

The role of socio-economic issues of urban centres in rural development

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Abstract

This paper assesses the role of socio-economic issues of urban centres in rural development. The objectives include the identification of how the surrounding rural areas (districts) interact with urban centre (Amasoma) and how the urban areas promote development in the rural areas through the spread of development /developmental impact to the districts, administrative efficiency and service efficiency/service delivery. In order to carry out this study the urban centres and rural areas were taken from Bayelsa state in Nigeria. Three communities (i.e. the headquarters and 2 other communities) were chosen from each district, making a total of 12 communities from the 4 districts. 60 respondents were interviewed from the 4 districts. The hypotheses were to determine the significant relationship in the study topic in line with the objectives. Eight growth and development inducing functions and socio-economic services were used. It was found that Amasoma has enhanced development in the surrounding rural areas (districts) through the spread of the lower order socio-economic services located at Amasoma. Nevertheless, the physical distance of particularly the Apeteama district from Amasoma affected the interaction levels, the utilization of Amasoma for the service, the administrative efficiency and service efficiency /service delivery between Amasoma and the Amasoma district. Conclusively, the study recommends that Amasoma should be made a local government and that definite boundaries should be spelt out for urban centres, the immediate implementation of the provisions of the Urban and Regional Law No. 88 of 2004 by all tiers of government in Nigeria amongst others. It also further recommended that the transportation fares being charged from the urban



centres to rural areas should be reduced and made affordable by the lower masses in the rural areas by the State and Local Government.

Keywords: urban centres, rural developments, growth functions, development functions, socio-economic issues, districts, urbanization, minimum population threshold, legal and administrative.

1 Introduction

Urbanization has existed in areas which now constitute Nigeria even before colonization. According to the National Population Commission “there were as many as twenty-five towns (each) with a population of 20,000 and more people in 1890, that is above ten years before the establishment of British rule in Nigeria” (National Population Commission, 1981) some of these urban centres included Sokoto (120,000 persons). Ibadan, Abeokuta, Kano and the slave part of Lagos (20,000 persons). At the 1920 census in Nigeria, there were no fewer than 29 such urban centres, by the 1952/53 census, the number had risen to 56, and by the time of independence in 1960, there were 259 urban centres in Nigeria. When the 1991 national census was conducted, there were 259 urban centres in Nigeria (NPC, 1998) compared to the current number of 774 Local Government Units in Nigeria, the implication is that almost half of the local government areas are either within, or actually constitute, urban areas of some sort (Ezeani and Elekwa [1]).

Another factor that accounts for the acceleration of the phenomenon of urbanization in Nigeria has been the ever-ending, craze or what Yusuf [2] called “a bizarre reckless hobby of military regimes in Nigeria to create new states and Local Government Areas and which tend to bring along with them new vacancies, new offices, new jobs, and new job-seekers. According to Ebonyi [3], equally important to the cause of rural-urban population push in Nigeria is the establishment of new states, universities, colleges of education, polytechnics and schools of management and their satellite campuses “in virtually all states capitals and some local government headquarters all over Nigeria. These possess the potentials of creating jobs, attracting more entrants of job-seekers and underserved large number of student enrolment and high density concentration of population professionals soon flood these centres, with the result that Nigeria has been ranked as one of those countries with the fastest growth of urbanization in the world.

These urban centres, be it state headquarters or local government headquarters exist to the territories for which they are responsible good places in which to live and work. The basic requirement for this is the establishment and maintenance of good urban services and functions viz: pure water supply, the disposal of refuse and sewage, the provision of health and education services, good administration provision of parks and libraries and museums and other recreational activities as well as protection among others (Ona [4]). The urban centres especially the local government headquarters are supposed to influence development in their immediate rural communities. Rural development according to Afolayan [5] is a process aimed at developing the rural poor, their economy and institutions from a



state of stagnation or low productivity equilibrium into dynamic process leading to higher levels of living and a better quality of life”.

1.1 Objectives of the study

1. To identify how Amasoma promote development in the surrounding rural areas.
2. To determine how distance affect the utilization of the socio-economic services between Amasoma and the surrounding district.

