

Spatial Planning Framework and Urban Development in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Spatial planning is defined in this study as a strategic activity that is concerned with the allocation and management of natural and human resources across space, bringing about competition for space at various scales, creating value by making places and distributing the activities such as social, economic, political and environmental, bringing to bear the interaction of different policies and practice for future development of any delineated geographical area. This study focused on Spatial Planning Framework and Urban Development in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Nigeria. The questionnaire was administered to Rivers State Ministry of Urban Development and Physical Planning staff. The study found that Spatial Planning Framework affects Urban Development in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The study recommends that the preparation of spatial plans should not be left to the planning consulting firms and government alone, other stakeholders such as Architects, Urban Designers, Estate valuers and planners in the built environment, and representatives of communities should be involved.

Keywords: Spatial Planning, Urban Development, Port Harcourt, Metropolis, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Port Harcourt is the capital of Rivers State in Nigeria. It lies along the Bonny River and is located in the Niger Delta (Ayotamuno & Ekaka, 2017). The population of the oil-rich city has increased from year to year. The current metro area population of Port Harcourt in 2022 is 3,325,000, a 4.86% increase from 2021, 3,171,000, a 5% increase from 2020, 3,020,000, a 5.12% increase from 2019 and 2,873,000, a 5.2% increase from 2018(www.macrotrend.com). The steady increase in population and industrialization requires government attention in spatial planning and development.

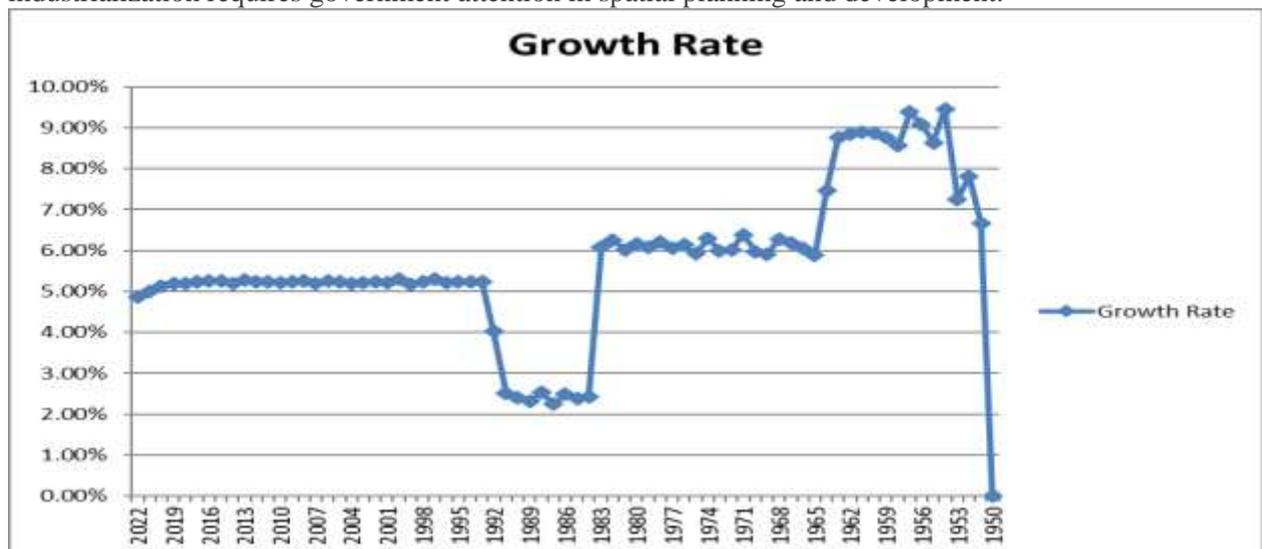


Figure 1: Graph showing the growth of population in Port Harcourt

In the context of physical planning, the transformation processes involving key aspects of urban management through the planning practice by planning authorities using their policy guide have failed to adequately address the numerous Physical Planning problems (urban sprawl, slums, poverty and environmental degradation) observed in most developing countries especially Nigeria and many African countries (Mabogunji, 2002; Obateru, 2004; Oyesiku, 2004; Jiriko, 2008). A strong planning system, based on up to date plans, emerging from current information is needed to address the situation in most African countries because of its dynamic nature (Wapwera,2013). Hence, sprawling conditions characterized by fast-growing slums aggravates the problem (Amanda, 2009).

