Urban Design for Transformation of Nigerian Cities in the 21st Century

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Abstract: This paper title "Urban Design for Transformation of Nigerian Cities in the 21st Century" Examined Nigerian cities with a view to showcasing the capacity of urban design for their transformation. This was achieved through examining the nature and characteristics of Nigerian cities, explaining the concept of urban design, showcasing the capacity of urban design in transformation of Nigerian cities and make momentous recommendation. The method used in the paper adopted qualitative research method that consulted text books, journal, internet materials, conference and seminar papers. The major findings of the paper are that peculiar problems of Nigerian cities are physical, environmental, sociological, cultural and managerial in nature which places them in the present pathetic situation. The paper expressed that urban design adequately utilized has the capacity to transform Nigerian cities into functional, productive, equitable, resilient and save places to live in the 21 century.

Key words: Urban, Urban design, Transformation, Cities, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is the century of cities. Half of the world's population already lives in urban areas and by the middle of the century; most regions of the developing world will be predominantly urban (UN habitat, 2009).

Today, cities are the main growth centres of economies, as well as being the growth centres of populations and of the use of resources (Busch, 2013).The cities hold the key to unlocking national urban development. They present real opportunities for unleashing enormous economic potential, increasing energy efficiency, reducing inequities, and creating sustainable livelihoods for all (UN Habitat, 2013). Cities are the engines of wealth creation, the centers of manufacturing, production and innovation (Oyeyinka, 2016 in Uwaebulam , 2016).Cities are centres of excellence, bringing together innovators, entrepreneurs, financiers and academics.

They attract a rising tide of humanity, of people hoping for a better life for themselves and their children. Cities provide opportunities, economies of scale, a future with more choices (Cities Alliance, 2006). Cities are where the world's business, financial and human capital are concentrated…population is increasingly concentrated, and they are the primary source of growth and innovation (BACEL, 2013).Cities are important drivers of development and poverty reduction in both urban and rural areas, as they concentrate much of the national economic activity, government, commerce and transportation, and provide crucial links with rural areas, between cities, and across international borders (United Nation, 2014).

Cities have also been blamed for causing environmental catastrophes, marginalizing communities, diminishing the quality of life of the poor. They have been castigated as centres of disease, social unrest and insecurity. Cities are also at risk from industrial hazards, natural disasters, and the specter of global warming (Cities Alliance, 2006).

In Nigeria cities play vital roles in all aspects of life. They serve as regional headquarters, state capitals, administrative, learning and commercial centers. And exhibit social segregation, inequality, discrimination among resident, over exploitation and usage of resources and infrastructure, poor commercial activities, insecurity among other.

Generally, "the contemporary cities are characterized by complexity, simultaneity and instability producing situation of transience and transformation (Gbedegesin and Aluko, 2010). With the advent of globalization, it is becoming clear that cities can no longer be left as they are (Sridhar, 2014).

The paper is aimed at Examining Nigerian cities with a view to showcasing the capacity of urban design for their transformation. This was achieved by examining the nature and characteristic of Nigerian cities, explaining the concept of urban design, showcasing the capacity of urban design in transformation of Nigerian cities and making momentous recommendation.

NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF NIGERIAN CITIES

Nigerian cities are growing in population and territorial coverage, but the ensuring spatial crania characterized by inequality. That is distribution of (basic) benefit and burdens within the cities is skewed between the rich and the poor. Inequality can be read on the face of building in the form of street and in the fabric of neighbourhoods (Phillips, 2016). Most cities have very badly deteriorating infrastructure due to old age and inadequate maintenance. Basic services such as water and sanitation, solid waste management, transportation, health and education in expanding urban centres are inadequate due to incapacity to increase their provision at the same pace of expansion. There is inadequate water and sanitation, electricity, fuel wood, control of atmospheric pollution etc.

The country has continued to have a persistent and pervasive issue in poverty reduction which is today the overriding concern of development perspectives and the greatest obstacle to pursuit of sustainable socio economic growth. The poverty rate increased from 27% in 1980 to 66% in

1996. It is estimated that more than 70% of Nigerians lived in poverty and Nigerians poor is said to account for 6% of the world's poor.

