



ECOLOGICAL ZONES AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN YENAGOA CITY OF BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigates the classification of socio-economic zones in Yenagoa city and its implication to development in the city. It is argued that emerging cities develop faster when classified into socio-economic zones. The study generated data from personal observations and an in-depth analysis of secondary data from relevant government publications, books, journals and commentaries. The city of Yenagoa was divided into six ecological zones: The Fast-Emerging Big Commercial Zone, the Medium and Small Commercial Zone, Government Residential and Planned Zone, Indigenous/Non-Commercial Zone, Medium/Low Residential Zone, and the Suburbs. The study looks at the proposed master plan for the State and the socio-economic implications of the lack of implementation of the Yenagoa city master plan. The findings show that Yenagoa is yet to attain a standard city status. This is evident in the dualism pattern of residence with buildings being incongruous and residential areas co-existing with prayer houses, social club sand schools. The study, therefore, recommends that the State government should make a conscious effort to implement and develop sustainable city development plans that will endure evenness if there is a change of Government. The government's land allocation policy should be done by categorising the city into well-recognised zones that can be easily identified and not the inappropriate situations the city currently inhabits.

Key Words: City, Concentric zone model, Ecological zones, Master plan, Yenagoa

Introduction

From ancient times, the mechanisms for developing a city and how to define it has been a subject of debate (Allegra et al., 2013; Short, 2006). With the growing importance of cities worldwide, more policy makers, geographers, demographers, sociologists, among others, have been drawn to the study of cities. Specifically, sociologists have long debated what makes life in the city or town distinct from life in a rural society. There have been substantial developments added to these

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arguments in recent years. To begin with, there has been a considerable shift in state policy toward focusing on individual sub-public venues for development and asset assignment, rather than advancing regional public turn-of-events as a whole. This becomes expedient as first, worldwide, urban communities are becoming metropolitan districts (Yin, 2021). Second, the growth of new information technology in all aspects of our social life is a critical aspect of development linked to and facilitated by globalisation. Globalisation and the rising use of novel information technologies, according to Brenner and Keil (2006), have resulted in a shift toward emphasising specific sub-national spaces. As a result, new cultural forms that cross national borders are arising (e.g., youth culture, social media culture). As a result, cities have become significant hubs for new cultural developments.

The above two trends for analysing and theorising about cities during the twenty-first century have significant implications. These insights may still be true today for big cities that have an impact on a fast-rising spectrum of different sorts of cities around the world (Al-Saidi & Zaidan, 2020; Amen et al., 2006; Beall, 2016). It is argued that if an emerging city can be classified into socio-economic zones, it would lead to the development of that city. As a result, this study investigates the ecological zones of Yenagoa city and their socio-economic consequences for development. It is, therefore, necessary to identify an ecological zone within a city after defining what makes a city.

The Concept of Ecological Zone

The ecological zone has diverse meanings depending on the background of the scholar defining it. Agricultural scientists for instance, favour using Agro-Ecological Zones (AEZs), which demonstrate connection to climatic variables that impact their potential to support agriculture. Thus, AEZs are influenced by elevation, latitude, temperature, rainfall amounts, and seasons during the growing season on a regional scale (PWC, 2017). Thus, the major ecological zones from the perspective of an Agricultural Scientist include; climate zones (tropics or subtropics), moisture zones (water availability), and highland/lowland.

From a Geographer's perspective, ecological zones could be defined as major bio-geographical land/water units characterised by their different species and communities (National Research Council, 1997). Hence, the major eco-zones are separated into smaller eco-regions that share natural communities, meteorological elements, climate, elevation, terrain, soil types, edaphic factors, and other physical characteristics (National Research Council, 1997).

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Similarly, from a sociological standpoint, an ecological zone is defined as a socio-ecological system consisting of a bio-physical unit linked to social actors and institutions. Glaser et al (2008), defined socio-ecological systems as a system bounded by physical or functional limits surrounding a particular ecosystem and its problem context. Redman et al. (2004), described a socio-ecological system as a "clear system of biophysical and social traits that interact in a resilient and sustained manner regularly." While resilience has a slightly different meaning in a social and ecological setting, the social-ecological systems approach asserts that social and environmental systems are interconnected through feedback mechanisms and exhibit stability and complexity (Berkes et al., 2003).