1.2 Hypotheses

Two hypothesis were formulated and stated in null forms thus

1. There is no significant relationship between the levels of interaction in Amasoma and the delivery of services in the surrounding rural areas.
2. There is no significant relationship between distance of Amasoma and the developmental impact in the surrounding rural areas.

2 Review of related literature

In recent years, some scholars in various disciplines and some international and national agencies have developed three broad types of definitions of city or urbanity namely:

2.1.1 The legal and administrative definition

The legal and administrative definition derives its legal existence from a charter granted by authority of the government within those jurisdictions the place is isolated. The requirement for recognition may be the existence of certain minimum population or other functional threshold requirement. In some cases, however, government simply designated selected places as urban without any requirement. Typical examples of countries where urban areas are legally and administratively defend include the United State of America and Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, urban places those having a municipality, a town committee or a cantonment board. In the United States of America, an urban area according to their Bureau of Census, is a concentration of population including 2,500 people or more. According to Onokerhoraye and Omuta [6]), “such a place may be incorporated place, that is legally chartered as cities, towns or boroughs or an unincorporated place that is those population concentrations that have no fixed corporate limits and do not have the legal powers of incorporated places.

2.1.2 The minimum population thresholds

The second category uses minimum population thresholds which vary from country to country depending on the situation in each country, thus, whereas we noted above in the case of US that a population of 2,500 is the distinction on which urban places are recognized in Denmark, an urban place is an agglomeration of 250 or more people. In Malaysia, the threshold separating urban and rural areas is 10,000 inhabitants, in Greece, it is 10,000. In Argentina it is 2,000 and in Nigeria 20,000 (Ezeani and Elekwa[1]).



2.1.3 Function

The last category in functional in nature and in it is based on attributes of a settlement which apart from its population include such characteristics as its heterogeneity, occupational structure and the economic base. For instance, in Japan urban place must be engaged in non-agricultural activities (UN [7]). Important to mention that the character of an urban area depends on the level of economic development of the country where it is located, the functional characteristics of an urban area varies from one country to another and from developed to developing. Hence, the lack of uniformity in the application of the functional criteria in the definition of an urban area in different parts of the world (Ezeani and Elekwa [1]), a review of the various definitions of urban areas reveal at least seven bases which are used either singly or in combination to identify the urban function of the population (Ezeani and Elekwa [1]).

2.2 Urbanization in Nigeria

In discussing African urban life, it was observed that urbanization is producing drastic and perhaps revolutionary changes in contemporary Africa and all over the continent, people are moving from their rural villages into burgeoning cities with the aim of achieving a better or modern life. This observation aptly describes, the situation in Nigeria with several hitherto small towns growing into big cities as many rural dwellers increasingly abandon their ancestral homes for those cities in the search for better life. According to the World Bank [8] the number of Nigerian cities of over 500,000 persons increased from only two (Lagos and Ibadan) in 1960 to nine in 1980. Similarly, the country's urban population grew from 15% in 1965 to 30% of the country's population rose sharply from 71 million in 1980 + 111 million in 1995. During this period the urban population as a percentage of the total population increased from 27% in 1980 to 39% in 1995, with an annual rate of growth of 5.6% (World Bank [8]). Nigeria has a long history of urbanization dating back to the pre-colonial and pre-industrial era. These were mainly the Yoruba (Ile-Ife, Oyo, Lagos, Ibadan, Benin City) and Hausa (Kano, Zaria, Katsina State). Today, there has been a proliferation of urban centres or cities across the length and breadth of Nigeria, particularly with cities assuming the role of centres for development.

According to Igbo [9], the increasing rate of urbanization in Nigeria is not necessarily a result of the well known effects of industrialization or rural – urban migration but more importantly a consequence of certain political developments in the country. The abolition of the hitherto existing four regions in 1966 (East, West, North the mid-west) during the crisis leading to the Nigerian Civil War and subsequent creation of states (12 in 1967, 19 in 1976) to the upgrading of small and less known towns to state capitals. These newly established state capitals as well as the new federal capital of Abuja, have become the belief of governmental, political and business activities which have attracted many people from the rural areas who wish to graze the new opportunities offered by the new capitals. In the country's vast rural areas, the local government headquarters occupy the same position as the state capitals in the urban areas. Amasoma the study area of this study would have been a local government headquarters today.



