

SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: AKWA IBOM STATE PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Many existing and developing urban centres including those in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria are undergoing rapid physical and economic growths, which contribute immensely to urban development. This urban development seems to benefit these centres, it can also, if not appropriately managed, create discrete challenges for them. This paper examined the urban development trends, characteristics and the need for integration of sustainability concepts into the urban development paradigm in Akwa Ibom State. The exploratory research approach was adopted for the study. It examined the concepts of sustainability, urbanization and urban areas; it also looked at urbanization trends in Nigeria and Akwa Ibom State in particular, and considered also the characteristics of urban areas in the state. The work revealed the need for the development of urban areas and integration of urban sustainability concepts into urbanization and urban development processes in the state as there are many benefits derivable. Based on the findings, it is concluded that formulating the necessary urbanization and urban development policies including establishment of statute for effective urban planning and management, the establishment of urban sustainability objectives and appropriate governance system that will serve as a vital prerequisite for developing, enhancing and sustain the transformative potentials embedded in urbanization and urban development.

Key Words: *Urban development, Urban sustainability, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria*

Introduction

The expansion of cities beyond their administrative borders, driven by increases in population and infrastructural development, usually spread out and swallow up neighbourhoods and growing towns to form mega-cities. This scenario

is typical in places such as Lagos, Kano, Port-Harcourt, Kaduna and Ibadan and other major developing cities in Nigeria. One of the most noticeable elements of most urban areas or cities in sub-Saharan Africa including Nigeria is the unsustainable nature of development in

both the old and the emerging cities. Ufot-Akpabio and Ofem, (2019) explored urbanization and development in Nigeria with emphasis in Akwa Ibom State and attributed urban development in the area to three imperial agencies namely: European colonial administrators with the establishment of Local administrative headquarters at various places; missionaries of Christian faith and European entrepreneurs. In order to sustain the growth in the urban centres the study called for the incorporation of the informal activities in the land/housing sector and transportation activities into planning matrix, political and financial autonomy for local government. This according to the study would enhance better performance, and granting of legal status to physical planning and development tools such as comprehensive plans and adequate investment in socio-economic infrastructure to serve as a pull and sustainable factors for the urban centres across the state.

Berry (1973) earlier viewed urbanization as a process of concentration of human population in a place. Emphasis here is on population without regard to concentration of dependable human activities and infrastructural development. This is typical of Nigeria's urbanization growth.

The urbanization growth rate in Nigeria is seen as one of the fastest in the world (Alkali, 2005) but corresponding increases in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment rate, social and economic activities and provision of basic social and economic infrastructures do not cope nor correspond with the growth. Thus resulting in decaying and sprawling slums in cities with attendant negative implications (Aluko, 2011). It also results

in increasing poverty, low environmental quality, declining health status and undue increase in government expenditure.

Despite the existence of appropriate Physical Planning Agencies, in most state capitals and Local Government Areas, many urban areas developed without adherence to physical development plans where they exist. Developers both formal and informal engage in arbitrary development of illegal structures (including the use of temporary and makeshift materials), spaces taken over by overzealous developers mostly politicians, economic activities developed without recourse to zoning ordinances and many parts of Nigeria cities including Uyo lack aesthetic appeal for a healthy living and a relaxed working environment.

Oduwole and Ijeomah (2017) assessed the relationship between Sustainable Development and Urban and Regional Planning Practice and opined that the sustainability of the planning profession is at risk as the sustainability of communities. Thus the need to bridge the information gap between socio-economic goals and physical planning requires appropriate capacity-building and technology for sustainable development. They also called for setting of justifiable sustainable standards for the planning profession with emphasis on its application in urban planning and management practices.

Consequently, Nigerian urban centres are developing and growing daily with little or no systematic direction (Aluko, 2011). The provision of basic infrastructural facilities is increasingly inadequate for the ever-increasing urban population in Nigeria. Also lacking, are legal and institutional frameworks to support sustainability in urban planning,

urban growth, development and management in most states including Akwa Ibom State (AKS). Annual budgetary allocations for controlling urban development and management; and related issues are inadequate in the country and in virtually all states of the federation. Above all, poor urban governance, lack of adequate urban planning/development model, urban sustainability developments objectives with targets and indicators against which urban planning and development data necessary for appraisal are non-existence in the country.