Understanding the Concept of the City

Understanding the concept of the city became more important with digitalisation and globalisation in the twenty-first century (Drainville, 2004). The city, according to Paul et al. (2013), is a relatively significant and permanent human community. The concept is subject to certain social constructs and the level of development. In the United States, for example, the word refers to towns with a populations of 2,500 or more; in some other countries, the lower boundaries for places classified as cities range from 20,000 to 50,000 people. The United Nations defines cities as those with a population of 100,000 or more (Borgatta & Montgomery, 2000). Although there are no formal report of how a city is different from a town, nevertheless, several urban centres have a specific authoritative, legitimate, or verifiable status relying on extant law. In general, urban areas include complicated frameworks for sanitation, utilities, land use, accommodation, and transportation. The centralisation of improvement stimulates extensive cooperation among individuals and groups, benefiting both parties yet complicating urban development oversight.

The city is often linked to metropolitan regions, resulting in a slew of business personnel moving out to metropolitan towns in search of paid employment. When a city expands to the point where it meets another city, it is referred to as a conurbation or megalopolis (Paul et al., 2013). Nonetheless, according to Borgatta and Montgomery (2000), a city is "a rather large, dense, permanent, diversified, and politically autonomous community whose population engages in a variety of non-agricultural vocations." They went on to add that a city is often associated with administrative region, which might be big, small, or the same size as the relatively dense settlement area that makes up the city proper. They did, however, distinguish the city from the suburb, which

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is a less populated but permanent population outside of the city centre. The suburb is populated by people who have social and economic links to the city.

One of the most recognised definitions of the city till date has been that of Louise Wirth in his 1983 article titled "urbanism as a way of life" where he conceptualised the city as;

a permanent settlement of heterogeneous persons that is relatively large, dense, and permanent. Individual variety, the lack of direct personal acquaintanceship, and the segmentation of human contacts, which are generally faceless, superficial, and temporary, and associated features are all explained by large numbers (Wirth, 1938, p. 8).

Wirth went further to identify the characteristics of the city to include heterogeneity, accentuated friction, specialization, diversification, the predominance of formal social control, complex pattern of segregation, etc. On his own part, Weber noted that cities are centres of markets, politics, religion, and culture (Weber, 1958). Vere Gordon Childe, an Australian archaeologist and philologist, proposed eleven traceable key qualities to define what is recognised as the modern city. These include (i) large population size and density, (ii) division of labour beyond agricultural vocation, (iii) formal taxation, (iv) monumental public buildings, (v) formal social support by the Monarch, (vi) literacy, (vii) record keeping and rational scientific knowledge, (viii) fine arts, (ix) commerce - including international trade, and (x) craftsmanship outside of family circles (Childe, 1950).

Nonetheless, Okolocha (2014), pointed out that in Nigeria and some other countries, a city is determined by fiat. Thus, in the US for instance, three types of metropolitan areas are recognised based on the fiat declaration of a city: Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA) and Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA). There were 261 MSAs, 73 PMSAs, and 21 CMAs in the United States by 1987 (Kornblum cited in Okolocha, 2014).

It is on this note that Okolocha (2014), added that any settlement proclaimed a planning area could be regarded as an urban centre, regardless of population or physical size. It is not surprising that public discretion and political expedience have established a hierarchy of cities with the federal capital, state capitals, and local government centres in descending order of importance (Okolocha,





2014). As a result of the aforementioned, cities are no longer classified based on the optimum city population concept.

Urban Structure Theories

The Burgess Concentric Zone, Hoyt Sector, and Harris and Ullman's Multiple Nuclei Models are three notable urban structure theories that were developed to define and explain the spatial pattern of the city.