The continuous increase in urban and rural populations has led to the problem of inadequate facilities and social services thus giving rise to social disparity and unequal access to basic facilities and services in most urban areas (Wapwera,2013). The problem of social disparity (inequality) is on the increase and is gaining global and local attention. Enyenghe et al. (2017) noted that despite the efforts of various governments to combat this social problem, it is still raising its head in the form of unequal access to educational facilities and emergency services. Urban inequalities are a result of economic, demographic and social stratifications affected by political will, management, distribution of resources and corruption at different levels in society particularly in developing countries of Africa.

Spatial simply means the flow of products, people, services, or information among places, in response to localized supply and demand about or involving or having the nature of space (Wapwera,2013). The term 'spatial' brings into focus 'the where of things', whether static or in movement; the protection of special 'places' and sites; the interrelations between different activities and networks in an area; and significant intersections and nodes within an area which are physically co-located (Dhakal, 2004; Healey, 2004).

Spatial Planning has a great tendency to contribute to development because it possesses the technical capacity to deliver pro-poor planning from the Local, State and National as well as the Regional level bringing about sustainable development. The use of master planning as an approach in Nigeria has not addressed the physical planning problems of most urban and rural areas, due to its rigidity and long-range nature of development for cities such as Port Harcourt (Oyesiku, 2004). There is a need to have a proportional distribution of infrastructure in urban cities and to ensure controlled urban development and management in Port Harcourt.

Urbanization is characterised by the nature of its dimensions which include; level of urbanisation, excessive urbanisation, urban primacy, migration and natural increase, job creation and the urban informal housing sector and its informal spatial form as observed by Kasarda and Crenshaw (1991), Galster et al, (2001) and Chris and Jay (2006). The nature of urbanisation includes; rapid and accelerated development rates taking different shapes and forms. The shapes could be; a balloon which expands without boundaries, a mushroom, a frog and a leaf. It also takes different forms ranging from suburbanization harbouring and affecting some sections of the urban fringe, counter urbanisation which is a situation where two or more urban areas converge forming a bigger or enlarged area and as well as ex-urbanisation explaining the character of rural housing which reflects transition and rural-based development and compares distributional haves and have nots.

Based on physical planning, urbanisation is encouraged by the transformation processes involving key aspects of urban management by planning authorities using a policy guide. Policies are generally urban biased as the required infrastructure is provided at locations where the government has received the greatest pressure, and therefore, urban areas develop much faster. Spatial planning framework and urban development and management in Port Harcourt metropolis are lacking in the literature, therefore this study examined spatial planning framework and urban development and management in Port Harcourt metropolis, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Spatial Planning

Spatial Planning is a set of concepts, procedures and tools that must be tailored to whatever situation is at hand if desired outcomes are to be achieved (Wapwera,2013). It is very important at this juncture to state the main rationale for adopting Spatial Planning. It is to ensure utilization and implementation to meet the need of present and future generations. It is now adopted in countries to address the issues

that have arisen as a result of urbanization problems as most urban environments are decaying at a rapid rate, and it plays a lead role in addressing issues at various levels.

The role of Spatial Planning, as enumerated by NEPA, 2011 are; firstly, to create the conditions for an enhanced quality of life, secondly, to fulfil the aims of efficiency and democracy through public participation and thirdly, to meet the challenge of sustainable development (Local Government Association, 2001; Yasin, 2003). Spatial Planning can be considered as many different things, depending on the purpose for which it is been considered. For instance, it could be considered an intervention, a framework, a tool, a method and a strategy among others (Wapwera, 2013). Its functions are very vital as it can create the condition for an enhanced quality of life, and fulfil the aims of efficiency and democracy through public participation which meets the challenges of sustainable development as the issues arising from climate change are closely considered (CEMAT, 1983; National Assembly for Wales, 2004; RTPI, 2011). Albrechts (2001) and Wyatt, (2009) observed that Spatial Planning is a discrete professional discipline which involves land use, urban, regional, economic, transport, community and environmental planning.

The implications of Spatial Planning to the study stem from the problem of urban sprawl, poverty, slums and the environment which is characterised by many factors ranging from economic, social, demographic, political and environmental concerns and the inability of the master planning system to address these problems which have generally resulted in decaying infrastructure in need of development, provision and investment. Spatial planning is characterised by dynamic and timely policy and decision making, inclusive and effective community engagement and collaboration, integration and joining-up as well as positive, evidence-based reasoning, sustainable urban development and climate change (ODPM, 2006).

