and land ownership in cities in Nigeria are seriously growing of weight and proportion. Just like any other city in Nigeria, changing phases of property and land ownership is speaking doom across board including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The attendant problems of these activities are multiphase and alarming. As a result of these activities, those available spaces are overcrowded, and over-utilized, hence, calling for a quick slum within the built up area of our cities. In the case of Akure, the capital city of Ondo State, the case is the same and even more worse with the recent series of invading and succession along the major transportation routes in the metropolis in particular the core area. Principally, the major indicators responsible for this high intensity rate in change of property and land ownership has been traced to massive urbanization.

David E. (1996) stressed that with all of the pressing problems of poverty, homelessness debt burdens, and trade deficits, many policymakers dismiss land market problems as issues of secondary importance to be tackled later such view is short-sighted he said. He also mentioned that in the next decade that most cities in the developing countries of the world will confront major land market problems. A shortage, runaway inflation, environmental and economic arises resulting from inappropriate land development he added.

The problems identified are only prominent at the city centre but not limited to the built up area of the urban centres but also applicable to the urban fringe. As we have unimaginable lateral conversion of building along the major transportation routes in Akure viz: oyemekun-Adesida road, Alagbaka-Fiwasaye road, Arakale road, Hospital road, and Oke-Aro to mention a few. All these, in most cases, are from residential building to big warehouse or store, commercial centre, and petrol station, educational/ study centres, giving rise to total alteration of the physical landscape of the area and impeding sustainable development within the core area of the city. As that is happening at the core area and along major routes, there is massive conversion at the fringe of the city sharply resulting to the destruction of the natural ecosystem and landscape of the area. Although, there is clear evidences that those activities of the fringe are the multiplier effect of the inability of the city centre to accommodate more population and development activities leading to the sprawling of the excess population to its suburb.

Idris, (2003) stressed that population increase in Nigeria has accounted for the rapid physical expansion and development. The problems and the challenges posed by rapid rate of uncontrolled and unplanned urban growth are immersed he said. In complimentary of Idris's statement, Jelili el at (2008) affirmed in their statement that this action is made more manifest in the process of conversion and redevelopment of properties to accommodate more businesses or less importantly properties are usually more dwelling units. Conversion without thorough consultation of professionals that can give them the right advice on such development have characterised the corridor of the major routes, however, complicating the existing problems. It should also be noted that while in most cases, housing modernization or rehabilitation, and redevelopment are usually associated with a change of use either wholly or partly, or in use intensity due to increase in property value.

Most Nigerian cities today are expression of distorted landscape with haphazardly growing shanty developments. All these comprising of massive illegal and unauthorized conversion making in some parts, transport system and facilities inadequate, noise and pollution a common phenomenon and overcrowded order of the day as a result of intensity of use. These features and trends over the years are making it impossible to provide such area with basic and essential facilities or too expensive where possible. This change, which is attributed to urban growth, always alters the land use pattern and values within the built up area of the urban system or class. In Akure today, the efforts to create more commercial, residential and as well as office apartments and other uses has demanded for the pulling down of old structures and in some cases, including family buildings to give way for new development that may partially or totally alter the physical landscape of the area. The cases of making use of available open spaces for different forms of development with no regard for their implication become rampant and alarming. This is said to have accounted for an ever increasing level of congestion, overcrowding, stress on infrastructures and utilities, traffic problem to mention a few. This situation has brought untold problem to the study area, calling for the attention of the physical planners for through appropriate organ readdressing with a view to ensure sustainability within the study area.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Land use change patterns are the result of the complex interactions between man and his physical environment. Specifically, land use conversion occurs when the use of a particular land is changed from the use that was originally allocated to it as a result of invasion and succession, economic rents, highest and best use and other factors that encompasses urbanization as a whole Farinmade (2010).

In Nigeria today, most urban centres are experiencing severe stresses as a result of a combination of global trends and unique local forces. While some argue that urban decline and environmental deterioration is a cyclical process with its roots in global investment cycles. It remains true that decline may be sparked by non cyclical factors and may be ameliorated or exacerbated through public leadership. Decline in urban centres is typically manifested in economic terms through a reduction in public investment, but with diversity in private business activity (particularly retail and commercial activity). Deterioration in the quality of public open space, congestion, conversion and poor urban management are also features of the decline nature of the urban centres. All these are functions of urbanization with a complex of physical growth without adequate measure of control that can avert such menace like we are witnessing today in our urban city centres.