Ernest Burgess' Concentric Zone model, commonly known as the Bull's eye model, was one of the most important models that discussed the directional expansion of cities. According to Burgess, cities have growth rings that radiate outward from a core or key commercial sector. The centre is the area with the highest land cost, which can only be afforded by businesses. Each ring contains a different type of development and economic activity. The value of land decreases as you move away from the centre due to development. The organisation of these concentric zones is generated through succession and invasion. In search of more pleasant zones, the inhabitants of each inward zone go outwards to colonise the next exterior zone. Based on a five-ring model, this model stated that a city expands outward. These five rings, according to the model, encircled the central business district at the heart of the city (Pearland Independent School District, 2014).

The Central Business District (CBD) is the first ring in the model's centre. It is also referred to as a city's "downtown." Many retail businesses, commercial offices, entertainment venues, and a significant land area are classified as CBD for governmental purposes. The zone in transition is the second ring of the concentric zone model. This ring is defined by heavily industrialised districts and more deplorable dwelling conditions for less fortunate individuals. New immigrants and single people looking for smaller dwelling units frequently occupy these types of sites (Tenement housing with poor housing codes). The zone of independent workers' homes is the third ring. Self-effacing houses describe places such as those seen in the third ring. These are typically occupied by people from the working class. The zone of enhanced residences is the fourth ring of the model. Larger and more spacious houses differentiate these types of neighbourhoods. People from middle-class households populate these residences. Finally, the fifth zone, the commuter's zone, is mostly suburbs populated by individuals working in the centre or the central business district who decide to commute between the two places (Pearland Independent School District, 2014). In the United States, the city of Chicago is a good example of a city that develops through the Burgess concentric zone analysis.

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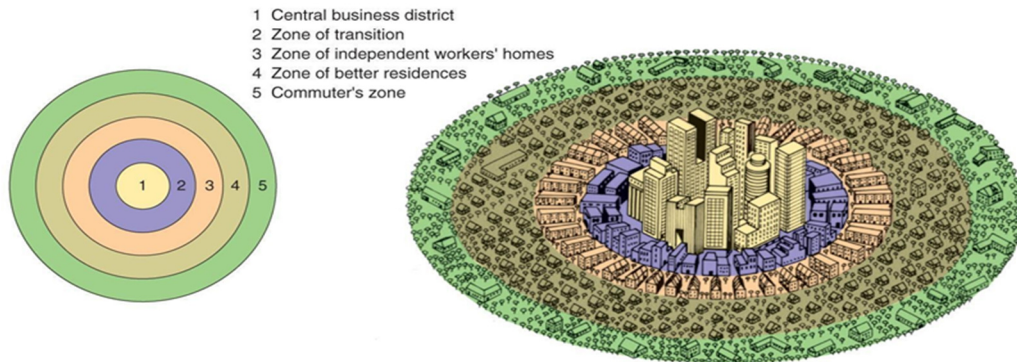


Fig. 1 Burgess Concentric Zone Model of Urbanization

Source: Pearland Independent School District, 2014

The Hoyt Sector Model refers to a city that lacks a strong central core but includes "nodes" of business and cultural activity. In other words, Hoyt argued that cities evolve in sectors instead of circles where additional parts develop differently relying upon how desirable they are. Like the Burgess Concentric Centre Model, Hoyt's Sector Model features a Central Business District (CBD), the highest land price area. On the other hand, the position of the other sectors is decided by transportation lines. Although there is still a Zone of Transition around the CBD in Hoyt model, the industry can be found along main transportation routes. The housing for the poorest members of society is the closest to the industrial parks. Pollution would most likely be blown towards them by the prevailing winds (and away from the higher-class housing). High-end housing is located in a separate sector that extends from the CBD, where many inhabitants work (Pearland Independent School District, 2014). The Hoyt Sector Model is used to construct cities like Mexico City and London.