Today, Nigeria has altogether 774 local government headquarters. These headquarters particularly those in rural areas, are beginning to enjoy the trappings of suburban areas, including pipe borne water, electricity, good access roads, wages employment, rented accommodation and increased commercial activities, with serious consequences of population concentration.

2.3 Rural developmental strategies: the trickle-down strategy

According to George [10], in the 1950s, the trickle down strategy pioneered by perox was developed as an approach though to be capable of transferring the rural sector of any economy, including those of the developing countries. This theory is deeply rooted in the growth pole theory. The theory rest on the establishment of growth centres which are designed to create deliberate change in a previously stagnant system, though concentration of investments in the centre. The theory has been adopted to suit rural development and its key contribution has been on spatial focus. Principally it focuses on the role key settlement or growth facilities within the rural system, its application to rural development, consciously or unconsciously has been world-wide. The faith national plan of France adopted the trickle-down strategy to depopulate the over-concentrated capital Paris, through upgrading of eight other smaller settlements including Lyon, Lille, Marseille, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Nantes Strasbourg and Nancy. Also based on the trickledown strategy was the Brazilian development approach prior to the early 1970s which intensify investments in some of her regions (George [10]).

In some African countries, the government have unconsciously adopted the trickledown strategy to redress the skewed development pattern encouraged by colonial government, which favours the capital cities. For instance, in Ghana the government sought to create growth countries including rural development centres through growth points at district, level, growth centres at regional level and growth poles at national level, on the ground that urban development will enhance economic activities. Kenya, where a spatial rural development programme, was planned and implemented, sued the growth centre approach in the 1970s. Other hierarchies of rural centres identified, were later designed to improve the quality of services and amenities in rural areas (Adedipe [11]). In Nigeria, one of the earliest view on national development favour concentration of development projects in a few urban centres. This was based on the assumption that development will trickle down to the rural areas from these growth centres. The trickledown benefits from urban industrial and commercial growth centre are expected to stimulate economic development in the rural areas. But this has never been the case in over the years in Nigeria (George [10]). This emphatically stressed in the 1986 budget speech. In the Nigerian case, resources tend to filter upwards without enjoying any development impact from the developed urban centres.

2.3.1 The need for rural development

According to Fubara [12], the concept of community (rural development refers to induced changed introduced for the achievement of community development.



It often involves an interaction between a community and its people which lead to an improvement of both. Underneath this supposition therefore is a suggestion that people are not compelled to accept such limited circumstances of life as poor education, decrepit housing, ill-health, decrease, unemployment, inadequate employment and generally an impoverished spiritual/physical environment as irreversible but that these limitations can be deliberately over-come through planned projects. Community development therefore in relation to the situation just described above is thus regarded both as an object and as a process (Fubara [12]).

As an object, it is an included change for the achievement of community improvement while as a process, it is a planned and organized effort to assist individuals to acquire the attitudes, skills and concepts required for their democratic participation in the effective solution of a wide range of society's problems which effect man's capacity to deal rationally with his environment. According to Afolayan [5]; the word rural means different things to different people. The American Juneau of census classified a group of people living in a community having a population of not more than 2,500 people as rural, whereas in Nigeria, the federal office of statistics defines a community with less-than 20,000 people as rural. Afolayan continued by saying that generally rural areas are easily identified by using criteria such as:

2.3.1.1 Level of infrastructure development: i.e. road networks, educational institutions, water supply, electricity, health facilities, communication, etc. the rural areas lack most if not all of these infrastructure and where – they are available the quality is usually below standards.

2.3.1.2 Occupational differentiation: Most rural dwellers earn their living by engaging in agricultural production.

2.3.1.3 Housing: Houses in rural areas are usually below standard an average person will be proud of.

2.3.1.4 Extent of community planning: Community development activities in the rural areas are often carried out with little or no planning at all, such that future development activities cannot be undertaken without interfering with the existing structure.