In South Africa, the case is also similar to all other African countries in particular Nigeria, with a reference to Akure. Cities network (2001) stated that South African cities are faced with particular challenges linked to the legacy of apartheid, delayed urbanization and political transformation. They further mentioned that South African cities have inherited a dysfunctional urban environment with skewed settlement patterns that are functionally inefficient and costly and huge service infrastructure backlogs. In the face of a housing shortage, the urban poor sought accommodation in a thriving backyard rental market, which remains beyond the purview of official policy-making to this day. Overcrowding and poor living conditions within backyards ultimately gave way to the illegal occupation of land, and the establishment of free standing

informal settlements they said. The intertwined forces of globalization have generated a global process of economic restructuring. This has substantial economic and spatial implication for cities in both developed and developing countries they added.

Farinmade,(2010) avers that the pattern of land use and land value are mutually determined. Value in the urban land is the resultant effect of economic or ground rent. In cities, economic rent is based on superiority of location only, the sole function of city land being to furnish an area on which to erect structures. Any utility could compete for any location within city and all land goes to the highest bidder who, therefore, obtains maximum convenience or economy in time and effort by being accessible.

Engelstoft, (1982) stressed that the growing pressure on the core of cities and the development of new buildings have primarily been designed to comply with demands for increasing needs of office space. In general, however, the result of the above mentioned has been a land use development in the core areas, from mixed to differentiated land use. While the total floor space of the area has been virtually constant. He further mentioned that the overall picture has been a general trend towards a constant or stagnating land use for retail sale, and a small increase in land use for other services, decrease in residential land use and as well as decrease in manufacturing industry. In general it may be maintained that the land use trends are the trends of a land use pattern in transformation, a fact that the following remarks attempt to study more thoroughly. Urban development and the resulting land use may be seen as the ultimate result of private and public investments and their ability to pay off he added.

Farinmade, (2010) highlighted that the utilization of land is ultimately determined by the relative efficiencies of various uses in various locations. Efficiency in use is measured by rent-paying ability, the ability of a use to extract a utility from a site. The process of adjustment in city structure to a most efficient land use pattern is through the competition of uses from various locations. The use that can extract the greatest returns from a given site will be the successful bidder. On the aggregate, there emerges an orderly pattern of land use spatially organized to perform most efficiently the economic functions that characterized urban life.

Onibokun (2006) in his own view commented that since the 1970s, a number of events have occurred simultaneously to change the form, structure and direction of growth of the urban centres. With more people drifting to urban centre; there are intense pressures on existing facilities, which gradually become inadequate. The increasing demand for urban land and, consequently, the encroachment of urban land uses on rural area. This rapid rate of urbanization brought with it many intractable urban environmental problems such as poor housing, poor environmental sanitation, inadequate infrastructure, urban sprawl and squalor coupled with indicators of social deprivation such as overcrowding and incessant urban violence to mention just a few.

Omosulu and Sogbon (2008) further stressed that as the demographic trends unfold, the nature of urban life in low-income countries will itself be changing, in most cases, into an unmanageable level. However, the speed and scale of these changes present many challenges of particular concern one of the risks to the physical environment and natural resources, health conditions, social cohesion, and individual rights and well-being. The chaotic nature of these changes could no longer be put under the armpit of the metropolis. It is beyond a manageable level and hence, calling for a quick attention with a view to avert further occurrences that may likely put more risks and dangers in the face of the city. It should be noted that where majority of these changes are taking place are areas of high population density and so, is like adding value to the impoverishment and complexity of lives of people which may not be good enough for the entire urban system of the metropolis.

THE CONCEPT OF LAND-USE

A central concept within geography is land use. The concept of land use may be analysed by splitting up the words (Anderson, 1971): Land, representing property, real estate, and physical resources; and use, referring to human activities as they take place on a given location due to constraints set by the social development. Land use, and in particular urban land use, may thus be regarded as an appearance of processes in society. The social development or processes of society and the human activities may be regarded as decisive for the land use; however it is important to stress that land-use; as such, should not merely be regarded as a reflection of the social processes (a deterministic view); on the contrary, land-use has to be seen as dialectically tied to the human activities and the social processes. Investments in a given type of urban land-use, once carried out, may to a certain extent act as a constraint imposed on a future use of the land.

