

UDC 911.3

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ISSUES IN REGIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Till date, Nigeria can not boast of a specific, well-formulated, clear regional development policy framework despite several urban planning, development and governance initiatives including passage of regulations at both federal and state government levels that have been undertaken since independence by successive post-colonial governments. Most of the country's claims of regional development are products of other policies, and intentions, which do not have any bearing on, deliberate regional planning policies. Policy and decision-making on development planning often do not incorporate the implications of the ways in which we use land and the consequences for different places (economic planning). The neglect of place, in particular, the way that different policies combine to affect places in different ways (regional planning), has contributed to a range of negative economic, social and environmental outcomes. This paper relies mainly on the secondary data and literature exploration to demonstrate that the little role accorded to spatial planning, especially, regional planning, in the development efforts is largely responsible for the underdevelopment, imbalance, and inequalities in the country, as well as poverty of the citizens. The conclusion of the paper is that regional planning should be an integral part and complementary to economic planning in the national development planning of the country. For regional planning to aid in the development of the country and promote the well-being of the citizens, appropriate recommendations have been included in the paper.

Key words: spatial planning, regional planning, imbalance, poverty, geopolitical regions.

Оладайо Рамон Ібрагім. ПРОБЛЕМИ РЕГІОНАЛЬНОГО ПЛАНУВАННЯ ТА РОЗВИТКУ В НІГЕРІЇ

У статті розглядаються проблеми, пов'язані з відсутністю чітко сформульованої політики у сфері регіонального розвитку Нігерії, незважаючи на ряд ініціатив у галузі міського планування, розвитку та управління. Політика прийняття рішень з планування розвитку часто не враховує наслідки способів використання землі та інших ресурсів, що призводить до низки негативних економічних, соціальних та екологічних явищ. Показано значний вплив територіального планування на соціально-економічний розвиток, його незбалансованість, нерівність і бідність у країні. Дано рекомендації з регіонального планування з метою сприяння розвитку країни і підвищення добробуту населення.

Ключові слова: територіальне планування, регіональне планування, дисбаланс, бідність, геополітичні регіони.

Оладайо Рамон Ибрагим. ПРОБЛЕМЫ РЕГИОНАЛЬНОГО ПЛАНИРОВАНИЯ И РАЗВИТИЯ В НИГЕРИИ

В статье рассматриваются проблемы, связанные с отсутствием четко сформулированной политики в сфере регионального развития Нигерии, несмотря на ряд инициатив в области городского планирования, развития и управления. Политика принятия решений по планированию развития часто не учитывает последствия способов использования земли и других ресурсов, что приводит к ряду негативных экономических, социальных и экологических явлений. Показано значительное влияние территориального планирования на социально-экономическое развитие, его несбалансированность, неравенство и бедность в стране. Даны рекомендации по региональному планированию в целях содействия развитию страны и повышения благосостояния населения.

Ключевые слова: территориальное планирование, региональное планирование, дисбаланс, бедность, геополитические регионы.

Introduction. Regional and spatial planning is traditionally bounded by political and administrative borders (Amdam, 2011). Planning" in this paper is not restricted to physical land use planning, but rather also includes socio-economic planning. Integration of these two types of planning is complementary in the development process, therefore essential for actual development to happen.

According to European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) (1983), spatial planning gives geographical expression to the economic, social, cultural and ecological policies of society. In general, spatial planning includes all levels of land use planning, including, urban and rural planning, regional planning, environmental planning and national spatial plans (Nilsson and Ryden, 2012) and are often used interchangeably, attempt to neglect any aspect, always results in dire consequences.

The neglect of place, especially the way that different policies combine to affect places in different ways (regional planning), has contributed to a range of negative economic, social and environmental outcomes,

including (Harris and Pinoncelly, 2014):

- Economic growth and development that is spatially unbalanced and sub-optimal
- Sprawling urban development that threatens agricultural land, and our global food production system and environmental sustainability;
- Protests and political instability that is increasing in response to inequality
- Unbalanced growth in both economic and demographic terms means that cities and rural areas suffer from underinvestment, compounded by poor transport, infrastructure, and services.

This paper views regional development planning to be at the heart of development planning, because it is this aspect of spatial planning that is largely neglected or forgotten in the practice of urban and regional planning in Nigeria with dire consequences as Nigerian situation has shown (Kadiri, 2010; Dung-Gwon, 2010; Mabogunje, 1985; Adeniyi, 1985).