Rural development has been described in different ways by different authors depending on the discipline or time of thought of the person concerned. This is because the subject of rural development is multidisciplinary and the definition of each author will depend on the area where he/she focused attention. But all definitions have a central theme which is "improvement of the living conditions of the rural people" (Afolayan [5]). What the different definition does is to lay emphasis on the process of getting the central objective of rural development achieved. Rural development is also a process aimed at developing the rural poor, their economic and institution from a state of stagnation or low

productivity equilibrium into dynamic process leading to higher levels of living and a better quality life.

Similarly, it is as “developing the skill of the masses to make self reliant through instruction which supply appropriate and relevant knowledge on the methods of self-help”. It can be seen that the above definitions, lay emphasis on the following definition from World Bank publication focuses attention on the development of the environment rather than human beings. Rural development is a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people – the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development of the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas. The group includes small scale farmers, tenants and the landless (World Bank [8]).

A common feature however, is that rural development is conceived in the high of “a system approach to integration of economic and social components in a mutually attractive and supportive process, emphasis on three main types of infrastructures are:

- i. Physical infrastructures which include roads, markets, clinics, schools, boreholes/dams and electrical installations.
- ii. Administrative infrastructures such as the local government authorities other rural development agencies or government and non-governmental organizations involved in rural development.
- iii Social infrastructure such as cooperatives community development associations and social clubs.

2.4 An overview of rural development efforts in Nigeria

As far back as early 1970s, rural development has been identified as a strategy for improving the economics and social life of the rural poor in Nigeria. Since then, successive governments at various levels have embarked on several programmes aimed rural development. A few of such programmes are discussed briefly for our guidance on how Nigeria has fared in executing rural development programmes in the past and present (Afolayan [5]).

2.4.1 The National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAPP)

The NAPP was created in 1973 by the federal ministry of agriculture with the primary aim of increasing staple food production through the promotion of improved production technologies among the small-scale farmers. But unfortunately, the programme has been kept dormant for a long time since after the region that introduced it left the stage.

2.4.2 River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAS)

The Rivers Basin Development (RBDA) came into being between early and mid 70s as a result of food and agricultural organization (FAO) of the United Nations recommendation. Although many people believing that the programme had some impact, there is a general consensus that the output from the authorities does not justify the huge amount of funds channeled into them particularly during the second republic.



2.4.3 The Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS)

The Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS) was established by the Central Bank of Nigeria in the mid 70s with the primary aim of providing guarantee to commercial banks for loans taken from them for agricultural purposes. The scheme was not too successful because commercial banks find it desirable to be penalized than meeting the requirement. This is due to the risk involved in granting loans to small-scale farmers scattered about in the rural areas.

2.4.4 Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure

The recent realization that agricultural development which is not accompanied by the provision of necessary social economic and institutional infrastructures will not lead to the desired eradication of rural poverty, has led to the establishment of DFRRI in 1986 by the Federal Ministry Government. The directorate has since been in slumber after the regime that created it left the stage.

The setting up of an eight-man Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) in 1986 was to oversee the implementation of the federal government's rural development budgetary package. The directorate commenced a nationwide rural water and sanitation scheme valued at N100 million towards the end of 1986, the scheme was designed to provide potable water to 5,000 communities. In all, twelve major projects in 97,000 rural communities in the country were embarked on the 1987 in order to consolidate the rural development programmes (George [10]).

3 Methodology

This research uses both quantitative data collection and analysis with the use of data sourced from primary source which came through the researcher's field survey by the use of questionnaire. Two sets of structured questionnaire were used to source for the empirical data for this study.

This data collected are presented in tabular form. They include basically the population distribution of the study area Amasoma and the surrounding districts.

- i. Data on the socio-economic services in Amasoma
- ii. Data from the surrounding districts on the pattern of use of the socio-economic services located in Amasoma
- iii. Data on how the people of the district interact with Amasoma their headquarters
- iv. Data on how Amasoma has been able to impact growth in the surrounding districts through the spread of urban functions and services at Amasoma

Two theoretical frameworks were used for this research. Namely: the central place theory and the growth pole theory being perhaps the most widely Implicit on these theories is fact that urban centres are central places and growth points from where the services located in them spreads to their surrounding hinterlands.