The disproportion thus occurs between an actual land-use and actual social conditions, as the land use may reflect earlier stages of the social development. A sufficiently large disproportion between actual land-use and actual social development may in turn create the necessary conditions for a change in the land-use. The dual relationship between social processes and

land-use is reflecting the qualities observable in a given piece of land, as those qualities may be characterized as either absolute or relative. The absolute qualities of land-use are associated with physical and morphological aspects of the area, where as the relative qualities are associated with social, economic and cultural features i.e characteristics related to an interplay between space and the social world.

THE STUDY AREA

Akure, a typical traditional city in the South Western geo-political zone of Nigeria, is located on 7° 17'11" North and Longitude 5° 14'11" East at a height of about 370m above the sea level. The city accommodated a population of 38,852 in 1952 (Osunsanmi, 2006), 71,000 in 1961, 109,000 in 1980, 112,000 in 1981; 114,000 in 1982; 117,000 in 1983; 120,000 in 1984; 123,000 in 1985 (Federal Office of Statistics 1986). This population of Akure rose to 239,124 in 1991, with estimated growth rate of 2.8%. The projected population put the population of Akure to be 269,207 and 298,712 in 1996 and 2000 and harboured 353,211 in 2006 (NPC 2006) respectively. This unprecedented population growth and sharp demographic changes have accounted for the unguided increasing density and intensity of development within the built up area in particular around the city centre and as well as along major transportation routes like Oba-Adesida road, Arakale road, Oyemekun road, and Fiwasaye-Alagbaka road, among others.