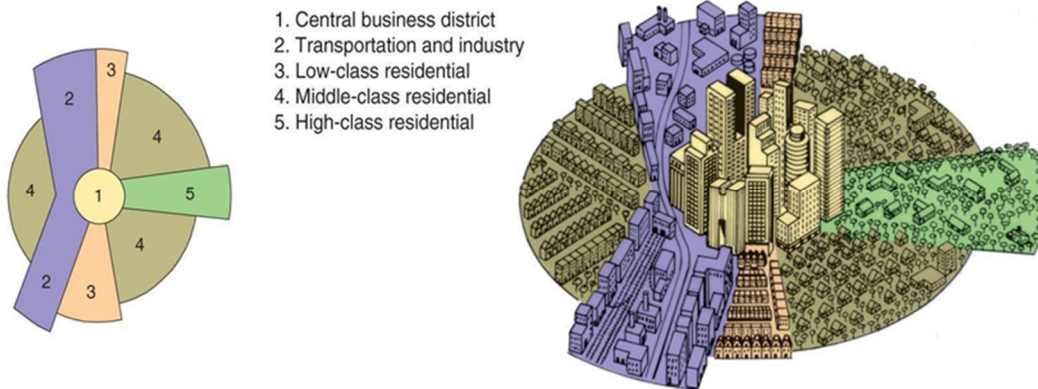


Fig. 2: Hoyt Sector Model of Urbanization

Source: Pearland Independent School District, 2014

The final model is Harris and Ullman's Multiple Nuclei Model, which they devised in their 1945 book "The Nature of Cities." The multiple nuclei concept sees a city as an assortment of individual focuses that attract a variety of people and activities. This plan has a central CBD, but other smaller areas serve explicit functions such as business parks and industrial parks. Each CBD molecule functions as a growth pole, allowing it to spread out across a large region rather than growing from a single point. They did admit, however, that some of these characteristics are only seen in large cities (Pearland Independent School District, 2014).

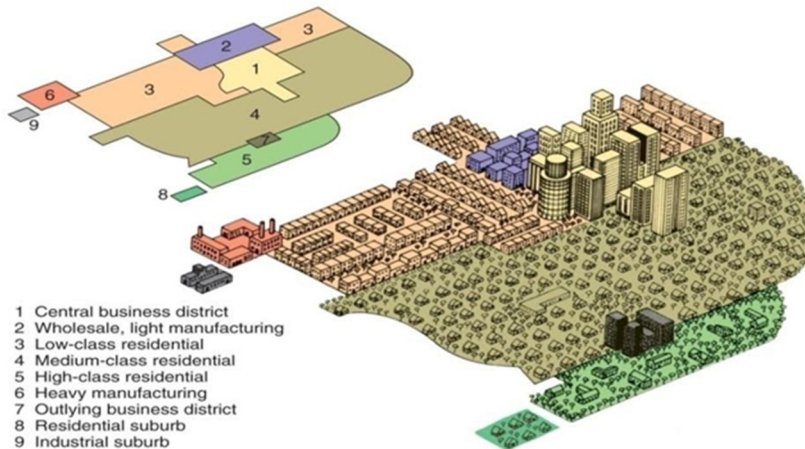


Fig. 3: Harris and Ullman's Multiple Nuclei Model of Urbanization

Source: Pearland Independent School District, 2014

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Methods

This research is a commentary on the ecological zones of Yenagoa city, as well as their socio-economic consequences for development and how the classification of socio-economic zones can lead to the development of an emerging city like Yenagoa in Bayelsa State. Yenagoa is located between the latitudes of 4°49'N and 5°23'N, as well as the longitudes of 6°10' E and 6°33'E. The city is situated along the Ekole Creek and Nun River; the latter is one of the key river streams making up the Niger Delta's river. Yenagoa is the state's major population centre. As of the 2006 National Census (cited in Obafemi & Omiunu, 2014), Yenagoa city has a population of 353,344 people, with 187,791 men and 165,553 women, and an annual exponential growth rate of 2.9 (Obafemi & Omiunu, 2014). The population forecast for 2019 is 482462 people (Macrotrends, 2020). The Ijaw people's traditional residence is Yenagoa City. The official language is English. In Yenagoa, however, the Epie-Atissa dialect, one of the Ijaw dialects, is the primary neighbourhood language (Obafemi & Omiunu, 2014).

