Urbanization and its Political Challenges in Developing Countries

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Abstract

Developing countries in the twenty-first century is experiencing rapid urbanization with a high concentration of people in the urban areas while the population of people in the rural areas is decreasing due to the rise in rural-urban push which has adverse consequences on the economic and political development of developing countries, in particular African cities. Therefore, this study seeks to analyze the trends and nature of urbanization in Africa from the pre-colonial era to the contemporary period of globalization in order to ascertain the implications of rapid urbanization on the processes of democratic transitions, on the vagaries of food sufficiency and crisis as well as its multiplier effects on the escalating rate of poverty and insurgency in the cities. These problems stem from the lack of good governance, high rate of corruption and the misappropriation of state resources through diverse economic liberalizing reforms and development strategies. Thus, this study affirms that urbanization is a process that requires objective management and institutional role differentiations and performance to create the organizational synergy, moderation and frugality necessary for the equitable distribution of the common wealth for the greatest good of all peoples not only in the urban areas but also in the rural areas which invariably will bring about political and economic development in African cities, and reduce the high incidences of poverty, insurgency and food crisis.

Keywords: Urbanization, Developing Countries, Politics in Africa, African Cities, Colonial Era

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1. Introduction

Urbanization is not a modern phenomenon in Africa. It has been occurring since about 10,000 years ago when Africans began founding permanent settlements, which paved the way for the first urban revolution around the Nile Valley in the region of Alexandria in Egypt (Muhammed 2011:161). However, hunting and gathering forced Africans to move all the time, but when Africans discovered how to domesticate animals and cultivate crops, they were able to stay in one place. Raising their own food also created a material surplus, which fed some people with food production and allowed them to build shelters, make tools, weave clothes and take part in religious rituals. The emergence of cities led to both specialization and higher living standards in the pre-colonial Africa.

However, by 3000 B.C.E., the Egyptian cities flourished as did cities in Africa to the South of Sahara. Axum, the capital of Ethiopia Kingdom, lasted from the first century C.E. until about the tenth century C.E.. In West Africa, between C.E 700 to C.E. 1600, prominent cities such as Kumbisaleh, Timbuktu, Djenne, Kano and Gao emerged. Also, new cities developed amongst the Yoruba, Ashanti, and Benin Kingdom. These cities apart from being commercial and political centers, they were religious centers as well. In the second half of the thirteenth century, trade with Europe also contributed to the urbanization of the North Africa. By the late thirteenth century, merchants from the Italian cities established commercial links with Egypt (Clark 2009: 47).

These first urban revolutionary processes and development patterns of the African cities were suddenly disrupted and stifled with the Berlin conference of 1884/85 and its instruments of colonialism and imperialism. African cities and emerging urban centres were apportioned among the European powers almost as if it were a pie. In order to balkanize and destroy the emerging urban centres in Africa, the European powers created new cities or urban centres either in the existing African cities or at a completely new site. Completely new cities were especially founded in the mining regions Zone to house the mine workers. Examples include Enugu and Jos in Nigeria, Johannesburg and Kimberly in South Africa, Ndola and Kitwe in Zambia and Lubumbashi in DR Congo. A strong centralized political, economic and administrative system was established in these new colonial cities, which triggered off a new wave of urbanization in Africa, with new adverse consequences on development needs.

In this new wave of urbanization, the flourishing pre-colonial cities were strategically ignored by the colonial European powers. In effect, such cities disappeared as for example Kukkawa and Dahomey. The disappearance of most indigenous African cities led to the sudden appearance of rural–urban migration, which pulled labour away from the countryside to the new urban centres created by the Europeans. In these new administrative urban centres Africans lived in small spaces and under poor sanitary conditions prone to illnesses. The colonial

governments' response was not to improve the African conditions, but rather to separate Europeans from Africans and establish influx control laws. In South Africa, this resulted in the official policy of apartheid from 1950 and was insidiously extended to settler cities like Nigeria, Lusaka and Nairobi. In West African countries like Nigeria, the colonial government created a new reserved area with the best infrastructural facilities for the Europeans while compelling Africans to live in the least developed areas outside the periphery of the cities, leading to the rise of slums in the history of African urbanization.

Therefore, the strategic creation of new urban centres and the disintegration of indigenous African urban centres created new problems, contradictions and misconceptions about the origin, meaning and nature of urbanization in Africa. Urbanization in Africa has been widely misconceived as having been the result of colonization. It is claimed that the Africans did not have the political sophistication and organizational ability to build urban cities but rather lived in isolated settlements prior to the colonial era (Hull 1976: 48).

Moreover, this misconception has made it very difficult to define what is known as "urban" from its African perspective and perception. As can be inferred, there is no specific definition for the term urban; rather it has been defined differently in various countries and by various disciplines. Thus, the factors that contributed to urbanization in Europe and the United States of America were different from what Africa has experienced and continue to experience. This divergence calls for a different approach in the attempt to define and solve urban problems.

In Africa, both migration and natural increase were the main causes of urbanization and migration, which is also a product of rural push. Hence, the rate of urbanization in Africa is increasingly rapid and is associated with problems such as inadequate infrastructure, waste management and inadequate housing. In order to overcome these problems, African countries rather than looking inward turn to international donor agencies from Europe and America for assistance. These donor agencies have one remedy for all development problems created by rapid urbanization process in Africa. The development policy options which they tacitly impose on African countries ranges from the introduction of neo-classical liberalism to the quest for the institutionalization of democratic governance and values. Thus, these development options and efforts do not seem to yield any meaningful results because urban problems continue to escalate in Africa. This is an indication that some important policy options or development values might have been missed in the efforts of African governments to solve these urban problems.