This means that major urban centres and their immediate rural hinterlands, the mother settlements and their offspring. Villages, large rural centres and their surrounding hamlets cannot be planned in isolation. Experiences have shown that a disproportionate concentration of investments in the major cities in the developing countries has aggravated the conditions of poverty and distress in their rural hinterland and encouraged overflows in rural urban migrants. Such an understanding will guide the delineation of a functional region, which will serve as a planning unit central place theory emphasizes provision of service at each level of settlement. Large urban settlements have higher order service activities, but the same services are being performed at the village level, although on small-scale basis. The provision of these services will improve the standards of living of the rural dwellers and reducing rural urban migration. The growth pole theory formulated and modified has been used as policy instrument for regional development in many countries. The theory emphasized large concentration of capital intensive manufacturing plants in the large urban centres to achieve agglomeration and large scale economics with little diffusion of benefits to the rural areas. But the emergence of a stable hierarchy of service centres may be critical to the efficient delivery of basic services such as health, education and social welfare to the rural population.

4 Results

Similarly, the findings revealed:

- (i) There is poor interaction level between Amasoma (the urban centre) and the surrounding districts with correlation coefficient of 0.97.
- (ii) The poor interaction level is caused by long physical distance and high transportation fares between Amasoma and the district.
- (iii) The utilization of the services located at Amasoma by the districts is also very poor with exception of Amasoma and the other districts. The poor utilization of service especially by Epitemia districts is caused by the long distance between Amasoma and Epitemia.
- (iv) The efficiency of local administration at Amasoma extending/providing services to the districts at their spatial locations is also negatively affected because of distance decay factor. This is because of the fact that as the distance increases, the cost of service extension to the districts also increase which eventually decrease the service extension to such district.

5 Recommendations

Based on the subject matter of this thesis, the recommendation of policies has far reaching implication on involvement of mostly the federal and state governments and partly the local government. Firstly, Amasoma an urban centre a central place and growth point to be able to impact growth and development to its surrounding districts it must act in the capacity of a central place. A central place being a place which has central functions that extend over a large region in which other central places of less importance exists. Also, in the words of



(Onokerhoraya and Omuta [6]), central places of higher order perform more important or more central functions, and exercise importance or influence over large areas. In terms of geometry, at any level of resolution, the most central place is that place which has the smallest conceivable sum of the distance which people from the region surrounding it travel to it and centrality is taken to denote the relative importance of a place. In relation to the commentary region it serves.

As evident from the foregoing analysis, the basic objective function implicit in the impact of growth and development from Amasoma to the surrounding districts depends on short physical distance to be travelled between Amasoma and the district, frequent movement (interaction) between Amasoma and district, adequate spread of urban function from Amasoma to the districts; maximum use of the services at Amasoma by the districts, efficient administration and citizen participation.

There should be realistic national urban policy to take care of urban policy matters. The Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law which came into effect following the promulgation of Decree No. 88, 1992, is an important district urban oriented policy. This law assigned some urban and regional planning responsibilities to each of the three tiers of government in Nigeria. Thus, the federal government, according to section 2 of the Decree, shall have responsibility for:

1. The formation of national policies for urban and regional planning and development.
2. The formation of urban and regional planning standards for Nigeria on the recommendations of the ministers.
3. The promotion and fostering of the education and training of town planners and support staff.
4. The promotion of cooperation and coordination among states and local governments in the preparation and implementation of urban and region plans.
5. Promotion and conduct of research in urban and regional planning.
6. The supervision and monitoring of the execution of projects in urban and regional planning, etc.

6 Conclusion

Conclusively, urban centres are central places and growth points –through which growth and development transmits to the points through which growth and development transmits to the surrounding areas. It is a place that houses the various functions (services) to be used by the people at the areas of influence for their benefits. Urban centres like Amasoma, the study area, are areas that spur u development from “bottom to up instead of from up to bottom” sequel to this, it is believed that the problems so identified and the proposed solutions will go a long way to enhance the realization of urban centres in Nigeria and Amasoma in particular as functional growth and development centres.



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