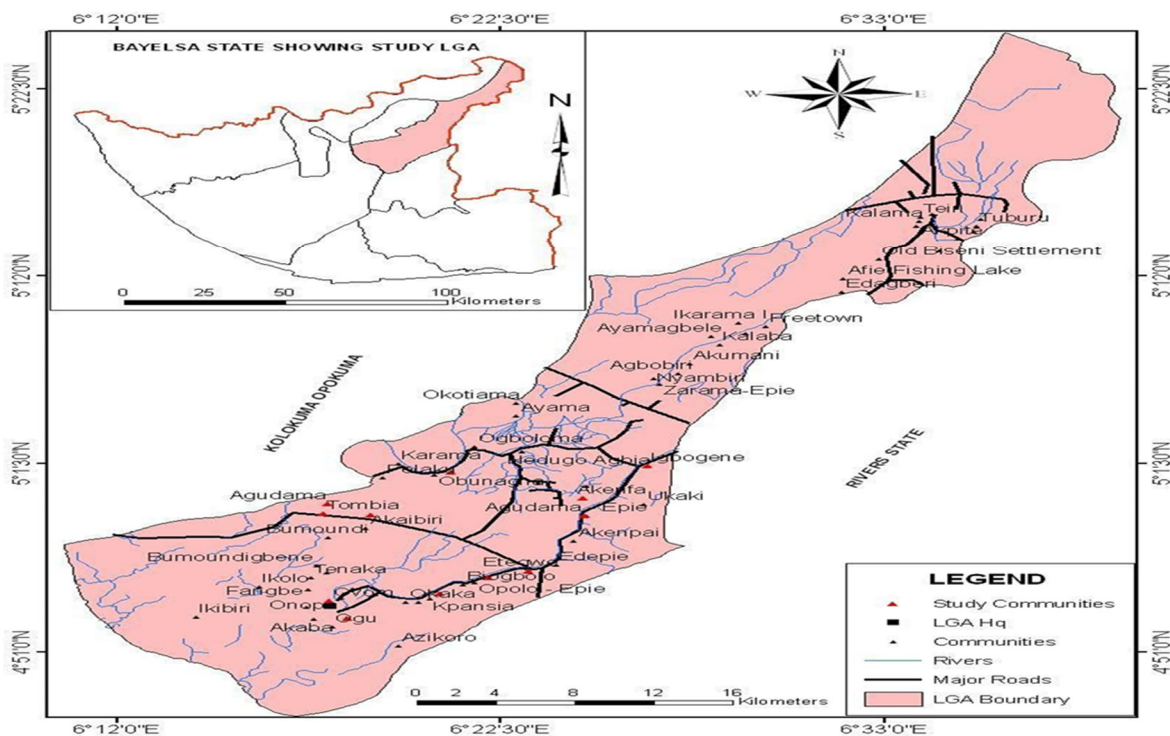


Fig. 4: Map of Yenagoa City

Source: Obafemi and Omiunu, 2014.

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Data for this study was collected on personal observation and an in-depth analysis of secondary data from available literature, such as relevant government publications, books and journals. The study provides a descriptive and logical analysis of both secondary data and personal observation. While most literature for this study was sourced online using the google scholar search engine, information regarding the city master plan was sourced from government publications and archives. However, analyses for this study were done based on the experiences of the authors who have been residents of the city for many years.

Discussion of Results and Findings

This section discusses the socio-economic ecological zones and their implications to socio-economic development of Yenagoa city in different sub-sections.