Therefore, this chapter will examine the development challenges of urbanization in Africa as well as its implications for the rise of poverty, political violence, food crisis and the new waves of unemployment and civil insurgence. It will also analyze the implications of neo-classical liberalism as a development policy option adopted by African countries in their quest to stimulate the rapid development of African cities

and urban centres. Also, this chapter will analyze the challenges of urbanization to democratic transitions in Africa.

2. The Evolution of Urbanization and its Challenges to the Political Development of African Cities

Throughout most of human history, the sights, sounds and context of urbanization involves the concentration of population into cities (Macionis 2009: 647). This rapid transition of man from nomadic ways of life through the establishment of small settlements to the glorious emergence of great cities and flourishing urban centres were simply unimaginable. So, urbanization is not only an evolutionary process of redistributing human population within a given society but also a way of transforming many patterns of social, economic and political life towards satisfying the development needs of man.

Therefore, the aim of this subsection is to trace these evolutionary changes in terms of the three epochs in the history of urbanization in Africa and assess the ways in which urban revolutions and forces have impacted upon the political development of Africa and upon the processes of rapid urbanization. The three evolutionary epochs in the study of the history urbanization in Africa consists of: the emergence of cities in the pre-colonial era beginning 10,000 years ago, the development of industrial cities during the colonial era and the explosive growth of cities in the post-colonial or contemporary globalization era.

3. Urbanization in Africa in the Pre-colonial Era

Urbanization has been widespread in Africa for centuries before the arrival of Europeans. But the concept of urbanization in Africa has been widely misconceived as having been the result of European colonization. This misconception assume that urban settlements are relatively new in African history and that Africans were hunters and gatherers of food who move all the time without the necessary tools or organizational abilities to build permanent settlements or cities. The misconceived assumption was that urbanization existed in Africa as a result of European inspiration and political sophistication.

According to Chandler (1994: 3-14), urbanization is not a new development or phenomenon in Africa but has been in existence in northern Africa as early as 3200 BC and later extended to the rest of the continent. The urban centres were located along the trade routes used by the Arab traders who brought wares from the Middle and Far East to trade with Africans. Some of these urban centres include Cairo and Alexandria in Egypt, Tripoli in Libya, Fez in Morocco, Timbuktu in Mali, Kumasi in Ghana and Kano in Nigeria.

However, from the fourth Century BC, there were extensive economic interaction and trade exchanges between Greek and various Kingdoms in North Africa. Such

economic cooperation led to the emergence of cross-Mediterranean trade relations which resulted to the establishment of flourishing sea ports such as Carthage and Alexandria which became prominent urban centres and remain highly significant urban settlements today.

Therefore, in pre-colonial Africa, trade, economic activities and exchanges stirred urban growth. For example, Tunis was founded 15km from the site of the ancient city of Carthage (Findlay and Paddison, 1986:28-34). By Middle Ages, the Hausa towns of Northern Nigeria, such as Kano, Katsina and Maiduguri were state capitals and trading centres. Also, the empire of Ghana, whose power peaked in the Ninth Century, was based on the control of the gold trade. These urban settlements focused on the market and were controlled by merchant elite. This was also the stimulating variable that encouraged the establishment of coastal urban settlements in East Africa, such as Zanzibar, Lamu and Mombasa.

Thus, in pre-colonial Africa, urban settlements not only grew and changed shape but also expanded its capacity and population size. In North Africa, the population of people living in the urban centres grew considerably. Cairo was estimated to have had a population of 300,000 in the Eleventh Century, and 500,000 at the beginning of the Fourteenth Century. Marrakesh had a population of 100,000 inhabitants in the Eleventh Century and grew to 150,000 and over 200,000 in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries respectively (Chandler 1994:6-8).These figures demonstrated that in most parts of Africa during the pre-colonial era, urbanization was rapid and had a systematic mode of progression. Some cities, such as Cairo, were large and powerful long before European colonialism began, others are essentially the creation of the present century, such as Harare and Nairobi (Drakasis-Smith 2000: 7).

In the late fifteenth and sixteenth Centuries, the pattern of urbanization in Africa was insidiously Balkanized and weakened by the expansion of European mercantilism into Africa, which stagnated the political and economic development of the existing urban centres. From the first Portuguese contact with Africa at the mouth of the Senegal River in 1445 to the ascendency of British and French mercantilism in the sixteenth Century, the flourishing African trade system was balkanized and replaced with slave trade which had devastating consequences on the political development of urban centres.

However, in order to prevent the emergence of powerful urban centres and to destroy the existing ones, the Europeans played one kingdom off against another. In the attempt to take over and absorb other small city states, the Ashanti Empire asserted control over the West African coastal states to gain monopoly over the regional slave trade. To this effect, an estimated 12 million slaves were taken from Africa in Christian ships (Chandler 1994:10) and this weakened the structure and population size of the urban centres. Although urbanization continued in Ghana in the seventeenth century but the earlier urban culture and centres were weakened as the slave trade peaked in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Similarly, the

Yoruba urbanization was also weakened by the increasing insecurity caused by internal conflict over control of channels for slave trading.

Therefore, successive waves of European slave trading gradually shifted the focus of the existing patterns of urbanization towards new locations created by the Europeans primarily to destroy the existing political structures so as to build new urban centres that would serve as the capital cities of the coastal states. The essence was to control the political and the economic activities of the urban settlements leading to stagnation for earlier patterns of urbanization in Africa. To this effect, during the sixteenth Century, Portugal founded Bissau in Guinea, Luanda, Benguela and Salvador in Angola as well as Loure Margues, Sena Mozambique in Mozambique. The Portuguese temporarily took control of Zanzibar and Mombasa. The Dutch founded Cape Town in 1652 and the French and Britain founded a number of West African urban centres which started as ports, including Conakry, Accra, Sekondi, Cape Coast and Calabar. Thus, the essence of establishing these urban settlements by the Europeans was aimed at extracting slaves, wealth as well as establishing political control of African cities, states and empires.