This study seeks to bring out the link between urban areas and economic development, opportunities offered by urban centres and adaptation measures/strategies needed to kick start sustainable development process in the study area. This is in view of the existence of institutional, technical, economic and political structures and machinery in urban areas in Nigeria, and Akwa Ibom State in particular.

Study Area

Akwa Ibom State (AKS) is one of the leading oil rich states in South-south, Nigeria. The state was created on September 23rd, 1987 from the former Cross River State, Nigeria. The state is bounded by Rivers, Abia and Cross River States and the Republic of Cameroon to the Southwest, North, and East respectively while, the Atlantic Ocean/Bight of Bonny borders the state to the South. It lies between latitudes 4°32' and 5°45' North of the Equator; and longitudes 7°28' and 8°28' East of the Greenwich Meridian. According to NPC (1998) AKS has a total land area of

7.249km², which represents 0.78% of the total landmass of Nigeria (AKS, 2013) and ranks 30th of the 36 states of the Federation by creation. The state has 31 Local Government Areas (LGAs) and 31 designated urban areas and Uyo as the State Capital. Uyo, Ikot Ekpene, Eket, Abak, Ikot Abasi (achieved urban status in 1960) Etinan and Oron (became urban areas in 1970) are the most developed urban centres in the state (see Figure 1). According to the 2006 National Population Census result, AKS has a total population of 3,920,208 persons out of which 87.89% constituted rural population while 12.11% formed the urban population (NPC, 2007). By projection the population of the state in 2019 is 6,13133 persons with density as high as 846 persons per square kilometre, one of the most dense states in Nigeria.

Methodology

Exploratory research approach was adopted to gather information for the Study. This involved the review of related literature and concepts. Specifically, information on the trends in urbanization and urban development in Nigeria vis-a-vis global trend were explored. This captured population growth rates in both global and Nigeria perspectives. The paper also explored the historical development of urban settlements in Akwa Ibom State, their population trends from 1953 – 2021 and projections to 2031. In addition, the need for sustainable urban development, challenges and features of urban areas in Nigeria and Akwa Ibom State were explored for analyses and conclusion on the situation in the study area.

There is no globally accepted position on how best to determine the boundaries of urban areas or determine when a settlement is classified as “urban” as a result of diverse definitions by authorities in urban studies. This is evident in the publication of the United Nations Population Division (2014). Urban areas are extremely diverse in terms of their size, spatial structure, employment patterns, level of economic development, natural resources endowment and social mix. Also, each country defines urban areas accordingly to its criteria, including a combination of administrative, population size or density, economic, and urban characteristics (such as paved streets, water supply system, sewerage systems, and electric lighting). Temporal and spatial data gaps make accurate prediction of urbanization and size of city populations difficult (UN-Habitat, 2016; UN, 2019). Some authorities simply adopt definitions based on population size, density, functionality and administrative/legal criteria, and some countries have adopted such definitions for application in their various domains. However, settlements designated as urban are seen to serve as centres of administration and commerce with the availability of basic social infrastructure. Broadly, some countries adopt multiple criteria, covering population and territorial size, population density, administrative; legal and extending to what could be considered as urban employment, density and contiguity (The United States Census Bureau, 2000).

In Nigeria by government proclamation, that is administrative, it is established that all local government area headquarters and state capitals are considered urban (Ufot-Akpabio and

Ofem, 2019). In addition to the administrative criterion used in Nigeria, population size is also used as agglomerations of 20,000 people are also considered as urban areas (Ofem, 2012).

The understanding of the concepts of urbanization, urban area, its continuous expansion and development are closely associated with ecosystem degradation. Layzerova *et al.* (2016) stated that environmental urban development creates a new trend in the context of the global ecological crisis. This crisis prompts the need for urban paradigm shift from urban facility provision to the adoption of urban sustainability concepts. Sustainable development is being viewed as the process by which present generations develop better ways to meet their needs without reducing the capacity of future generation to also meet their needs (Kiamba, 2012). George (2001) aligned with Brundtland definition which states thus, “to equitably meet development and environmental needs of present and future generations”. Also, Ravetz (2000) opined that the art of planning for sustainable development is the art of planning interactions in such a way to achieve sustainable development. The goal in this case is a set of realizable objectives that are compatible with each other and complement each other to create urban sustainable development.