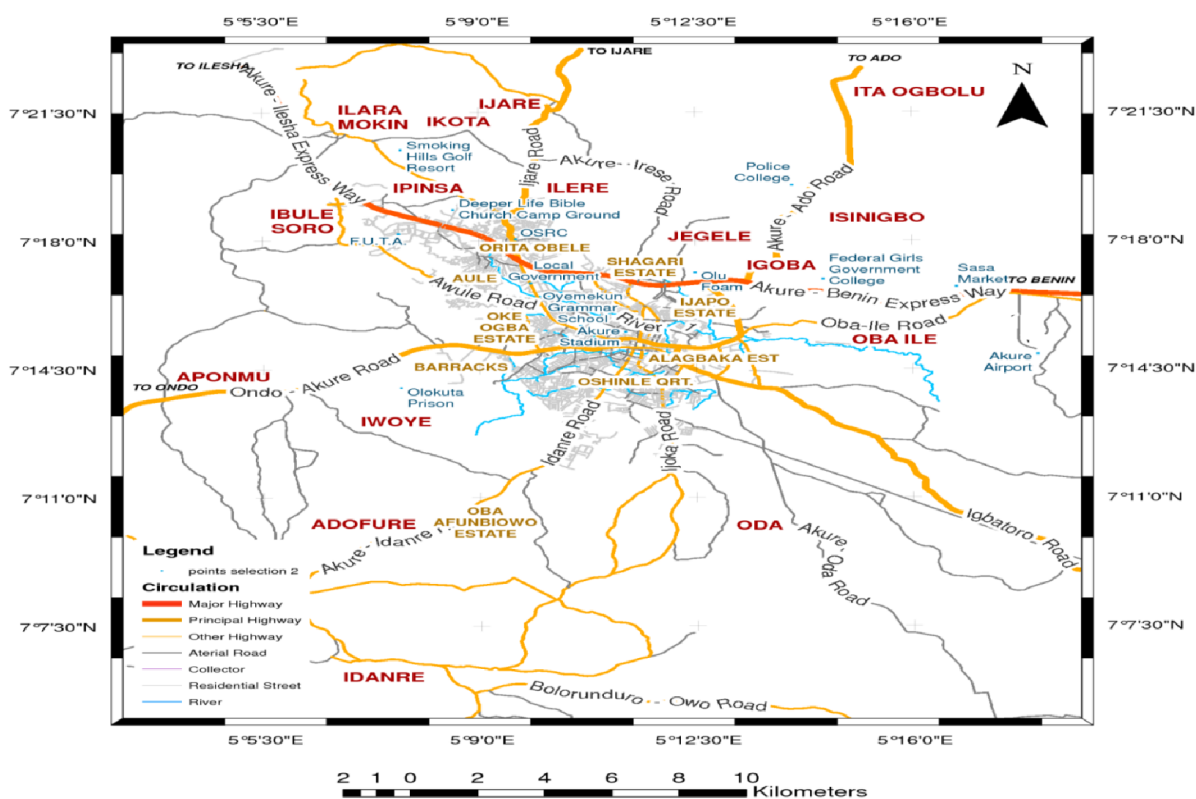


Figure 1: Map of the study area

Source: Sogbon, 2014

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Akure the capital city of Ondo State. However the study covered the central area of the metropolis. Reconnaissance survey was carried out to identify areas and routes where changes in phases of property and land ownership are predominant. The areas identified include Arakale road, Oba Adesida road, Oyemekun road, Oke-Aro, Odo-Ikoyi, Isolo, Araromi, and Alagbaka-Fiwasaye axis. Method adopted for collection of data includes the use of direct observations measurements and oral interview.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Several factors were said to have accounted for the continuous changing in phases of property and land ownership within the armpit of the study area and these include:

The heighten agglomeration of urban population was identified to be one of the major indicators responsible for changing phases of Property and land ownership at the entire city centre and other connected major routes in Akure Metropolis. This massive and rapid urbanization gave room for high demand for Landed property suitable places for stores, warehouses, and office complexes, hence, its intensity. Incessant and unparalleled population increase and concentration has accounted for an increase in the amount and quantity of garbage generated by the populace. Commercial activities generate more waste than residential uses, hence, greater level of population. The smells and odours coming from food joints, the noise generated from the equipment also cause noise pollution. Dust generated from those furniture companies and sawmilling can also cause havocs to the lives of people residing within the vicinity were such activities are taken place.

There is the urge in every individual seeking for property to be purchased at strategic location in particular at the Central Business District of the city where commercial activities are booming for quick capital recovery and through locational advantage the study reveals.

One of the identified indicators for changing in phases of property land ownership is the diverted interest of land and property owners. Increase in land value motivated property and land owners to give away their buildings and landed property at exorbitant prices. Some deliberately sold theirs because of the unconducive atmosphere that the city centre is becoming to get alternative elsewhere while some sold theirs because of the obsolescence of the buildings hence the urge to quit. Some sold off their property because it was inherited property and never interested in staying at their father's or forefather's apartment.

Government inability to adequately control density and give standard is one of the factors responsible for such high concentration at the city centre. Although some of these structures were built before planning standard came to be but measures could still be taken to avert concentration. Government have not been able to give such a precise density standard and ensure its implementation. Number of people to be living per kilometre square should be specified by government, but unfortunately, nothing has been done to this effect.

Land use policies and guide that will help to moderate land use has not been adequately made available by government for public use. Where available, applications of those policies have not been effective both by government agencies and the public. These over the years have been inducing on the physical environment several catastrophes through land use abuse.

For profit maximization, some land and property owners gave away their property at a high cost for the purpose of economic benefits. Some converted their property from residential to commercial uses to earn high rent. Some lease out theirs because of high rent rate at the city centre due to high demand through high population influx.

The incessant and massive conversion and change in development phases of property across the study area can be traced to poor government supervisions and monitoring of development projects by the development control department of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development in the state. Findings revealed that many of the changed property have no approval and where approval was granted, people did not build with specification of what was approved for them

IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGING PHASES OF PROPERTY AND LAND OWNERSHIP

There are several implications that are connected with changing in phases of property and land ownership in the study area and they are as follows:

One of the major identified implications of changing in phases of Property and land ownership in the study area is incessant traffic congestion due to an increasing level of commercial activities particularly during on and off street loading from trucks and haulage vehicles. The existing roads can longer accommodate the increasing influx of people who migrate to or across the study area on daily basis either to transact business or for other purposes. The vehicles of those on business patronage are on street parking as parking spaces were not available either for the customers, the business owners or property owners as the case may be. It should be noted that these situations resulted to major traffic problem along these corridors, particularly during peak hours of the day. The plate below shows one of these critical experiences along Adesida road in the study area.