4. Colonial Africa and its Patterns of Urbanization

In the second half of the nineteenth century, European mercantilism was expanded and transformed into colonialism. This process of transformation was inspired by the development of capitalism in Europe which gave rise to the quest to search for cheap raw materials, agricultural produce as well as markets for manufactured exports. Thus, the institutionalization of colonialism in Africa brought with it the development of new cities, administrative headquarters and mining facilities which had destructive effects on the pre-existing social formations and patterns of urbanization.

During the colonial period, the Europeans in their strategic attempt to break the trade monopoly of the Arabs, established new transportation networks, small ports and trading posts along the coast primarily to stimulate their business activities and also for easy transportation of commodities to their home countries. New urban settlements were then developed from these port centers: Accra in the Gold Coast (presently Ghana), Dakar in Senegal, and Freetown in Sierra Leone were some of these ports. Others were Cape Town and Durban in South Africa, Beira in Mozambique, Mombasa in Kenya, Tunis in Tunisia and Calabar in Nigeria. All these port centers and trading posts grew and became urban centers.

However, for the Europeans to obtain and maintain a pool of cheap labour force in these new urban centers, for the purpose of mining, settler agriculture and manufacturing, lands were expropriated, tax imposed and African agricultural system jettisoned and discriminated against. For this reason, the colonial powers restructured the political and economic systems pre-existing in African societies so that they produced solely for exports that provided only minimal returns to African

labour. Therefore, in their effort to increase and maximize profit through extensive exploitation, the colonialists restructured African agriculture, introduced new administration systems and overtly changed the patterns of urbanization in Africa.

However, the restructuring of African patterns of urbanization and economy was triggered off not only by economic competition but also more extensively by political competition, brought about by Belgian and German annexation of territories in Africa which upsetted the balance of power and reinforced the quest and scramble for the partition and political control of Africa, generally, to exercise hegemonic political control of the pre-existing and newly created urban centers. In order to deter the Belgian and German penetration of African economies, Britain, France and Portugal introduced new methods of political control and exploitation. For this reasons, Britain following its paternalist philosophy introduced decentralized administrative method of political control while the doctrine of assimilation or direct centralized political control was established in all the urban settlements or territories controlled by Belgium, Portugal and France. These methods of political control used by the Europeans in the administration of African urban territories brought in new waves of stagnation in the political development of urbanization in Africa.

5. Urbanization in Africa in this Era of Globalization

The period of 1960s and early 1970s marked a new era in the development, structures and patterns of urbanization in Africa. Hence the period is often referred to as the beginning of post colonial urbanization, when most countries of Africa gained political independence from European colonialism. Twice in its history, Africa has experienced a revolutionary expansion of cities and urbanization formations. The first urban revolution began about 3200BC with the first urban settlements and continued until new permanent settlements were established during the colonial era. About 1960, the second urban revolution spurred rapid growth of cities in Africa.

In this era of globalization, extraordinary urban growth is occurring in Africa. In 1950, about 25 percent of people in Africa lived in cities but in South Africa less than this number lived in the cities because of the Apartheid policy of segregation and restrictions. In 2007, the figure was close to 50 percent. Similarly, in 1950 only seven cities in the world had populations over 5 million and only two of these were in developing countries. By 2007, forty-nine cities had passed this mark and thirty-six of them were in less developed nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America (Macionis 2009:646).

Urbanization during the post colonial era had been rapid. This is as a result of many African nations entering the high growth stage two of demographic transition theory. Falling death rates have fueled population increases in urban centers especially in Africa. For urban areas, the rate of increase is twice as high because in

addition to natural increase, millions of people leave the countryside each year in search of jobs, health care and education as well as other conveniences such as running water and electricity. As cities grow, so do suburbs. In Nigeria, for example, the ever increasing concentration of peoples in cities had tremendous impact on the urban centers. Lagos in1963 had 665,000 inhabitants (Rekodi 1997:17-23), and this rose to 8.7million in 2000. It is expected to become the world's eleventh biggest urban center by 2015 with a population size of 16 million inhabitants (United Nations 2005)

In African urbanization formations, cities do offer more opportunities than rural areas, yet they provide no quick fix for the problems of escalating populations and gridding poverty and mass unemployment. Many cities in Africa are simply unable to meet the basic needs of much of their population. These cities are surrounded by shanty towns with high level of unemployment and poverty leading to a rise in crime, violence and civil insurgency in the urban centers with its devastating effects on the structures and processes of political development of African urbanization frameworks.

In the cities of many developing world countries, immigrants can find employment mostly in informal sector which refers to human activities generally organized outside of the formal rules and regulations set down by governments. Informal sector doesn't mean that they are necessarily illegal. Moreover, in informal sector, the organizational principles generally follow the rules of family, kinship, friendship, neighborliness and ethnicity that have deep roots in all societies (Duben 1992: 54). In informal sector, generally people can find a position only in marginal jobs such as street vendor, door keeper, peon, porter, door keeper and similar jobs that are not enough to gain the livelihood of a family and those jobs have mostly no social insurance, pension and regular payment. Therefore, almost all members of the family had to work for a job.

6. Conceptual Perspectives in the Study of Urbanization in Africa

In this section, we shall examine the various conceptual frameworks of urbanization which will help us to appraise, analyze and understand the patterns of urbanization and its relationship to the challenges of political development in Africa. Breeze (1966:62) defines urbanization as a process of becoming urban, moving to cities, changing from agriculture to other pursuits that are common to cities and corresponding changes of behaviour patterns. This definition explains the African urban population which has been rapid due to the rural-urban migration process which continuously adds to the number of inhabitants in the urban centers. Therefore, the word urban is often used for such terms as town, city, suburbs and metropolitan area. It is a general term associated with population size, population densities, economic functions or the life in a city including the context of political behavior and socialization.