This paper, therefore, argues that the little role is accorded to spatial planning, especially, regional planning, in Nigeria's development efforts and this is largely

responsible for her underdevelopment and poverty of the citizens.

It is therefore against this background that this paper intends to carefully examine what regional planning entails and the implications of not adequately allowing it in development process in Nigeria, while also proffering possible solutions through recommendations

Methodology. The research relied heavily on secondary sources of data such as published and unpublished materials: Past National development plans, development reports of both national and international agencies, journals (including, e-journals) newspapers, articles, textbooks, and web resources.

The meaning of regional planning. Regional Planning is also referred to as Regional Development Planning (Okafor, 2004, Mabogunje, 1985). A regional plan is described as "statement of general policy and proposals for the development plan designed to channel the growth of such a region in desirable direction"(Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning law of 1992). HRM (2003) described the regional plan as a "detailed, long range, region-wide plan that will outline where, when, and how future growth and development should take place". Regional planning is seen as planning that occurs beyond the boundaries of local government (comprising rural and urban settlements). It is a cross-jurisdictional or multi-jurisdictional planning that addresses issues that go beyond the local level such as transportation, housing, watershed planning, regional agricultural planning, air quality and water quality and provision (UANCR, 2007). According to Jellili, Adedibu, and Egunjobi (2008), the aim of regional planning is to correct lopsided development and promote regional and national development through the identification, analysis, and allocation of resources in the Intra and inter-regions of the country.

Gillingwater (1975) cited by Kadiri (2010) added a political perspective to the definition of regional planning.

Regional planning is a tool for creating a long-term and suitable framework for socio-economic development both within and between regions or states. Regional planning creates more opportunity for changes but the success depends on local involvement and participation in all aspect of planning (Taleshi and Bisheii, 2015).

Regional planning creates strong and predictable conditions for development through investment, economic, social and environmental benefits.

However such development can be achieved if a regional plan has the following characteristics and established principles of spatial planning as posited by Taleshi and Bisheii, (2015); Burns, Eaton and Gregory et al. (2013):

- Plans that promotes a vigorous regional economy.
- Promotes territorial cohesion through a more balanced social and economic development of regions, and improved competitiveness;
- Plans should contribute to sustainable development by enhancing the natural environment and ensuring that social and economic development takes place within environmental limits.
- Plans should be monitored and reviewed regularly.

The scope of regional planning. As a process, regional planning is concerned with the deliberate operations of locating activities in geographic space. While regional development planning recognizes the need for growth in the GDP, however, for a country as diversified as Nigeria, it further recognizes the fact that regions within a nation develop differently, both in direction and rate. That special care, which Nigeria has refused to take, is the adoption of regional planning in development. Regional planning, if well adapted, would utilize the area differences to strengthen the national and regional/state economies and thereby promote integration and cohesion at national, state and local levels.

Regional problems and problem regions: Consequence of past development planning strategies. Regional planning can be used to solve regional problems as well as solution in problem regions (Kadiri, 2010). There are regional problems of uneven development between the Northern Nigeria and southern Nigeria, and between rural and urban areas. Examples of Problem regions are Niger Delta and North East, with the varying levels of terrorism, unrest, poverty, fragile governance and infrastructure deficit. Regional challenges and problems regions in Nigeria are deep rooted and pervade all sectors and regions. Since regions are different and changes dynamically, regional planning must focus on the specific situation and challenges of the actual planning region.

In spite of the efforts by successive Governments at all levels including the establishment of intervention agencies such as the Niger Delta Development Board (1961); Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) (1992); and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) (2000) as a way of accelerating the development of the region, the fundamental development issues and challenges of the region are yet to fully abate. It is against this backdrop that the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs was established in 2008 and started operations in 2009 to fast track development in the region (Orubebe, 2013).

The mandate of the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs is to formulate and execute policies, plans, programmes and other initiatives as well as coordinate the activities of agencies, communities, development partners and other stakeholders involved in the development of the region. The Ministry is also expected to provide a focal point for coordinating and mobilizing concerted domestic and international assistance in resolving key security and development challenges in the region.

However, like the previous policy, economic planning is again at the forefront of strategies being employed for the development of the region. According to Orubebe (2013), while government passively provides the enabling environment, including infrastructure, private sector is to be the active engine in development of Niger Delta.