For urban sustainability to be achieved, Cairns Jr. (1997) listed four conditions that must be met, which include; fuel and mineral resources should not be extracted faster than they can be naturally replenished; long-lasting, harmful product and by-products should not be produced faster than they can be broken down and assimilated by the environment; overconsumption and over-harvesting

should be restricted to prevent a decline in the productive capacity of affected ecosystems; and finally, basic needs should be met using efficient electronic and energy saving technologies. With these conditions, urban centres will be able to sustain their development process in the long run, even in the face of substantial urbanization (Kiamba, 2012) and city expansion.

Trends in Urbanization and Urban Development in Nigeria

The world has been urbanizing rapidly for a long time and shows every sign of continuing to do so. It is estimated that

more than 40% of the world’s population today are urban dwellers and over the year’s concentration has been in developing countries like Nigeria (Tolley and Thomas, 2016). United Nations (2019) reported that the Africa’s population now grows at a rate of more than 2% per year. This growth rate has placed Africa as one of the world’s most critical zones of rapid population, urbanization and urban growth. The population, urbanization and urban growth rates by regions of the world are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Estimates of population, urbanization and urban population growth rates (all in % per annum) by regions, 1950-2050

Population growth rates	1950-1960	1960-1970	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2020	2020-2030	2030-2040	2040-2050
World Regions	1.8	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.4	1.2	1.1	0.9	0.7	0.6
Sub-Saharan Africa	2.1	2.5	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.4	2.2	2.0
Northern Africa	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.6	1.9	1.7	1.6	1.3	1.0	0.8
Asia	2.0	2.3	2.2	2.0	1.5	1.1	1.0	0.6	0.4	0.2
Europe	1.0	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.0	-0.1	-0.2	-0.2
Latin America and the Caribbean	2.8	2.7	2.4	2.0	1.7	1.3	1.0	0.8	0.5	0.3
Northern America	1.8	1.3	1.0	1.0	1.1	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.5
Oceania	2.2	2.2	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.2	1.0	0.9
Urbanization rates										
World	1.3	0.8	0.7	0.9	0.8	1.0	0.9	0.7	0.5	0.5
Sub-Saharan Africa	3.3	2.1	2.1	1.9	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.0	0.9
Northern Africa	2.0	1.6	1.1	1.0	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6
0.6Asia	1.9	1.2	1.4	1.7	1.5	1.8	1.4	1.0	0.7	0.6
Europe	1.0	1.0	0.7	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Latin America and the Caribbean	1.8	1.5	1.2	0.9	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2
Northern America	0.9	0.5	0.0	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Oceania	0.7	0.6	0.0	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.2
Urban population growth rates										
World	3.2	2.8	2.6	2.7	2.3	2.3	2.0	1.5	1.2	1.0
Sub-Saharan Africa	5.5	4.6	4.9	4.8	4.0	4.1	4.0	3.6	3.2	2.9
Northern Africa	4.7	4.4	3.6	3.6	2.5	2.1	2.1	1.8	1.6	1.4
Asia	3.9	3.5	3.5	3.8	3.0	3.0	2.3	1.6	1.1	0.8
Europe	2.0	1.8	1.2	0.8	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1
Latin America and the Caribbean	4.6	4.2	3.6	3.0	2.4	1.7	1.4	1.1	0.7	0.5
Northern America	2.7	1.8	1.0	1.2	1.6	1.2	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.6
Oceania	3.0	2.9	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.2	1.1	1.0

Source: United Nations Population Division (2014)

The pace of urbanization and development of urban areas in Nigeria currently exceeds that of all other countries in the continent. Currently, more Nigerians are domiciled in urban areas than in rural areas. Ayedun *et al.* (2011) reported that in 1930, there were 25 urban centres in the country. The figure increased to 56 (125%) in 1953. Between 1953 and 1963 the number grew to 185 urban centres representing 229% increase in just ten years. He noted further that while the total urban population increased by 240% between 1890 and 1953, the population rose by more than 300% between the period of 1953 and 1993. Current population projections put

Nigeria at 206,139,589 people. The figure is equivalent to 2.62% growth rate of the world population of 7,794,798,773 (UN, 2019). The country maintained its seventh position in the list of countries by population, while the urban population in the country at present is projected to 52% of the entire country's population. The percentage of urbanites is expected to reach 71.5% by the year 2050, with population of over 402 million people. With these figures, Nigeria may become the third most populated/urbanized country in the world by 2050. Demographic indicators used in ranking Nigeria are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: World and Nigeria Population, Urban Population Growth and Ranking (2000-2050)