Various concepts are used to explain the formations and patterns of urbanization in any given society. Therefore, to be in position to understand the structures and processes of urbanization in Africa, there is need to adopt a conceptual framework with the intention of the concept explaining the problems and challenges of urbanization as it relates to issues bordering on democratic transition, political violence, civil insurgency in cities, agriculture and food crisis as well as to the needs of political development in African cities. On this note, we shall discuss the following concepts:

7. The Concept of Modernization

The concept of modernization explains the structural and institutional processes of transition from traditional methods of production to modern and advanced methods of production or ways of life. The concept holds that the modernization of cities or states through economic development encourages the pursuits and advancement of social and political development. Berliner (1977:443-461) argues that there cannot be urbanization without industrialization. This implies that economic activities or industrialization provides the institutional mechanisms for the growth and dynamics of urbanization. Therefore, the more industrialized a society or a city is the more urbanized it becomes.

However, for Emile Durkheim something is lost in the process of modernization or urbanization, but much is gained. Durkheim's concept of mechanical solidarity bears similarity to Ferdinand Tönnies' Gemeinschaft (community). Both Tönnies and Durkheim agree that urbanization erodes mechanical solidarity and sense of community or common identity, But Durkheim further explains that modernization or urbanization generates a new type of bonding which he called organic solidarity. This new form of specialization and interdependence which leads to growth of industrial cities or urban centers with modern forms of economic activities and production, as emphasis on traditions and norms are weakened. Thus, urbanization in modern societies offers more individual choice and impersonal ties or secondary relationships necessary for strengthening the values of social, economic and political development of societies.

However, in explaining the patterns of urbanization the modernization school of thought adopted two basic analytical tools. These tools of analysis are the evolutionary perspective and the functionalist approach. The evolutionary approach emphasizes that social changes that stimulate urbanization are unidirectional, progressive and gradual. The evolution is irreversible as rural primitive stage advances to high level of modern urban based society. While the functionalist conceptual approach reveals that as society proceeds towards modernization, systematic and transformative changes take place giving rise to change from traditional values to modern ones: Hence, the growth towards urbanization is made possible by advancement in technology and industrialization based economic activities and values.

Thus, the 'rural push' causes African nations to experience migration from rural to urban areas in order to become an industrial (modern) society. This is based on assumption that the development process and urbanization move along a continuum. Thus, the rural-push has caused a large scale rural-urban migration in the recent years in Africa. Therefore, using Walter Rostow (1977:64) concept of evolutionary ladder of development as a conceptual framework to explain the social changes that triggers off the rural-urban migration in Africa, there is a connection between Rostow's concept and the demographic model of Warren Thompson (1992:24).

Thus, urbanization in Africa follows Thompson and Rostow's evolutionary process. The granting of political independence to Africa states marked the beginning of a new era of specialization in the production of primary agricultural products, which generates surplus for external trade. Income and savings begin to increase with a corresponding increase in the desire for high standard of living and attitudinal changes among the African people. This brought about a demographic transition characterized by a rapid decline in death rate with birth rate increasing tremendously. The fall in death rate was as a result of improved sanitation and health care. Population growth is rapid. This tends to put pressure on farmlands since there is limited room for expansion, creating an increase in redundant labor.

However, such redundancy sparked off the push for migration of rural population to urban centers for employment, since most manufacturing activities are concentrated in the cities. The rural push is necessitated by two basic factors related to agriculture. In the first place, the increased population puts pressure on land for cultivation, calling for the expansion in the rate of excess labour, which ends up finding their ways into the cities for employment. Secondly, the improvement in agricultural practice by means of mechanization result in lesser need for farm labour resulting in excess farm labour, which ends up finding their way into manufacturing employment in the urban centers.

Therefore, as a result of increasing urbanization and dearth of social amenities and employment, families in African cities have began to realize that children are expensive to rise and that having too many children hinder them from taking advantages of job opportunities, since most families in the cities have become dual income earners. In the rural areas, where birth rate tend to be higher, continued decline in infant mortality means parents realizing they do not require so many children to be born to ensure a comfortable old age. Life expectancy also improved. Urbanization at this point continues to progress since more and more people move to the urban centers where the jobs are. Therefore, Rostow's stages of economic development offers the conceptual tool for the evolutionary analysis of the unidirectional, progressive and rapid growth in urbanization in Africa.

8. Urban Bias Conceptual Approach of Urbanization

The concept of urban bias is another conceptual approach that is relevant to the study and understanding of urban development in Africa. This concept emphasizes that the development of new cities or existing urban centers are due to political persuasions, issues or motives rather than economic reasons. Lipton (1977:50) was one of the precursors of this approach who believes that in post-colonial Africa that emphasis on urban development have shifted from its economic prospective to political dynamism. He further argues that political drive of governmental and non-governmental actors influence the yearnings of Africa states to develop the urban centers to the detriment of the rural areas. Such political decisions led to the high concentration of infrastructural facilities and utilities in the urban centers.

However, due to the administrative bias of political actors and policy makers, new urban centers were created in Africa which turns out to become new capital cities or centers of political authority. Such cities are Lilongwe in Malawi, Yamoussoukro in Cote d'Ivoire and Abuja in Nigeria (Muhammad 2011:162). These cities have been experiencing large population concentration because of expected political benefits that will be derived by living in such cities which invariably speed up rural-urban migration; thereby favorably competing with older cities in Africa both in terms of size and population density. Hence urbanization rate in Africa is rapid and so is population growth. Therefore, the rapid increase in population of urban centers in most African nations is a function of the intentional bias of policy makers and politicians in the process of authoritative allocation of values. These urban centers serve as national capitals or as headquarters of states or local government areas/ provincial councils with high concentration of political activities, which have multiplier effects in stimulating higher economic and social activities and benefits.