Application of spatial planning is employed it would go a long way to addressing the problem raised concerning infrastructure development, provision and investment. Hence, the implication is that the provision and investment are inadequate of facilities, utilities and services necessary to trigger any economic, social and political development in other areas creating a disparity in the distribution of infrastructure. Spatial planning is an approach that is broad and robust enough to accommodate as well as address the problem of the inadequacies observed in urban environments.

The UNDESA, (2010) reported the adoption of a specific planning alternative is the best option for better planned urban areas. This means that if the system of planning is not adequate to address the problem, with peculiarities in a specific area, the system should be changed to address the problem in the given location. For instance, upgrades in slum housing water and sanitation systems have not yet been rigorously evaluated to demonstrate whether there is a direct link to improved health outcomes in developing countries; but in developed countries, this has been considered, planned and provision made for implementation in both rural and urban areas (Wapwera, 2013). Urban development and sprawl in most developing countries are characterised by seriously bad slum conditions because the urban sprawl problem is not adequately managed. This usually results in degenerate slum conditions, and this adds to the number of slums in cities.

Development is usually not captured even during government surveys (such as a national population census), as they cannot be easily grouped under either urban or rural centres. Subsequently, from the urban and regional planning point of view, investigation of these kinds and patterns of growth have become vital for the provision of basic infrastructure facilities (such as water, electricity, sanitation and roads) in these regions of towns and cities as well as urban areas (Turnbull and Navarro, 2008).

The sprawl is encouraged by the presence of facilities, utilities and services (infrastructure) available in urban areas. These are made available at the outer edges of the urban area and the inhabitants take advantage by relocating to such places (Wapwera, 2013). It could also be that the infrastructure makes it easier for the population as it offers them the mobility to relocate to the outer parts of the urban area. For instance, good roads linking the workplace and the home, as well as recreation points, could be the immediate causes of sprawl; this has been observed in developed and several developed countries (Chris, Gerhard and Lila, 2007).

There is an unprecedented population growth which potentially threatens the available infrastructure, and, because the infrastructure is not equally distributed, urban sprawl can be triggered. The availability of infrastructure in a specific location pulls the population from the area without, or with a limited, infrastructure. The non-availability of the infrastructure may push the population out of the

area. These movements (migration) have varying consequences such as formal and informal settlements emerging. In developed countries, a balance is created by ensuring that the infrastructure is proportionally distributed as observed by EEA (2006) and Litman (2011). Decline and urban sprawl, best explain the situations where sprawl occurs at any given opportunity in a city or urban area. This is because in most cities the opportunity for development in phases is possible, as well as a change in land use and land use cover.

Urbanisation is a form of response to a bewildering set of economic, social, demographic, cultural and environmental processes as well as the political forces on the physical geography in proportion to population and resource consumption in towns and cities within urban settlements (Kempe, 1986; Vernon, 2005; UN, 2007; Knox, 2009; Reinhard & Yasin, 2011). It was also considered demographically or sociologically as a process of rationalization and is closely related to liquidation, industrialization, localisation, modernization and globalization as observed by the World Bank (2009) and UN (2010).

Urbanization is a world phenomenon that is common to both developed and developing nations. It is defined as a key process, a complex set of socio-economic, political, cultural, demographic and environmental development that has increased the proportion and density of population and resource consumption in towns and cities within urban settlements (Kempe, 1986; Vernon, 2005; Knox, 2009; Reinhard and Yasin, 2011). The urbanization trend will intensify over the next decades and would be higher in Africa in countries such as South Africa, Egypt, and Nigeria (UNDESA, 2009). The impact of urbanization on urban areas the world over are usually felt as it affects urban structures; areas, density, mobility and transport, infrastructure, city-related production, human behaviour as well as private households at different dimension and extent (Reinhard and Yasin, 2011).

The modernisation/ecological perspective explains the decline and urban sprawl, which goes to explain how the social, and economic aspects of environmental interaction with one another bring about a change that will reach a climax and begin to wane. Old ways of doing things are no more being absorbed as the features of modernisation and the natural/ecological succession are considered (Kasarda & Crenshaw, 1991; EEA, 2006).

The application of Spatial Planning to the metropolitan /urban areas and cities is intended to achieve a reduction in the disparity of urban infrastructure distribution through adequate and timely planning. Planning is essentially spatial; it is concerned with the spatial impact of many different kinds of problems and with the coordination of many different policies (Wapwera, 2013). For instance, housing, regeneration, industries, employment, income (tax) and the flow of goods amongst others are all occupying space or have spatial dimensions. Furthermore, social planning addresses housing and movement, services delivery such as health, education and amenity/recreation opportunities (Obateru, 2001; Rydin, 2011)

The role of spatial planning is in the investment and provision of basic infrastructure required for the growth and development of urban areas in different regions of both developed and developing countries, which is achieved by the adoption of spatial planning principles. The experience of most developing countries about planning is different, as the master planning system approach is widely adopted or utilised.