Nigerian towns are growing without adequate planning. Millions of people live in substandard and subhuman environments plagued by slum squalor and grossly inadequate social amenities. The result is manifested in growing overcrowding in homes and increasing pressure on infrastructural facilities and rapidly deteriorating environment. Housing and associated facilities such as water, electricity, health facilities, sewer and waste disposal are grossly inadequate, erratic and unreliable. Juvenile delinquency and crime have become endemic in urban areas; the transportation network capacity and the transportation system in general are grossly deficient and are structurally defective. (National Urban Development Policy, 2006). Nigerian cities are badly manage and hence have become slum, cesspools of poverty, high disease burden, pollution, congestions, and untimely death through high maternal and infant mortality, preventable road accidents, robbery and marginal criminality (Uwaebulam,2016).

The problems peculiar to Nigerian cities are physical, environmental, sociological, cultural and managerial in nature. They include among others conflicting land use, unsightly, dirty and unpleasant cityscape, high building density, invasion of informal sector, poor infrastructural facilities, traffic congestion, prevalence of slum and squatter settlements, pollution, solid waste, flooding, fire outbreak, building collapse, miscreants, ethnic clashes, high population density, public ignorance and apathy, poverty, myth and superstition, inadequate political will, most cities have no development plans, planning indiscipline, crippled land laws, inadequate framework, uncoordinated management functions, supremacy of political power, administrative overlap, inadequate public participation (Oduwaye, 2014).However the above situation called for intervention that will bring about transformation through effective and efficient, concerted and specialized skill explained below.

CONCEPT OF URBAN DESIGN

According to urban design group (2011) urban design refers to "a collaborative and multidisciplinary process of shaping the physical setting of life in cities and towns. It is a process of molding the form of a city through time, creating the theatre of public life, making better places for people than would be otherwise produced". It is the process of designing and shaping cities, towns and villages with goal of making them functional, attractive and sustainable (Wikipedia, 2016). It is building an integrated all-encompassing urban system that considers what urban form of the city should be and what should be the process of envisioning it (UN Habitat, 2015).In Nigeria urban design is described as part of the physical planning process concerned with the architectural composition of buildings and space, with special attention to visual qualities and to the interrelationship between physical elements and socio-psychological consideration (Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2006).

 Urban design is about how to recapture certain of the qualities which we experience as well as those we see that we associate with the traditional city: a sense of order, place, continuity, richness of experience, completeness and belonging. It is concern with analyzing, organizing and shaping urban form so as to elaborate as richly as coherently as possible the live experience of the inhabitants (Urban design group, 2011). It deals with the larger scale of groups of buildings,

streets and public spaces, whole neighborhoods, districts and entire cities with the goal of making urban areas functional, attractive and sustainable (Cities alliance, 2007).

From above, urban design in essence is about the interdependence and mutual development of both city and the citizen. And at its core is the recognition that just as the citizen is both biological organism and self-consciously acculturated persona, so the city too is an organism shaped by powerful intrinsic, almost natural forces that must be understood and respected in any successful intervention and a willfully, even self-consciously, created cultural artifact. Intervention of the creative will have always guided the city growth and change elaborated its identity in many ways large and small as well as conceived and realized those crowning glories that make great cities so special. In essence "urban design is about making connections between people and places, movement and urban form, nature and the built fabrics" (UN Habitat, 2015).

Some of the most obvious Urban design principles that will help improve communities include the following; cultivating a dynamic and exciting community center or hierarchy of centers, creating a strong sense of place, enunciation of theme and variation, decision on where to make a design statement and making it, promoting and facilitating social interaction, making social system more important than vehicular system, emphasizing on compact development pattern, adopting functional method of transporting people of all abilities, goods and utilities, encourage mixed use development, generosity in civic and public gathering space and compatibility of the design with inhabitant of a city (Thomson, 2016).

To undertake an urban design in a city, the following are taken into consideration: residential zones, incorporation of nature within the city, aesthetics, urban structure, urban topology- density and sustainability, accessibility, legibility and way finding, animation, function and fit, complementary mixed use, character and meaning, order and incident, continuity and change and civil society /social capital (Wikipedia, 2016). It process includes – defining physical design principles, identifying performance criteria, developing design options, evaluating the options in terms of design principles and performance criteria as well as developing the preferred option (Urban design group, 2011).