In addition, governments and political actors in Africa tend to invest domestic capital and resources on the provision of development facilities and utilities. These facilities are largely located in urban areas where the policy makers and politicians live and where their properties are domicile, whereas in the rural areas where the larger proportion of the population is found are tacitly neglected in the authoritative allocation of values. Investible resources in favor of rural dwellers, who are basically farmers, in the form of roads, small scale irrigation facilities, agricultural machinery and storage facilities, are downplayed by the policy makers. Hence, higher standards of living are created in the urban areas with deepening poverty crisis in the rural areas, resulting in the creation of disparity between urban and rural areas. The result is that the rural dwellers out of frustration and poverty tend to migrate to the urban areas in search of better standard of living, facilities and job offers. Therefore, the rural-push in Africa is a product of intentional bias in the authoritative allocation of values. In the process of determining who gets what, when, and how the urban areas are favored while the rural areas are neglected and tacitly excluded. Thus, the urbanization rate in Africa is rapid, so is its population growth. The big cities of Africa will continue to grow while the population of the

rural areas will continue to decrease creating a cloud of uncertainty in the future of urbanization in Africa.

9. Urbanization and Setback of Democracy in African Cities

The fervor felt for democracy in the urban centers and rural areas in Africa, after the gruesome experiences of apartheid and military regimes is more than a love for civil rights. Democracy embodies a faith that more moral, prosperous and dignified way of living exists than being ruled by dictators. Democracy represents liberty and responsibility, the pursuit of happiness and civic duty (Hood 2004:48-60). Many keep the promise of democracy alive. Courageous democrats continue to forge ahead in urban centers where democracy is still a distant hope and its benefits still a mirage. But while the promise of democracy remains alive, the practice of democracy in urban centers in Africa has become moribund.

The morbidity of democratic practice and processes in urban centers in Africa is brought about by the rapid rate of urban population growth, which has made it difficult for public authorities to plan and control sprawling development of houses and facilities in the cities. In most of the traditional cities in Africa such as Kano, Ibadan, Benin and Zaria in Nigeria, there have been no modern town planning but rather the pre-colonial patterns of land use which could no longer meet up with the new demands of social changes and rapid population making it difficult for modern town planning process to take place. Therefore, the inability to cope with this new town planning is due to lack of funds, infrastructural facilities, technical capability etc. the result of the rapid population growth in African cities are associated with the various electoral challenges, malpractices and problems which affect the democratization processes in the urban centers.

Urban centers are rapidly expanding to cover areas that were hitherto forests therefore, identifying houses and streets in these new areas constitute a problem to operation of representative democracy. Such problems could include accessibility to polling centers as well as difficulty in identifying the polling station, thereby creating contradictions in the conduct of elections and voting patterns. For example, the new urban areas in the suburbs of Abuja in Nigeria, namely Mararaba, Karu, Jikwoyi, Nyanya, Lugbe, Zuba and Madala, the streets are not named nor clearly numbered or marked. Thus, it is difficult to locate registration centers and polling booths in these areas during elections. Hence, most of the low income earners that live in these suburbs are de-enfranchised and the results of the elections most often do not reflect the wishes and expectations of the electorates leading to political protests.

Also, the distribution of the population density within urban areas constitute great challenges to election management in Africa, especially in the creation of new wards, polling centers as well as voters registration centers. The more dense the population of a zone, the more constituencies, polling units and electoral wards are

created, necessary for proper collection of votes during elections. Those zones that are clearly planned and numbered produce less stress for electoral officers than in densely populated low level areas that are characterized by slums, crime and poverty. These slums record high level violence during election giving room to malpractices, intimidation and rigging; missing the essential elements that explains deeper and more sophisticated reasons why countries in Africa democratize and why citizens in the urban centers lose faith in democracy and institutions of government.

However, these governments that come into power through intimidation and rigging because of the structural defects in urbanization processes and planning discourage political discourse and free speech except within exclusive government circles of power. They may be able to employ brilliant economic plans for the development of urban centers and resuscitation of agricultural facilities in the rural areas to reduce the pressures of rural-urban migration but most often have no idea how to encourage such economic growth, especially in the areas of transportation which is an essential element in electoral management in the urban centers. It is from urban centers that electoral materials are printed and distributed to rural areas and towns.

Indeed, deficiency and lack of structural coordination in urban transportation system in Nigeria, like most African countries result either in slowing down or even in complete breakdown of election management in urban centers. Electorates and electoral officers find it difficult to arrive at the polling station to vote or distribute electoral materials to facilitate the voting process respectively. Therefore, the late arrival and in some cases the non-availability of electoral materials such as voters cards, electoral registers, ballot boxes and even personnel grossly affect the voting process resulting in voters staying on the queues for longer hours. Those that could not endure the stress, often out of frustration abandon the voting process, leading to disenfranchisement of many voters. Such structural defects and disenfranchisement brings about doubts, acrimony and even instigate racial conflicts that make democracy lose its values and relevance in the urban centers.

Also, the urban dwellers apprehensive of the fact that electoral materials and officers always arrive late, develop a social behavior of lateness to the polling stations, thereby making electoral officers to extend the voting hours to dusk which then gives room for electoral malpractices and the election of candidates who are ever suspicious of political opponents and fear circumstances that could lead to their loss of political power. Such elected representatives speak of political rights, but they are careful not to elaborate a specific notion of rights in any detail for fear of setting in motion calls for liberalization and true democracy.