UN Habitat (2003) observed that 'slums, semi slums and super slums' form the evolution of cities. This explains why many developing countries have a large number of slums as they form the basis for the emergence of cities. Deeyah et al.,(2021) stated that Informal settlements, sometimes called slums, are sites of significant environmental risk in developing cities. Despite its environmental challenges, residents prefer to live in informal settlements rather than planned allocated plots. Other problems associated with Urban development are the high levels of poverty alongside high levels of ignorance that fuel crises leading to environmental problems. Ooi and Phua (2007) observed that most cities in the developing world have become centres where vast numbers of people compete for the most basic social services and infrastructural facilities: for a room, within reach of employment at an affordable rent, or vacant land on which a shelter can be erected without fear of eviction, for places in schools, for medical treatment for health problems or injuries, or a bed in a hospital, for access to clean drinking water, for a corner on a pavement or square to sell goods, quite apart from the enormous competition for jobs. the growing influx is not limited to income level, but households use social networks (living close to family or friends), livelihood opportunities, proximity to work, and

commuting cost to find accommodation, land for building and support for everyday life in an informal settlement as corroborated by Deeyah et al., (2021).

Dung-Gwom (2007) showed that inequalities exist in the provision of basic facilities across residential neighbourhoods in Jos Metropolis. Dung-Gwom and Oladosu (2008) and Mallo and Anigbogu (2009) also observed that urban poverty is also affecting the living conditions of urban residents in Jos. Jiriko, (2007) argued in his study on Abuja and Enugu that Physical Planning activities in Nigeria have concentrated on direct control to the neglect of both integrated plan and policy formulation. Be that as it may, there has been no impact seen or felt about addressing the problem of urban sprawl as observed by Agbola and Olatubara (2004) and the UN Commission for Sustainable Development (2004).

Mallo and Anigbogu, (2009) examined the housing quality of comparable residential neighbourhoods in Jos Metropolis and observed that the physical, economic and social characteristics of residents were different depending on the density of neighbourhoods within the study area (Wapwera,2013). Dung-Gwom (2007) proffered solutions for addressing the problems generated by the rate of urbanisation in most countries and has tried to present policies that bring about various forms of transformation. UN habitat (2007) reported that problem-solving is not only conceivable but highly achievable, given the right policies (spatial plan), so that slums were considered to be slums of hope rather than despair.

Concept Spatial Planning

According to Ransford (2018), the use of the term spatial planning to describe the activities, processes, practices and the accompanying legal and institutional milieu described in this book is quite recent. Since its inception, the activity of planning has been known and continues to be known by other related terminologies including: 'land-use planning physical planning urban planning town and country plan regional planning' and even just 'planning. Just as societies, in general, continue to evolve and the prevailing socio-environmental and economic challenges of the day continue to assume different degrees of complexity, so has planning, which seeks to confront these complex challenges evolved in terms of the underlying theories and the nature and scope of the activities associated with it in practice. In general, the nature and scope of planning within any given society, indicative of the terminology used, reflect the priorities of that society, which in turn determine the focus and core functions embraced by the activity. In some instances, the terminologies are used also to indicate the spatial scale (whether town, city, regional or national level) at which the activity of planning is undertaken.