Socio-Economic Ecological Zones in Yenagoa City

The city of Yenagoa is regarded as adopting the models of urbanisation stated earlier; some characteristics of the growth identified by these models are readily available in Yenagoa City's development. However, the concentric zone model seems to be dominant on how the city of Yenagoa is growing. For instance, the CBD was identified by all three models seen in the city's development as the Ovom/Onopa district where extensive commercial activities started before the creation of Bayelsa State. After state creation, the city started spreading out just as Burgess noted. Nevertheless, as stated in the concentric zone model, the city did not spread out in circles nor did it spread in multiple nuclei form, as stated by Harris and Ullman, as the city had some form of development from the Igbogene axis before the creation of the state.

Having stated the above, we identify the various socio-economic ecological zones located in the city. In summarizing the Yenagoa City layout, this paper has identified a somewhat similar district identified by Okolocha (2014) in Benin City. However, whereas Okolocha identified four ecological zones, this paper identified six inclusive and continuous communities: The Fast-Emerging Big Commercial Zone, The medium and small Commercial Zone, Government Residential and Planned Zone, Indigenous/Non-Commercial Zone, Medium/Low Residential Zone, and the Suburbs.

The Fast-Emerging Big Commercial Zone

Before and after the creation of Bayelsa State, there were hardly any big businesses such as manufacturing companies, Banks, etc., in the capital city. As stated by Burgess, the city is fast

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growing with big business centres with invasion and succession. The fast-emerging big commercial zone consists of those areas where big businesses are situated. In these areas, the prices of land have skyrocketed so that only large corporate bodies can afford to buy (landed) properties. The fast-emerging big commercial district is located along the following district of the city; The Sani Abacha Expressway, D.S.P Alamieseigha way, and Isaac Jasper Boro Expressway. These areas also have standard plans of building that, if not met, will face demolition from the Government. The issue of residency is at the minimum in these areas compared to a medium and small commercial zone.

The Medium and Small Commercial Zone

The commercial zone is as old as the city itself, though there have been increasing commercial activities in this zone. The medium and small commercial zone consists of those areas where small and medium-scale business activities dominate. They include Melford Okilo Road (Formerly Mbiama Yenagoa Road), Swali Market and Town, and almost all the roadsides of the streets in Yenagoa City. One characteristic of this zone is that most people in these areas use the same house for their business and residence as it is most common on the streets of Yenagoa city.

Government Residential and Planned Zone

This zone's location is at the heart of the city, which serves as the Government's administrative seat and residence. This zone consists of places like the Melford Okilo road, especially the Ovom areas with Road Safety Road, Secretariat, Government House, Hospital Road, Women Affairs Road, Captain Amangala Road, etc. Some parts of D.S.P Alamieseigh way are also part of the government's official areas with offices such as; the Revenue House, Treasury Building, etc. Also, places like; Azikoro Estate located at Azikoro road, Opolo Housing Estate in Opolo, Okaka Housing Estate in Okaka, and Senior Civil Servants quarters in Ovom serve as senior government official residences are all part of this zone. Some Government reserved areas located along with some parts of the Sani Abacha Expressway, Elebele Road, Isaac Boro Expressway, etc., are all part of this district.

Indigenous/Non-Commercial Zone

Though modernisation is fast eroding people's cultural heritage as societies become more urbanised, some Die-hard cultural adherents continue to stick to their guns. The indigenous/non-Commercial zone consists of some parts of the city where traditional beliefs and practices are still to no small extent visible. The traces of conventional architectural design are seen in these areas.

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Their political system is still highly based on hereditary or gerontocracy. The commercial activities in these areas are to a negligible extent. However, traditional economic activities such as farming, fishing, lumbering, etc., still thrive in these areas. Places like, Ikolo, Yenaka, Famgbe, Obogoro, Ogu, Agbura, and most villages in Gbarain clan, Agudama-Ekpetiama clan, etc. are all parts of this zone. Nevertheless, the Goodluck Jonathan Bridge at Swali links villages like Ikolo, Famgbe, Ogbogoro, etc. The city centre's congested nature shows that people have started buying land and building houses in these areas, which means that these areas will soon wear the look of a city centre.