Therefore, such regime which came to power through electorate malpractice can be dangerous to the institutions of government, the people they rule and at the same time expose the urban dwellers to the threats of political violence, terrorism and sudden death as the case of Boko-haram in Nigeria reveals. Tension builds in

the urban centers and good will is destroyed. Under this circumstance, political leaders begin to identity political enemies and issues threats. As groups and interests collide, these difficulties result in calls for military coups as was seen in Mali and Guinea Bissau or intense political crises and revolution as was also seen in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt. Because of the destructive instincts and authoritarian nature of such governments, political opponents and urban elite dwellers begin to demand replacement of the corrupt regimes without opting for democracy and without any grassroots support for democracy as an alternative choice of government among the urban or even the rural dwellers. The people opt for political bargaining and negotiation; in such cases democracy does not even emerge as an option as calls for a just, moral and benevolent regime is renewed which will bring the greatest good to the people.

Similarly, in their quest to restore confidence, most democratic government embark on social reforms in the urban centers to develop policies towards the implementation of city master plan. As noted by Kent (1964:64) and Black (1967:76) the city master plan is an official document adopted by government as a policy guide to determine and control the physical environment of the community or urban centers. Drawing from this definition, most government policies in the modern urban centers in Africa such as the policy of demolition of illegal houses and structures in Abuja from 2003 to 2007 caused mobility of urban dwellers which had adverse consequences on electoral system and patterns. Due to the demolition of illegal houses, electorates who registered as voters in one zone of the urban center were forced to relocate to other urban suburbs in Abuja and those who could not afford the expensive house rents relocated to the villages in the rural areas. Therefore, during elections such registered voters could not vote because of change of location.

However, due to the rapid increase in rural-urban migration in Africa new classes of rural uneducated class move to the urban centers in search of employment and other means of livelihood. Most of those uneducated class are ignorant of the values, processes and structures of democracy as well as the provisions of the electoral acts. With such migration of the rural dwellers to the cities, there emerge a new class struggle between the educated elites who are politically active and use state power to control the wealth of the state and the new class of uneducated people who are active in promoting tribal and religious sentiments and hegemony. Such struggle breeds incompatible interests, racial differences and violence in democratic elections in the urban centers.

As observed by Borongo (1986:48) most African elections studies affirm that African voters tend to make their electoral choices as communities or racial groups rather than on individual merit or competence. Thus, these new classes of uneducated persons see elections in the urban centers as a contest between ethnic groups for political hegemony and control of state resources. They see ethnic support and sectional interest as more important than party loyalty, ideologies and

values. Each indigenous ethnic group would always prefer their own candidates to win elections which sometimes result into violent ethnic conflicts and insurgency as was the case in Jos crisis of 1999,2003,2007 and 2011 elections, Similarly in Borno state especially in Maiduguri, the racial division in 1979 between the Kanuri and Hausa racial groups culminated in the violent political struggle and thuggery between the Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP) and the National Party of Nigeria (NPN).

Finally, due to the rapid increase in urban population as well as economic, political and social opportunities existing in urban centers, election management and democratic transitions are faced with great challenges in Africa. The urban centers are structurally unplanned which stimulates inefficiency in the management of elections. Despite these challenges, urbanization provides the functional frameworks for the desirability of democracy as an instrument of political development which serves as prerequisite to economic and industrial development of urban centers in Africa.

10. The Implications of Urbanization on the Development of Agriculture and the Sprouting of Political Dependency and Food Crisis in African Cities

We need to understand in this sub section how urbanization is changing or might change the structures, mechanisms and future of agriculture and its implications for food production in Africa. Thus, the spatial distribution of towns and cities reflect changes not only in how the agricultural economy is organized but also how the growth of multinational corporations have structured the agricultural development and political dependence of African urban centres on international capital, leading to the rise of food crisis and low agricultural production in African cities.

The first urban centres in Africa emerged in fertile regions where the ecology favoured farming and raising crops. The preindustrial settlements built by hunters and gatherers hardly affect the environment and agricultural production because they are few in number and have only simple technology. Nature affects all aspects of their lives as they follow the migration of game and watch the rhythm of the seasons.

The intermediate stage of urban development in Africa known as the horticultural or pastoral stage, the establishment of cities had a greater capacity to affect agriculture. The environmental impact of horticulture and pastoralism on agriculture is somewhat limited because people still rely on muscle power for producing goods and other agricultural services.

Human control of the natural environment increased dramatically with the establishment of modern urban centres and facilities brought about by the post-

colonial industrial revolution and expansion in Africa. Muscle power gave way to engines that burn fossil fuels, coal at fire and then oil. The use of such machineries in the urban centres affects agriculture in two ways: it consumes more natural resources and releases more pollutants into atmosphere. Secondly, not only do industrial urban centres use more energy, they produce more goods than rural agrarian settlements do. Higher living standards attracts more people from the rural areas to the cities causing a spiral dearth of labour required for farming and food production in the rural areas with a multiplier effect of food crisis in the urban centre as well as among the rural dwellers.

Therefore, food crisis in the urban centres is seen as a situation in which the food system no longer responds to the nutritional needs of the people nor to sustainable food production based on respect for the environment and improved methods of agriculture. It is also a situation where the prices of food items are out of the reach of the majority people living in the urban centres which most often are poor. Reichman (2003:46) argues that food crisis as seen in African urban centres could be defined as extreme or protracted shortage of food, resulting in widespread hunger and a substantial increase in death rate.

Today, the widespread shortage of food in Africa is a product of capitalist contradictions evident in the economic management of agriculture and the food system in the urban centres. Common goods such as water, seeds and land which for centuries have belonged to the communities for the common good of all, have now been privatized converted into exchange currency at the mercy of the highest bidder, thereby deprive the farmers of their land. In most capital cities in Africa, especially in Nigeria the emerging domestic capitalists introduce a feudalist approach in the management of land and agriculture. Through the use of state power, these pseudo capitalists convert the communal lands into private estates, which has adverse consequences on food production in the cities. For this reason, the food production system in the urban areas are based on a model rooted in a capitalist logic of seeking maximum profit, optimizing of costs, and exploitation of the labour force in each of its productive sectors. Such capitalist control and exploitation in food production is the catalyst that stimulate either extreme or protracted food crisis in African urban settlements.