Development Master Plan of Port Harcourt City

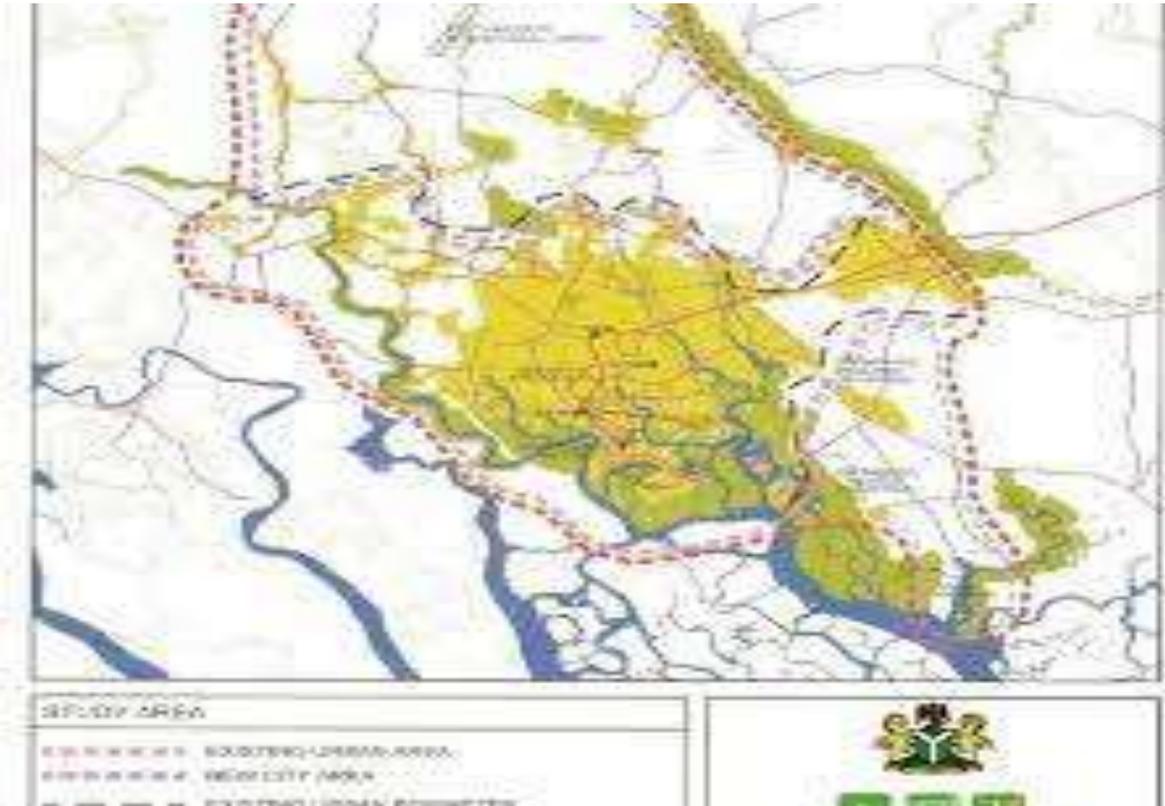


Figure 2: Picture showing the Development Master Plan of Port Harcourt City
Source: www.google.com 2022



Figure 3: Picture showing Development Master Plan of Greater Port Harcourt City
Source: www.google.com 2022



Figure 4: Picture showing Development Master Plan of Port Harcourt Main Town
Source: www.google.com 2022

The utility of physical accessibility is in the area of regional development planning on how to make resources available to using population. The basic propelling motive of economic development is to increase accessibility in all its connotations to resources and power in the distribution of the benefits of development. Thus, in practical terms, having to rationalize the supply of limited services and at the same time maintain or improve the accessibility of these services to the consumer, leads to a fundamental dilemma (Okoye, 2016). The poor state or rather declining level of easy access to urban facilities and services in most areas of the Port Harcourt metropolis has continued to attract the attention of both the government and private sector to palliate the problem. However, it is necessary to provide a detailed catalogue of accessibility to these urban facilities in the city which will now serve as a guide to foreigners and visitors to the city of Port Harcourt on how to access urban services based on what is of priority to them. People have often lamented the high cost of accessing these facilities now and compared to the good old days. A critical observation of the Port Harcourt metropolitan city reveals that some parts of the city could access certain urban facilities and services while some parts are growing or possibly getting into such status while some parts remain relatively slum settlements.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The instrument used is a questionnaire; one set of questionnaires is for staff of Rivers State Ministry of Urban development and physical planning. The study was analysed using quantitative and qualitative methods. The researcher used the simple percentage in tabular representation followed by a detailed description and explanation of the data. However, the sampling size for the study comprises 300 users of these facilities/services who were randomly selected from the Ministry of Urban development and physical planning in Rivers State. The simple random sampling technique was used to ensure that all elements have equal chances of being represented in the target population.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Out of the three hundred (300) Questionnaires administered, Two Hundred and Ten (210) were retrieved and used for the analysis which represents 72.4% while Eighty (80) which represents 27.6% were not retrieved. The table below has the details

Table 1: Importance of Spatial Planning Framework on Urban Development in Port Harcourt Metropolis