Medium/Low Residential Zone

This area possesses similar attributes to the inner city and working zone identified in Burgess concentric zone model. The medium and low residential zone was classified together as it is tough to identify areas where it is majorly low-income or medium-income earners that reside. However, we could still to some extent, identify areas with high slums and ghettos. The medium /low residential zone includes almost all the inner parts of streets in Yenagoa city such as Azikoro Village, Swali Town, Oil mail/ Jetty road, Obele street, Gwegwe street, Arietallin street, some streets in Onopa, Imgbi road, OMPADEC road, Ebis road Amarata, Azikoro road, Osiri road, Okaka road, Saptex road, Captain Ayeni road, Nickton road, Baybridge road, Otioio road, Erepa road, Ebis Road Biogbolo, NEPA road Opolo, Streets in Okutukutu, Etegwe, Edepie, Akenpai, Agudama, Akenfa, Yenegwe, and Igbogene. As stated earlier, some of these areas have many slums and ghettos with a higher prevalence of crime and cult group-related activities. Hence, they are dreaded, especially at night by the residents of the city. Examples of such areas include Swali Town, Oil mail/ Jetty road, Obele street, Gwegwe street, Arietallin street, etc. The streets/roads are not free from criminal activities or low-income dwellers; it is just that the areas mentioned above have more reports of crime incidence.

Suburb

A suburb is a residential or mixed-use area, either existing as part of a city or an urban area. According to Burgess (Pearland Independent School District, 2014), as low-income dwellers invade the inner city, the wealthy residents relocate to the city's outer part called the suburbs. The suburbs where the most affluent are currently living include Elebele Road, both by Azikoro and Opolo roads, along Imiringi road, along Tombia road, Okolobiri road, etc. Additionally, with the relocation of these wealthy men, Elebele, Okolobiri, Nedego, Agbia, Ogboloma, Tombia, Agbura, etc., will soon be invaded and transformed by urbanisation.

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The Yenagoa City Master Plan

Yenagoa's Master Plan was based on the availability of abundant tourist potential as the best and most cost-effective path to growth. The ability to carry out this imperative approach necessitates the creation of an enabling environment for rapid economic growth. Considering Bayelsa State's topography, making it a popular tourist destination has been a problem for succeeding governments. The necessity to construct a befitting capital city was recognised early on, prompting the lengthy process of adopting the 2007 Yenagoa City Master Plan Strategy document, which was prepared and coordinated by Harcourt Aduke and Associates in 2004 with the assistance of the German firm Albert Speers (Nworisara, 2012).

The Bayelsa State Government has had the fundamental objective of developing a model city similar to what is available in other cities throughout the world since the state's creation in 1996. However, there was a fresh zeal attributable to the Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan-led government, who temporarily served as Governor of Bayelsa State in 2006 and resolved to speed up the master plan process to develop a suitable metropolis. Nonetheless, Governor Henry Seriake Dickson continued with the plan after pledging to continue his predecessor's outstanding work. The Master plan's first phase was intended to be completed in December 2009, while the second phase was supposed to start in January 2010. However, no significant progress has been made in either stage one or two.

The goal of the master plan was to "transform Yenagoa metropolis into a globally renowned city with modern infrastructure and appreciable aesthetic beauty similar to other model cities in the world,". Although the Master Plan was created by the government of Bayelsa state, several steps have been taken to bring it to fruition, but to no avail, due to lack of will and commitment on the part of the government.

The Yenagoa City Master Plan encompasses a 15-kilometre radius around the city centre, including Ogbiri in the west, Oloibiri in the north, Otuogori in the south, and Otuasega in the east. The Musa Yar' Adua International Cargo Airport, Glory Drive East-West Igbogene Road, Oxbow Lake Resort's four-star hotel, Ekoli Bridge, Swali Theme Park, The Galleria, Tower Hotel and International Conference Centre, Central Business District (CBD), Glory Land Castle-Government House, MelfordOkilo Memorial Hospital, Kolo Creek Gas Turbine, the Yenagoa Zoo and Conservatory are among the infrastructural projects critical to the master plan (Nworisara,



2012). Despite Governor Henry Serike Dickson's promise to complete these projects during his first term, they remain in the same state as when he took office.