Therefore, to understand the major causes or reasons for food crisis or the dramatic increase in food prices in the urban centres or cities in Africa, the Marxist approach is most appropriate in explaining the capitalist contradictions inherent in the food production system. Thus, this close association between urbanization and capitalist values and contradictions is likely to influence the nature of food crisis and the success of food production. To this effect, John Friedman (1986:34), develop the idea of global cities or large urban regions in order to promote the values of capitalism among world cities through which finance, capital, economic decision making and international labour flow. The general idea of World cities is to internationalize capitalism through the process of globalization which encourages

urban centres to be highly interconnected and interdependent which serve as huge magnets for cosmopolitanism.

Global urban region are cities which control international finance and with much economic power, they command global investments and the concentration and accumulation of capital. London, Tokyo, Paris and New York are the leading centres of World Finance and international capitalism as well as homes of stateless transnational corporations (TNC) and international systems of Finance such as World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organisation, which strategically control and determine economic, political and agricultural activities in African Urban centres or cities.

For Saskia Sassen, these global cities stand out as key command points in the organization of the urban agriculture and economy in Africa. African cities, therefore, serve as the key locations for the market places for leading industries from the global cities as well as sources of raw materials. Hence the need for strategic management of urban food production and agricultural policy in Africa by the transnational corporations (TNC) and international banks whose corporate headquarters are either in Europe, America or Japan in order to determine the flow of international division of labour as well as to ensure the political dependency of African urban centres on these leading global cities.

To promote the values of political dependency through the process of strategic control of agriculture and food production in African cities and countryside,   the transnational corporations and capitalists from the global region of the North designed an agro economic development policy in the 1960s and 1990s known as 'Green Revolution' which tacitly led to the destruction of food system in the rural and urban areas of Africa. The Green Revolution as a strategic policy option was vigorously promoted by various international institutions and agricultural research centres with the theoretical objective of modernizing agriculture in the non-industrialized urban and rural settlements in Africa. Early results of the programme in some urban centres in Africa were spectacular from the point of view of food production per hectare, but this increase in land yield did not have a direct impact on the reduction of hunger and food crisis in the urban centres (Toussant 2008:37).

However, although the green Revolution programme in African cities and villages promoted agricultural exports to boost foreign currency reserves, but it reduced African countries to the baseline of monoculture economy to boost the raw material base for industries in Europe, Japan and America, while reducing the supplies of agricultural commodities for local consumption. Thus, customs barriers were dismantled, facilitating the entry of highly subsidized agricultural products from United States and Europe at a price lower than the domestic agro products, thereby discouraging investments in local food production and agriculture. Such policy had a negative impact on food security and consequently increases the political, economic and agricultural dependency of African cities, suburbs and villages on food supplies from Europe and United States.

Beyond the Green Revolution strategic option, there are underlying issues that explain the current deep food crisis in African urban centres. The indiscriminate application of neo-liberal policies of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), trade liberalization, foreign debt rescheduling, privatization and commercialization of public enterprises as well as the capitalist model of agriculture and food production are the primary causes of food crisis and the systematic political dependency of African cities on the global cities of the North.

For this reason, Eric Holt-Gimenez (2008:28) argues that the economic development policies of Green Revolution and Structural Adjustments Programmes driven by the transnational corporations, international finance institutions and the global cities of the North have led to the destruction of food systems. Similarly, Rosset, Collins and Moore Lappe (2010:45) shares the same view with Holt-Gimenez that the agro-economic policies of Green Revolution and Privatization of public goods had negative collateral consequences for many poor and medium peasants in the slums of the urban centres as well as a long term effect on food security in the core urban centres. The resultant effect was the dismantling of traditional African agricultural food system which had always guaranteed food security for African peoples.

Therefore, the structural adjustment programmes of World Bank and International Monetary Fund had as its main focus the subordination of the agro-economy of African countries to the payments of foreign debts by applying the maxim 'export more and spend less'. The systematic application of this maxim has forced the government of African cities to withdraw subsidies for agricultural commodities such as bread, wheat, milk and sugar with a drastic devaluation of the national currency, thereby making it cheaper to export agro-products with a speculative reduction in the purchasing power of the domestic populations, leading to extreme poverty in the urban and rural areas in Africa. Culminating in food crisis and dependency on international capital, investments, markets and finance controlled by the transnational capitalists.

11. Urbanization and the Problems of Poverty, Political Crisis and Insurgency in African Cities

The historical process in Africa from a pre-capitalist to a capitalist mode of production had brought about extensive changes in the structure of urban centres or cities in the continent. This structural change lays emphasis on capitalism as the only viable approach to the development of urban centres in Africa and which will place African cities on a higher stand to compete favourably with other global cities in the World. Therefore, the application of capitalist values in the politics and economic activities of urban centres have provided a new economic framework which transforms the cities into real estate traded for profit and concentrates wealth in the hands of the few as well as minimizing the roles of government to participate actively in the areas of industrialization and economic activities in the cities.

From this point of view, the political actors and economic elites in African cities been anxious to satisfy the demands of global capitalism and attract foreign investments adopts neo-classical liberalism as a form of economic reform policy or approach for the development of African urban settlements. With the political disintegration of Soviet Union and demise of global socialism, Neo-classical liberalism or limited governmental economic responsibility became increasingly influential in African politics as a model for the economic development of the urban centres. However, with the new waves of democratization process in African cities in 1900s Neo-classical liberalism was strategically fused into the economic management of African cities as a development model to stimulate the social benefits of capitalism to the African peoples.