Haven follow the process and apply the principle in design of a town or city will among others: enhance appearance, transportation, the public space along streets between the private property lines and location decision about specific civic and private land uses and increase in property value (Thomson, 2016). It provides the opportunity to transform the way that we live, to facilitate the development of socially integrated, prosperous cities where people live together (UN Habitat, 2015).

However, embarking on this noble activity is bedeviled by series of factors in the cities of Nigeria. These include less awareness on the capability of urban design in addressing cities problems, inadequate political will, inadequate funding, inadequate stakeholders' participation, less professional involvement, inadequate up to date knowledge on urban design among the little number of professionals available among others.

CAPACITY OF URBAN DESIGN IN TRANSFORMATION OF CITIES

Transformation is synonymous to alteration, conversion, revolution, makeover, or change. It refers to complete change of cities into ones with improved or usefulness. In the context of this paper transformation of cities refers to making the cities functional, productive, equitable, resilient and safe places to live. Below showcase things urban design can offer in the transformation of cities in Nigeria

➢ It can contribute to social integration, equality and diversity. Planning residential areas with different possibilities in terms of typology and price enables residents from different backgrounds and income levels to live together, prevents the creation of isolated ghettos or gated communities, fights segregation and discrimination.

➢ It can give space for different cultures, ethnicities and lifestyles to mix and come together.

➢ It can foster sustainable use of shared resources. Planning compact, denser cities reduces the over exploitationof natural resources, and facilitates common living by enabling equal access to land, food and water for all.

✓ It can inspire lively neighborhoods. Designed public spaces, parks, playgrounds, streets and squares filled with activities help create a vibrant public life for all residents.

✓ It can make cities safer. Neighbourhoods that remain active and lively at night, with commercial activities on the ground floors, pedestrian friendly well-lit streets and public spaces mean increased personal safety and security.

✓ It can foster proximity to jobs and services. With good infrastructure and public transport, higher building density and mixed use neighbourhoods, jobs, markets, schools and recreation are closer to people's homes and are easily accessible by foot, bike or public transport.

✓ It can help to create clean, healthy cities. Denser cities and proximity to jobs and services mean reduced need for car use, less congestion and less pollution, as well as more sustainable usage of land and preservation of the natural and green areas.

✓ It can anticipate climate change and reduces the impacts of disasters. Planning with sensitivity to the surrounding nature, avoiding development in risky zones, planning natural buffers and prevention systems in flood or earthquake prone areas builds resilient settlements and safe communities.

How we all ensure good design is part of the planning and managing process of a city is key for our urban future (UN Habitat, 2015).

RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

Recommendation

i. It is expedient to understand that how we all ensure good design is part of the planning and managing process of a city is key for our urban future in Nigeria.

ii. Policy for promotion of urban design in cities of Nigeria. Development of a programme of action for cities regarding advancement and encouragement of urban design at all level of governments.

iii. Inclusion of urban design in annual budgets of federal, state and the local government.

iv.   Identifying and involving all stakeholders. Pinpointing interested parties and the various roles they should play, make them understand the roles and give them ample time and opportunity.

v.   Exploring all traditional and contemporary sources of finance for urban development at various levels.

vi.   Involving relevant professionals in urban design so that activities are carried out in professional ways.

vii.   Training and retraining of personnel to get updated with day to day activities of their work and be capable of addressing challenges of time.

Conclusion

The paper had essentially identified peculiar problems of Nigerian cities as physical, environmental, sociological, cultural and managerial in nature. These place them in the present pathetic situation. The paper expressed that urban design adequately utilized has the capacity to transform Nigerian cities as it can: contribute to social integration, equality and diversity, give space for different cultures, ethnicities and lifestyles to mix and come together, inspire lively neighborhoods, make cities safer, foster proximity to jobs and services, help to create clean, healthy cities as well as anticipate climate change and reduces the impacts of disasters. And hence make them functional, productive, equitable, resilient and save places to live in the 21 century.

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