Plate 1: Showing Traffic Congestion at Adesida in Akure

Source: field survey 2015

The changing phases of property from residential uses to commercial uses has accounted for gross housing shortage in the study area. Tenants in most cases, have to vacate their renting apartment because property owners want to change, sell or lease as the case may be simply because of pressure on property within the study area that calls for high prices. This is making it difficult for new migrants to secure residential accommodation in the study area as a result of these developments. In some cases, they were not asked to move out but pack to some apartments within the buildings that were initially proposed for toilets or stores with a view to convert the frontage rooms to shops and stores. This, however, is one of the strong indicators that accounted for housing shortage within the study area. The effects of this are far felt to the extent that some traders along these routes do convert their shops to bedrooms.

There are cases of land use conflicts across the study area simply because there are no strict land use controlled mechanisms being put in place to check and balance development within study area. There are bound multiple uncontrolled development within the study area despite its status as state capital city. There are several cases of building having accommodating a church and residential apartment together; the church is occupying the ground floor while the residential is upstairs. In another case the church is occupying the upper floor and stores down floor. Cases of residential and shops are numerous. The case of furniture and residential apartments also dotted the study area.



Plate 2: Showing Some of the Mixed Uses in the Study Area

Source: field survey 2015

Since property in the area are sold out or leased out to the highest bidder, leasing or selling of adjoining property also take the same queue. At places like Arakale, Adesida, Oyemekun Alagbaka-Fiwasaye axis to mention a few, plot of land ranges between five to ten millions (N5m – N10m). This is a factor of competition and the high intensity in the demand for the use of land, particularly, at the city centre where demand for land is relatively competitive. This discovery is in line with (Omosulu and Sogbon 2008) that land value at some places in Akure in particular city centre ranges from N1.5m- N3m and N5m – N10m respectively.

This incessant change in phases of property and land ownership particularly at the core area of the city has solely accounted for the blockage of many residential building particularly family houses. This act is predominant in Arakale where virtually all houses were almost converted to stores and warehouses. This has narrowed the entrances into many residential buildings making it difficult for residents to have free access into their places of residence. The plate below explains the situation further.



Plate 3: Showing Blockage of Residential Apartments

Source: field survey 2015

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The study area is continually becoming inhabitable for families especially areas liable to some peculiar problems due to the forces of invasion and succession of commercial activities. The study area had undergone a tangible level of change from residential use to commercial and other uses. This however, brought about several inconveniences like high rent, inadequate space, strain on infrastructural facilities, invasion of privacy, housing shortage, traffic congestion, pollution, alteration of the entire landscape and distortion of the arrangement of the area.

In view of the above highlighted problems, the following suggestions were made to check unauthorised change in the phases of property and land ownership in our cities in particular the study area;

- (i) The government should establish municipal by-laws with a view to prevent urban lawlessness and will help to reduce the heightened unauthorized conversion within urban area in particular core area.
- (ii) There should be quick domestication of Urban Regional Planning Law which has been underway in the state (Ondo state.)
- (iii) Urban regeneration and integration plan for city, Town and Township centres should be enacted to facilitate the city improvement.
- (iv) Development control department of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development of the state should wake up to their obligatory duty and make effective monitoring of land use and thorough supervision of development projects within the study area.
- (v) Fines should be imposed on buildings that have change their uses from the original plan without following the appropriate procedures and approval
- (vi) Government should establish a density control policy that will guide population density of the various sectors of the city
- (vii) Land use policies and guides should be made available for public consumption and use while government agencies should implement these policies as appropriate.
- (viii) Government should embark on regular public enlightenment campaign through radio and television programmes
- (ix) Public participation should also be encouraged by government at the point of decision making and implementation stages
- (xv) There should be reviewed of approved plans and approval order at the city centre and along major transportation routes.

Conclusively, it is legally possible and acceptable for property to change its use from the initial or original use to another and also for land owners to transfer their property to another but with the observance due process. The problem associated however with the study area is the inability and the failure of the property owners to follow legal and acceptable due process while making alteration either to their buildings or change of ownership.

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