Year	Population	Yearly % Change	Yearly Change	Urban Population %	Urban Population	Country's Share of World Population	World Population	Nigeria Global Rank
2000	122,283,850	2.53	2,867,103	34.9	42,627,440	1.99	6,143,493,823	10
2010	158,503,197	2.68	3,927,636	43.5	68,949,828	2.28	6,956,823,603	7
2015	181,137,448	2.71	4,526,850	47.8	86,673,094	2.45	7,379,797,139	7
2016	185,960,241	2.66	4,822,793	48.7	90,546,177	2.49	7,464,022,049	7
2017	190,873,244	2.64	4,913,003	49.5	94,525,016	2.53	7,547,858,925	7
2018	195,874,683	2.62	5,001,439	50.3	98,610,801	2.57	7,631,091,040	7
2019	200,963,599	2.60	5,088,916	51.2	102,805,995	2.61	7,713,468,100	7
2020	206,139,589	2.62	5,000,428	52.0	107,112,526	2.64	7,794,798,739	7
2025	233,343,112	2.51	5,440,705	55.8	130,312,056	2.85	8,184,437,460	6
2030	262,977,337	2.42	5,926,845	59.4	156,299,881	3.08	8,548,487,400	6
2035	294,986,051	2.32	6,401,743	62.7	184,887,647	3.32	8,887,524,213	5
2040	329,066,615	2.21	6,816,113	65.7	216,083,636	3.58	9,198,847,240	4
2045	364,711,807	2.08	7,129,038	68.6	250,285,391	3.85	9,481,803,274	4
2050	401,315,000	1.93	7,320,639	71.5	287,130,349	4.12	9,735,033,990	3

Source: Extracted from Worldometers (2019)

Studies have shown that there are more than 840 urban centres in Nigeria using the criteria of 20,000 people and Local Government Area headquarters as urban areas (Aluko, 2011). Also, there are seven cities with populations of over a million in Nigeria. Lagos ranks first with a

population of 9,000,000 inhabitants and Maiduguri ranks 7th with a population of 1,112,449 people (Worldometers, 2019; Ufot-Akpabio and Ofem, 2019).

However, despite Nigeria being ranked among the fastest urban growing nations in the world, Akwa Ibom is ranked among

the least urbanized states in Nigeria with only 12% of its population living in urban settlements of 20,000 people and above (NPC, 1991). Although this situation is perceived to have changed significantly today due to increase in urban-base activities and infrastructure renaissance in most urban areas across the state.

Urban Development in Akwa Ibom State

In Akwa Ibom State, urban development processes originated in different places at different times and in different ways; and proceeds at different rates (Akpan, 2010). These development processes are closely linked to three imperial agencies namely: European colonial administrators, missionaries of Christian faith and European entrepreneurs who came, settled and expanded in their preferred locations in the state (Ufot-Akpabio and Ofem, 2019). Their expansions were further consolidated by succeeding indigenous leaders of different administrative backgrounds (Akpan, 2010). The removal of King Jaja of Opobo from power in 1887 and the subjugation of the area by the British Colonialists, paved the way for European entrepreneurs to exploit at places such as Oron, Itu, Eket, Etinan, Ikot Abasi, Ifiayong and Uyo. Most of these places later transformed into local administrative headquarters, now the nexuses of urban development in the state.

The colonial administrative headquarters were also home to Mission headquarters and this prompted the establishment of various pioneering urban development infrastructure, principally in

health and education sectors. Example of these infrastructure include: Teachers Training College and a hospital at Oron, Adiaha Obong Girls' College and St. Luke Hospital, Anua in Uyo, Etinan Institute and Medical facilities in Etinan (AKS, 2006). This development propelled urbanization and urban development processes in these places and in the state in general.

The creation of AKS in 1987 and subsequent creation of new local administrative areas/headquarters with improved infrastructural facilities in these centres set in motion urbanization and urban development processes. Figure 1 shows thirty-one (31) settlements (local government headquarters) that assumed urban centres between 1960 and 1996 by administrative criteria and numerical growth of urban centres in Akwa Ibom State.

Akpan (2010) reported that in 1957 only 7 centres could be described as urban in the state, based on the population criterion of 5000 people and above (NPC, 1953) by 1963 the number declined to 3 because the criterion was raised to 20,000 people and above (NPC, 1963). By 1991, the number of settlements classed as urban rose to 24 (NPC, 1991), and in 1996 the number increase by 7 bringing the total number to 31 urban centres in the state. In terms of the rate of growth, urban centres in the state continues to record increase in population with Uyo having the highest increase. This is as shown in Table 3. The projection is based on 4.2% (WorldBank, 2018).