S/No	Factors	No of Respondents	% Distribution
1	It is factor for development	33	15.7
2	It encourages Urban development	49	23.3
3	the goals of co-ordinating the physical manifestations of sectoral policies	17	8.0
4	Spatial planning anchors national visions, goals, programmes	72	34.3
5	Spatial planning has a profound impact on the internal layout and functional organization of land uses	15	7.1
6	Spatial planning system, identifying the institutional structures, legal frameworks	11	5.2
Total		197	100

Source: Field survey (2022)

Table 2: Challenges of Spatial Planning Framework on Urban Development in Port Harcourt Metropolis

S/No	Factors	No of respondents	% Distribution
1	High rate rural- Urban migration	13	6.2
2	Growth rate of population	12	5.7
3	Poor urban master plan	10	4.8
4	Poor policy implementation	10	4.8
5	Land Use Act	13	6.2
6	increased population and infrastructural developments	13	6.2
7	Complex nature of the urban master plan	12	5.7
8	Industrialization	9	4.3
9	Environmental degradation	9	4.3
10	Poor resource management	10	4.8
11	Lack of vision	3	1.4

Source: Field survey (2022)

Table 3: Government policies and Spatial Planning Framework for Urban Development in Port Harcourt Metropolis

S/No	Factors	No of Respondents	% Distribution
1	Greater Port Harcourt city master plan	31	14.8
2	Land Use Act	23	10.9
3	Local Government Administration	59	28.1
4	Decongestion of Port Harcourt City	7	3.3
5	Agricultural Policies	32	15.2
6	Effective implementation of master plan	18	8.6
7	Urban planning	14	6.7
8	Rural- Urban employment	15	7.1
9	Development of rural-urban infrastructure	11	5.2
Total		210	100

Source: Field survey (2022)

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Urban centres in developing countries have shown the development and distribution of new settlements at the fringe of the urban areas as a result of this process. The urban problems observed are a range of poor housing, infrastructure, environmental quality and urban poverty, which brings about changes in the original landscape of the urban area, urban systems, urban ecology and urban political economy amongst others (Knox, 2009). Nyambo (2010) observed that the inability to bring about sustainable urban development has always been associated with the lack of sustainable urbanisation and planning approach which is not appropriately implemented. The major problems have always been rapid urbanisation, growth of slums and urbanization of poverty and poor conservation of the natural environment. The importance of spatial planning cannot be overemphasized in a populated city like Port Harcourt, poor spatial planning facilitates Infrastructure development which plays an important role in shaping the spatial development of cities at a city-wide and more local scale. At the intersection with the normative objectives of sustainability, efficiency, liveability and inclusiveness, the master planning approach in Nigerian cities like Port Harcourt to be specific cannot adequately address the urban problem of urbanization and its physical characteristics (Oyesiku, 2004; Agbola, 2004). This is necessitated by the social, economic, environmental and political constraints in the urban planning procedures in the metropolis. Hence, an effective urban planning approach is required to address the urban development and management (sprawling) and its characteristics in the metropolis.

CONCLUSION

Urban centres in developing countries have shown the development and distribution of new settlements at the fringe of the urban areas as a result of this process. Spatial Planning as an approach is geared towards identifying and targeting development, conservation priorities, risk and opportunities in both the urban and rural areas. It is not a static blueprint plan, as it attempts to coordinate the social, economic and environmental resources within different jurisdictions. It also provides linkages within and between urban and regional areas and provides an infrastructure to bridge the dichotomy that exists between the rural and urban areas (Healey, 2007; Jiriko, 2008). Good governance makes a difference in good planning because it's key to the design and implementation of any plan as the market forces usually are not to be relied on. Most of the urban development plans end up on shelves with the dust settling on them because they are not implemented due to poor spatial planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. The process of the preparation of spatial plans should not be left to the planning consulting firms and government alone, other stakeholders such as Architects, Urban Designers, Estate valuers and Town Planners in the built environment, and representatives of communities should be involved. Well-managed urbanization has the potential to improve the living standards of the world's population therefore; the transition into an urbanised should have positive implications for Rivers State's economy, social conditions, physical conditions, as well as the environment.
- ii. The government should formulate policies and implement techniques that will promote accessibility to urban facilities and services in the Port Harcourt metropolis. There is an urgent need for the government to increase the number of basic socio-economic, educational, health, transportation and recreational facilities in the city to serve the increasing population.
- iii. The government should supplement by constructing more low and medium-cost urban facilities in the city to reduce the burden of inequality and inaccessibility. Since the government cannot tackle these problems single-handedly, non-governmental organisations and cooperate bodies should be encouraged to invest in urban facilities and services to enhance easy access and, ultimately, the city's liveability.

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