Although, Niger delta is moving towards regional economic integration as demonstrated in the establishment of the BRACED Commission by the South-South geopolitical zone comprising Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo and Delta states and other geopolitical regions of South-West and South-East are

equally developing frameworks for regional integration and economic development, the comprehensive regional planning approach are not been adopted. Even when Orubebe (2013) agreed that regional development approach is a sine qua non for the rapid socio-economic transformation of the Niger Delta region.

Overview of regional planning in Nigeria. Most of the country's claims of regional development are products of other policies, and intensions, which do not have any bearing on, deliberate regional planning policies. Provision of infrastructure and facilities and general economic development efforts were left to the whims of the bureaucracy and economic planning, as spatial planning was subservient to economic planning in Nigeria.

However, the importance of regional planning for national development cannot be overemphasized. It is especially important in countries where regional disparities are obvious, as it is in Nigeria (Raheem, Oyeleye and Aladekoyi, 2014). While economic planning (Sectoral Planning) are indispensable in development process, this does not mean that spatial planning can be dispensed with totally, leaving the "invisible hand" to take its course (Ng and Tang, 2004).

Moreover, even the profession of Urban and Regional Planning has been unduly preoccupied with Development Controls, Urban Master Plans and Subdivision Layouts as the main focus of urban and regional planning activities to the neglect of rural and regional planning.

Indeed, Nigeria has never lacked (economic) development plans and policies, whether short term, medium term or long term (or perspective plan), but the efficacy of these plans and policies vies-a vies her level of development, leaves more to be desired. Accordingly, Orubebe (2013), while regretting the inability of Nigerian nation to make remarkable progress in development and nation building despite the availability of abundant human, material and natural resources, proclaimed a gradual shift of paradigm from a centralised approach of development to regional development. Specifically, about Niger Delta development, Orubebe opined that regional development approach is a sine qua non for the rapid socio-economic transformation of the Niger Delta region (Orubebe, 2013).

Neglect of regional development planning: Implications. Several years of development planning in isolation of regional planning in Nigeria have its consequences, including:

- Persistent sectoral and spatial disparities in the economy, despite the growth in the economy;
- Discordant note between industrial and population growth and infrastructure development in the cities-rural –urban migration, poor settlement patterns, infrastructure deficit in urban and rural areas;
- The environmental impacts of development constituting hazards to human health- Niger Delta, Flooding.

Way Forward

Spatial planning framework in Nigeria will help to achieve the following:

- Economic development and reduce unemployment;

- Encourage sustainable development in through a balanced spatial structure;
- Economic and social integration.

The above can be called spatial sustainable development (Taleshi and Bisheii, 2015). Since uneven development and different policies have different effects on local and regional communities, achieving a balanced development in Nigeria will not happen automatically; therefore, it is necessary to integrate different spatial actions for stability and balanced development of Nigeria.

To achieve this, the under-listed guidelines are recommended as a model for regional planning and development in Nigeria (Taleshi and Bisheii, 2015; Jelili, Adedibu and Egunjobi, 2008):

1. Development of a balanced and polycentric urban system and a new urban-rural relationship: It is recognized that "urban centers" are invaluable in spatial developments. As a result, settlement systems and networks are important aspects of spatial planning for development.

2. Through spatial planning, development goes in a direction that is consistent with environmental considerations and economic objectives.

3. Integration of sectoral planning with spatial planning: Sectoral allocation of resources and free market economy has been observed to not only lead to increase in gross domestic product and national income but also widen the disparity among regions in terms of economic developments. In other words, while sectoral planning targets sectoral growth, spatial planning ensures development across regions.

5. Good implementation of regional planning policies: For regional disparity to be eliminated or at least reduced, regional planning as a mid way between national and urban planning should be holistically implemented.

6. The federal government and the proposed Regional Councils, therefore embark on inter-regional planning and intra-regional planning, among the states in the country and among the states in each region, respectively. At state level, therefore, intra- sub-regional (intra-state) planning operates.

7. It shall be the duty of the Regional Council to identify the distribution of population and resources, "developed" and backward areas, problems and other issues affecting each region as well as make necessary plans and recommendations for intra-regional and inter-regional development respectively. With this, the states of the region can embark on joint regional development projects or programmes.

Conclusion. It is crystal clear that for any meaningful development to be realized and be sustainable in a country as large and diverse as Nigeria, spatial planning including, regional planning should be integral part and complementary to economic planning in national development planning. In doing this, the plan of action must be developed by stakeholders themselves, according to prevailing regional context, traditions, etc. and in accordance with the guiding principles of a regional plan.

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Надійшла до редколегії 07.03.2017 р.