Table 3: Population Growth in Major Urban Centres in Akwa Ibom State (1953-2031)

Urban Centres	Population						
	1953	1963	1991	2001*	2011*	2021*	2031*
Uyo	6256	14470	118250	178,435	269,250	406,288	613,073
Eket	6096	6660	42800	64,585	97,454	147,054	221,899
Oron	13641	34163	55900	84,351	127,282	192,064	289,816
Ikot Abasi	5106	6947	19620	29,606	44,674	67,411	101,721
Etinan	5540	5693	19800	29,877	45,084	68,030	102,654
Ikot Ekpene	18,070	38107	58850	88802	133,999	202,199	305,111
Abak	Na	Na	21000	31688	47,816	72,153	108,876
Itu	Na	Na	6850	10336	15,597	23,536	35,515

Source: Ufot-Akpabio and Ofem, (2019); * Authors' Projections (2021)

Despite, government efforts in promoting pull factors in urban centres of AKS, many are still lagging in terms of development and infrastructural growth as only few centres, namely; Uyo, Ikot Ekpene, Eket, Oron, Etinan and Abak are recognized as developed (Atser and Udo, 2015). The age, level of Socio-economic activities and availability of social infrastructure of these centres contribute to the ranking of these major urban centres.

Also, in a list of seventy main cities in Nigeria, only two (Uyo and Ikot Ekpene) are listed, while only Uyo made the list of top twenty-five major cities in Nigeria (Worldometers, 2019 and Ufot-Akpabio and Ofem, 2019). The underlying causes of rapid urban population growth and expansion in the state are attributable to population growth driven by declining mortality and persistently high fertility (NPC and ICF International, 2014). The trend between 1990 and 2013 indicated that mortality decline outpaced fertility decline by a wide margin in Nigeria (NPC and ICF International, 2014). The resultant population boom, according to (Fox, 2012) has driven urban growth expansion through natural population increase in existing urban centres, and also

indirectly expands migrants, and may, through demographic pressure on natural resources, contribute to the “push” factors in the rural areas. As applicable in the formation of cities in other developing countries, urban development in the state is also driven by urban natural increase than rural-urban migration.

Bloch *et al.* (2015) and Lamond *et al.* (2015) stated that the process of urbanization is generally conceptualized and seen in the public imagination, as one in which people migrate from rural areas to existing towns and cities in search of opportunities. In reality what is often not given adequate attention is the increasing number of identifiable “new urban” settlements that have emerged close to some of the classified urban centres, though outside the administrative and population size criteria. These towns usually have lower number of buildings and population densities than the officially acknowledged settlements with arrays of social infrastructure, but contribute significantly to urban development and expansion. Examples of such centres in Akwa Ibom State include; Itak in Ikono LGA, and Ikot Akpaden in Mkpat Enin LGA. Also, Mberu (2015) opined that urban-urban flows can significantly

influence urban development system. This scenario is typical in Akwa Ibom State as urbanization and urban development processes flow between Uyo capital city to various LGA headquarters and vice versa. Another factor responsible for urban development in Akwa Ibom State is improved economic and infrastructure prospects in various urban centres. This encourages more intensive rural-urban and other related migration to the centres. These characteristics of Nigeria's urbanization and subsequent expansion of urban centres are usually accompanied by urban environmental problems similar to those observed in the earlier urbanized and developed parts of Nigeria (Onibokun and Faniran 1995; Abiodun, 1998; Jiboye, 2011).

Given the new-economic status of the population, application of appropriate urbanization and urban development/management concepts by the leaders have also arisen. These and other urban development needs must be identified and addressed by adopting inclusive urban development and management approaches or concepts to guide sustainable city development in the state.

Need for Sustainable Urban Development in Akwa Ibom State

Cities the world over are currently operating in economic, social, and cultural ecologies that are different from outdated urban models of the 20th century. This raises the need to revisit the urban agenda, and to reorder our approach to urban development because of its relevance. UN-Habitat (2016) acknowledged urbanization as one of the most significant trends of the present century, providing the foundation and momentum for change. Gradual shift of the existing “classified

urban” areas to “real urban” areas will constitute transformative energy that can be harnessed by the state government for a more sustainable development agenda. Urban areas the world over are known to act as economic platforms for production, innovation and trade. Through urbanization and sustained urban development approaches, millions of people can move away from poverty through increased productivity, employment opportunities, higher quality living, and large-scale investment in slum upgrading, housing development and related infrastructure and services. This transformation in urban areas may in part be facilitated by increased access to Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

The need for urban areas in Akwa Ibom State can be seen as a positive link between urban areas and economic development. For example, 50% of the world's population in cities account for over 80% of the global GDP, similarly, Kinshasha accounts for 13% of the population of Democratic Republic of Congo, yet generates 85% of the income of the country (UN-Habitat, 2016). The higher productivity of urban areas stems from agglomeration economies or what is generally referred to external economies of scale.