However, contemporary classical liberalism introduced in African cities by the government collaborates with the economic reforms programmes of World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Such developmental reform policies as privatization, subsidy removal, and minimal role of government in economic activities, monetary austerity and structural adjustment programmes are some of the classical liberal approaches prescribed by World Bank and International Monetary Fund to attract foreign direct investments to boost economic development in African cities. Such inflow of foreign investments in capital intensive manufacturing has resulted in increased output and industrialization in the urban areas.

This then does have a multiplier effect, businesses sprang up to provide services that are linked either directly or indirectly to the manufacturing activities in the urban areas. This creates the false impression for the rural dwellers that there is high paying employment opportunities available in the urban areas, hence the geometric migration to the cities in search of high income jobs. On arrival to the urban areas and to their dismay they cannot get the high paying employment, so they end up in the informal sector. The informal sector workers are the least paid among the urban labour force. Since, they cannot afford the high rent demanded by the landowners in the cities; they are forced to live in the slums, thereby escalating the rapid population growth in the suburbs, which already have been characterized by high cost of living with a corresponding decrease in the standard of living.

Also, the recent neo-classical economic liberalism has restructured the labour-capital relationship in the developing cities of Africa. From this point of view, the decline in industrial Snowbelt cities after 1950 in the United States and Europe was the result of deliberate decision by the corporate elites to move their production facilities to the developing urban areas in the Third World nations especially Africa where labour is cheaper and less likely to be unionized or move the industries out of the country entirely to low income cities in Africa (Macionis 2009:467-469). Because the Labour costs are much cheaper, semi-skilled and upscale jobs related to garment, shoes, handbag, engineering design and financial analysis are out-

sourced by the multinational corporations to urban areas of Africa. According to Noble (20003:78) and Kentor (1981:201) these movements of transnational capital causes growth in supporting service sector employment leading to the migration of labour into the urban centres to fill up these jobs, hence growth in urban population.

However, anxious to attract foreign investments to meet the demands of urban population growth, through the process of structural adjustments programmes and economic liberalization, African nations open up the economics of their urban areas to compete with more and established industrialized global cities, which brings about a new form of structural globalization and inequalities in global trade relations. Such structural inequality causes increased poverty and sufferings in African cities, and keeping the economics and politics of African urban areas dependent on the economic reform policies of International Monetary Fund and World Bank, thereby resulting in loss of livelihoods.

Ohlsson (1999:89) argues that the major causes of conflict in many African cities are the loss of livelihoods resulting in many young people being unable to reach the positions in life that the society expects from them. This constitutes the reason for most of the internal wars, acts of insurgencies and violence plaguing African cities. This view is further complemented by Karl Marx who affirms that conflict is inevitable in human society when there is consistent struggle among individuals and states in order to have a better livelihood. To this effect, in African urban areas, there is a consistent struggle between the two antagonistic classes (the rich and the poor) with a wide gap in the means of livelihood as a result of the exploitation of the poor by the rich, leading to violent conflicts (Collier 2004:253-273).

Therefore, the fulfillments of basic needs and access to livelihoods drive individuals into conflict particularly when productive activities are scarce, unemployment is high and returns from agriculture is low (Weinstein 2006:146 and Walter 2004:371-388). These structural deficiencies create disaffection and frustration among the people in the urban areas which triggers violent protests, revolution and acts of insurgencies against the state and its political actors as the cases in Nigeria, Tunisia, Mali, Egypt, Libya and Guinea Bissau have shown.

These acts of violence triggered off by poverty and frustration led to the rise of violent militant groups in the urban centres of Africa. In the Nigerian cities of Maiduguri, Kaduna, Abuja and Jos, the spiral circle of poverty and frustration often make the people to form militant groups like Boko haram to carry out acts of violence. The use of terror by insurgent urban militant groups like Bokoharam and Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) in Nigerian cities is to lure the attention of the government to long years of neglect, economic exploitation and political repression of the great mass of people living in poverty in the suburbs and slums of the cities. Hence, the poor, the unemployed, the 'almajiris' and the low income peasants who constitute a greater percentage of the membership of these urban militant groups use dramatic series of terror attacks against

government officials, institutions as well as selected public places to make the cities ungovernable so as to pressure the government to dismantle the repressive economic policies and reforms that geometrically promote poverty and not development in African cities.

12. Conclusion

Urbanization in Africa has been widely misconceived as having been the product of colonialism. This misconception assumed that the Africans do not have the organizational ability to build cities but rather lived in isolated settlements in the jungles prior to the colonial era. The assumption also was that the cities in Africa existed as a result of European influence. Therefore, in this chapter, an attempt was made to correct these false assumptions. Urbanization appeared in Northern Africa as early as 3200BC and later extended to the rest of the continent long before the arrival of the Europeans in the 1400. For this reason, this chapter analysed the evolutionary process of urbanization from the pre-colonial era to the contemporary period of globalization and in addition identified its challenges to the political development of Africa. We also analysed the effects of urbanization on the transitional processes of consolidating democracies in the urban areas as well as multiplier effects of neo-classical liberal economic reform policy options on the development of African cities.

Therefore, this chapter reveals that in Africa, there is a rapid increase in the size and density of population in urban areas with a corresponding increase in rural-urban push. This rapid growth stems from the limited role of government in stimulating economic activities in the rural areas as well as in the urban centres resulting in incompatible increase in unemployment, poverty, slums and struggle for means of livelihood. This struggle for limited resources in cities triggers off acts of violence, crime, political protests and revolutions as well as the rise of dangerous militant groups that carry out acts of terror, which nip and stifles the political development of African cities. Therefore, to ensure the strategic development of African cites, the government should be active in stimulating economic activities through the re-introduction of modern economic liberal policies. To this effect, the socio-economic and political institutions should be strengthened to ensure that the political elites do not use state power to convert public industries to their personal wealth through the misapplication of the values of privatization and structural adjustment programmes. Finally, urbanization is a process that, through objective management, will bring about the much desired economic and political development of the African cities.

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