Moreso, urban areas known to be centres of energy consumption and a key source of greenhouse gasses are also at risk to climate events. Despite this, sustainable and urban development centres offers opportunities for the development of mitigations, and adaptation measures and strategies as there exist the needed institutional, technical, economic and political

structure/and machinery in the urban area to kick start any development process.

Urban Development and Sustainability Challenges in AKS

Urbanization and urban development issues are seen to pose different challenges on urban areas environmentally, socially and demographically and are all interwoven and interlinked. This interconnectivity of urban issues poses great sustainable development mix for Nigerian urban centres as they are areas of high concentration of people, investment, and resources. Despite the potential for positive consequences in the form of creativity, socio-economic development and community well-being in urban centres, they can also be associated with negative consequences for air and water quality, ecosystem viability, poverty rates, and high rates of wealth inequity.

1. The growing urban population with growing demand for comfortable lives and decent living environment in the emerging urban centres in the state requires a huge amount of resources because of the inherent conflicts in the present and future trajectories toward sustainable development at the local, national and global level.
2. Globally energy is the engine driving urban development and it is the central resources that create the possibility of utilizing the other resources to meet human needs. This manifest in the area of infrastructure development and provision, food supply and other human related needs. This strategic element in urban development is critically lacking in the state.
3. Unsustainable urbanization gives rise to unsustainable urban development with its attendant effects on people lives by creating unnecessary economic and environmental cost and bolstering social disparity and injustice.
4. Despite the social, economic and political roles of urban areas, physical planning and urban renewal efforts in the state disproportionately focus on few urban centres of Uyo, Eket and Ikot Ekpene without adequate attention to other “designated” urban centres to fulfill their potentials.
5. Urban managers at the “top” are grossly unprepared for multidimensional challenges associated with urbanization and urban planning development. These include: inadequate housing, waste collection and disposal, development of ghettos and slums with its attendant negative implications. Moreso, new and pervasive risks of urban residents due to high incidence of urban crime and violence, cultism, terrorism and warfare, heightened securitization, disease epidemic commonly associated with mostly non-resilience and unplanned urban areas tend to undermine sustainable development of urban areas in the state.
6. Inadequate autonomy (legal and financial) for local government administrators to provide adequate, appropriate and required services to their constituents. This is as the central government has failed to grant required autonomy

to local government administrators for the proper administration of urban areas even when there is legislation to that effect. Moreso, urban administrators' lack of transparency in governance and consultation with stakeholders and the general public are also an impediment to sustainable urban development in the state.

7. The place of local government (urban) administrators in promoting sustainable urban development is of grandness, but the seeming lack of understanding of the concepts and need for sustainable urban development, poor funding, poor sectorial coordination and political will exist to a considerable extent.

Features of Urban Areas in Akwa Ibom State

Like other urban areas in Nigeria, urban areas in the state pose the following basic features:

- i. They are dynamic and multifaceted entities marked by unordered assemblies of the traditional core city with peripheral areas of social and economic activities; this applies mostly to the major urban areas in the state. The emerging urban areas in the state are identified with high level of informalities from land acquisition to actual development and vary in complexity from one urban area to another.
- ii. Urban areas in the state are mostly covered by residential housing development with little thought given to commercial, industrial and other land uses. The centres are marked by sprawl as most of the urban areas lack comprehensive plans to give direction

for orderly development. In places such as Uyo, Ikot Ekpene, Ikot Abasi, Eket, Oron and Abak, there are noticeable transformations of previous residential uses into commercial and institutional uses in the core areas.

- iii. Urban centres in the state can rightly be explained in the context of unplanned, distorted morphology, non-functional, disorderly, unhealthy, unsafe and aesthetically unattractive urban areas. This situation may not be unconnected to the historical antecedent of the emergence of the centres, planning system, governance and poor location of some of these urban areas.
- iv. Other noticeable challenges include; poor and deteriorating condition of living, inadequate provision of infrastructural facilities/services such as electricity, water supply, transport network, waste disposal facilities, substandard buildings with infrastructural inadequacies, poverty manifested in low purchasing power of residents.
- v. Economic and productive activities in the state are sited without recourse to the planning model or zoning ordinances in the state. In most cases productive enterprises are not applying appropriate technologies in an attempt to meet human needs.

Integration of Urban Sustainability Concepts in Urban Development and Management in AKS

Sustainability is the study of how natural systems function, remain diverse and produce everything they need for the ecology to remain in balance. Sustainability and sustainable development focus on balancing those

five lines between competing needs – our need to move forward technologically and economically, and the need to protect the environments in which we and others live.

Gong *et al.* (2016), stated that cities are at crossroads. Inclusive in this assertion are cities/urban areas in Nigeria and Akwa Ibom State in particular. Urban areas pose both economic and political strengths, they can guide their states forward along the path of sustainable development but are hindered by lack of appropriate national/state urban policy and integrated urban development plan. Resources earmarked for urban development

purposes in the state are increasingly compromised at all levels. Sustainable development is often presented as having three dimensions: economic, social and environmental (Thunell and Norstrom, 2014). It provides opening for achieving process along all these dimensions, but the opportunities need to be ceased by incorporating appropriate urban sustainability concepts into urbanization and urban development processes in the state. The interconnectivity of the three spheres of sustainability is shown in Figure 2.

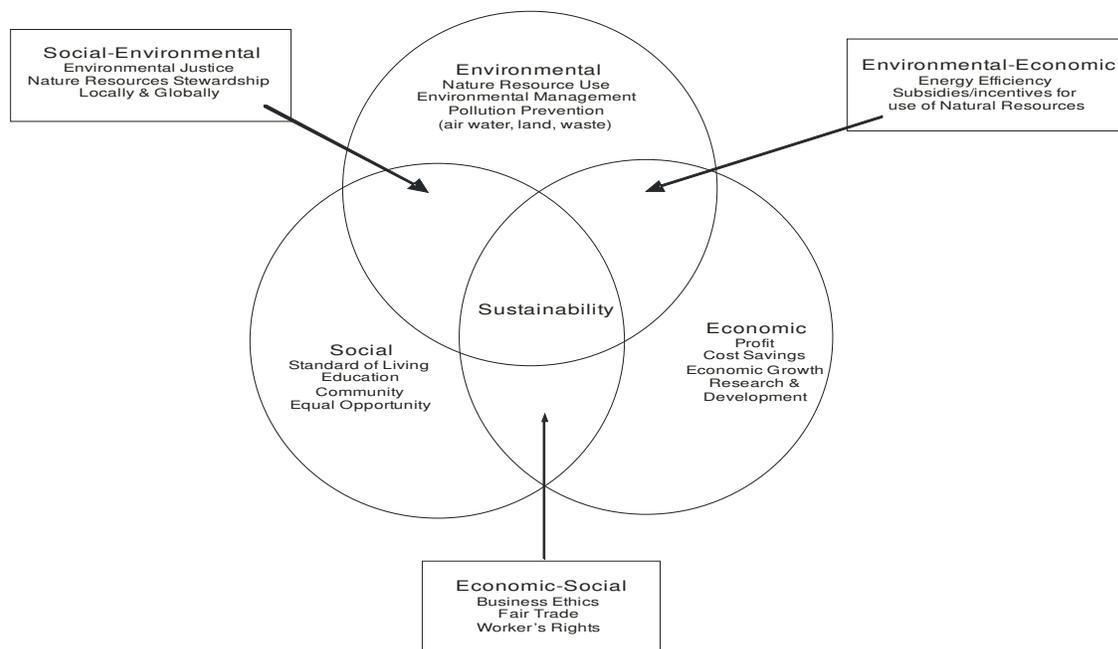


Fig. 2: The Three Spheres of Sustainability
Source: Rodriguez *et al.* (2002)

However, sustainability is a prerequisite for long-lasting urban competitiveness, and to improve this competitiveness, an urban centre should therefore not focus on a single factor or aspect of urban development, but rather adopt an integrated approach that will lead

to a more sustainable development path overall (Gong *et al.*, 2016). Sustainability is not just about the development but is also about the health of all as a society in ensuring that no people or areas of life suffer as a result of environmental legislation. It is also about examining the

longer-term effects of the actions of humanity and asking questions about how they may be improved. This can be carried out in line with any of the urban sustainability concepts in Table 4.

Table 4: Contemporary Urban Sustainability Concepts for Consideration.

Concept	Features	Focused Aspects
Eco-City	A city built on the principles of living in harmony with the environment, using renewable energy and other resources.	Environment, economy
Green City	Green urban biodiversity; Green economy that is low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive.	Environment, economy
Inclusive City	A city that has spatial inclusion, social inclusion and economic inclusion (World Bank, 2015).	Social inclusion
Innovative City	A city that is innovative and a major driver of economic growth.	Social organization, Economic growth
Liveable City	A city with good ecological sustainability and liveability, which provides high quality of life.	Environment, social inclusion
Smart City	Using modern communication technology to support sustainable urban development and a high quality of life.	Holistic perspective, infrastructure
Sustainable City	A city “where achievements in social, economic and physical development are made to last”, and a city that is inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (UNDP, 2015).	Holistic perspective
Learning city	A city that places education at the forefront of strategies and policies for social, economic and environmental wellbeing.	Holistic and inclusive learning
Low carbon city	Using modern production technology to support sustainable urban development economically and environmentally friendly city.	Environmental, economic perspective
Resilient City	A city that offers better opportunities, promotes social and economic environment. Sustainability, promotes biodiversity, camping capacity and ecological linkages.	Holistic perspective

Sources: Extracted from (Thunell and Norstrom, 2014, UNIDO, 2017)

Each of these contemporary urban management concepts has a different focus, but they nevertheless overlap each other in the areas of environment, society and economy. They are focused on one or more aspects of the three dimensions of urban sustainability, namely social equity, economic growth and environmental protection. Sustainability and sustainable development are anchored on these major pillars which form the backbone of tackling the core urban areas in the state.

The applications of these concepts can be in the areas of urban job/employment creation, development and expansion of urban business, provision of basic human needs (such as housing, hospitals, schools, good network), provision of resilient energy system, and regulation of production processes to protect the ecosystem. However, whether we call the outcome smart city, resilient city, sustainable city, transit-oriented development, it is worthy of note that it pays to reform land use planning and direct all facets of development to ensure that cities are more compact and less focused on long distance trips and distorted development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Urbanization and urban development in Akwa Ibom State like other parts of Nigeria, show that these phenomena are continuous without commensurable growth in social and economic infrastructure and facilities provisions. There is also lack of application of urban sustainable development framework in our city governance. These may lead to sharp decline in the quality of living standard and the environment. Employment opportunities are lacking while crime is increasing in these centres.

The existing and emerging urban areas are far from meeting the basic needs of the residents. Based on the findings the following recommendations are made:

- i. There is a need for city managers to adopt systematic interactive planning process or systems that will drive urban sustainable development by integrating all three spheres of sustainable urban development.
- ii. Proper identification of urban sustainable development objectives against which the planning documents will be appraised is fundamental in achieving sustainability in urbanization, urban growth and development in the state. The objectives so set will provide the starting point in city planning process and set the basis for sustainability appraisal.
- iii. Since sustainability requires resources, Local Government Area Authorities where these designated urban centres are found should be politically and financially autonomous; and budgetary allocations improved for urban development to enable them perform the expected functions as entrenched in the statutes that created them. With this, they will be able to stimulate development in their various domains to derive the benefits associated with urbanization and urban areas.
- iv. The informal sector sustains the economy of virtually all the urban areas in the state and there is need to properly incorporate it in the planning matrix of these urban centres.
- v. The concept of sustainable development facilitates the development of new principles and methods of physical/urban planning.

Efficient road network, compatibility of land uses and appropriate zoning of urban activities can be attributed to such methods as embedded in various urban sustainable concepts shown in Table 4.

- vi. Urban managers must ensure that all development activities in urban areas are equitable for both the present and future residents as this will improve the quality of life for both present and future generations.
- vii. Urbanizations and urban development are unavoidable in contemporary society, but do not need to run parallel to sustainable urban development plans or programs existing in emerging urban centres in Akwa Ibom State and in other parts of the country. Urban managers should incorporate urban sustainable development concept(s) and policies into their general urban development and management framework.
- viii. Since urbanization, urban growth and development are functions of industrialization, socio-economic development, increased population density, and changing pattern of settlements, it is imperative for governments, agencies, and urban development stakeholders within and outside the state to provide basic infrastructural support to take care of the changes.

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