Fig.5a: Yenagoa City Master Plan Map



Fig.5b: Yenagoa City Master Plan Map

Source: (Friends of the city, 2009)

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The implications of the lack of implementing a master plan for Socio-Economic Development

The establishment of Yenagoa is in line with the growth pole concept, which prioritises the development of a new capital city that will have a regional developmental ripple effect. To a large extent, the observed consequence has been one of the mixed fortunes as the problems of Yenagoa city. In the new capital city, infrastructural development that is out of step with population expansion and the supply of an economic base that would cater for the people's socioeconomic welfare appear to be rearing their ugly heads.

Furthermore, due to high land costs, high rent costs and a lack of housing units for the people, the allocation of land and housing plans to accommodate all the city's socioeconomic categories has failed. As a result, there has been a significant increase in the number of informal or unsanitary settlements established by immigrants from other parts of the state as well as the original residents. Consequently, illegal settlements and slums are rapidly expanding with operators taking advantage of the government's regulatory weaknesses, the slow and cumbersome process of obtaining legal title to land, and the great demand for housing and other services.

The above has several ramifications for the city's socioeconomic development. To begin with, the city's environmental and waste management are inadequate, resulting in serious health consequences. For example, based on observations, there are many garbage dumpsites throughout the city. Even though major roads are always full of dirt, it takes the government a month or more to respond to the clearance of these specks of dirt. The failure of the municipal government to address environmental issues has resulted in significant water pollution, environmental deterioration and widespread infectious diseases that have affected the majority of citizens in the capital city.

Urban utility services have been a serious challenge due to the city's biological layout. It's difficult to figure out how and where to put pipe-borne water, electric power distribution, sanitation sewage, and so on. As a result, utility services are unevenly distributed, with government and rich men's residential quarters and offices having better amenities. On the other hand, are left with little or no basic necessities. Another impact is on crime and insecurity. As previously indicated, due to the city's poor layout, hooliganism, thuggery, cultism and other criminal and social vices are prominent in specific sections. Due to extremely bad or no internal roads leading to these areas

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with a high prevalence of crime, it has also become difficult for security operatives such as the police to combat crime in these areas.

The cost of living is so high in the city as a result of its lack of good planning that many have dubbed it one of Nigeria's most expensive cities. The cost of renting a house is comparable to that of Abuja, Port Harcourt, and other Nigerian cities (Olatunji, 2020). Education fees are no exception, with a good private secondary school charging a school fee of between 50 and 100 thousand naira per term (roughly equivalent to USD120 and USD240 respectively) (Tooley et al., 2005). The city's transportation system is also one of the highest in the country. For example, the cost of transportation from Yenagoa city to Port Harcourt, which is around an hour and thirty minutes away, is around 1200 naira, (roughly equivalent to USD3), although the same trip in other states costs between 400 and 500 Naira or less (roughly equivalent to USD1).

Transportation fare from Benin to Onitsha for example, is roughly two hours long, but the transportation fare was only N600 (roughly equivalent to USD2) in 2015. The informal and inefficient property markets are not left out in this, Due to different claims to land ownership, cases of land disputes exist in the city's several courts. These conflicts are mostly caused by the city's poor ecological zone design, which is exploited by informal and inefficient property markets.

In addition, the city's inadequate urban planning has a knock-on impact as evident in lack of industry and unemployment. Due to the nature of the city, it is difficult for investors to find ideal locations for their businesses. Another consequence of inadequate city planning is the lack of affordable and decent houses. The majority of the houses in the city are of poor quality, with no drainage, toilet facilities or bathrooms, among other things. As a result, "the short put" phenomenon of defecating in public and flinging it into surrounding shrubs or streams persist. More importantly, the number of houses in the city is insufficient to keep up with its rapid growth. This is primarily due to the high cost of land, construction materials and sand filling before construction. Finally, the city's growth and poor urban planning have resulted in severe traffic jams, particularly around the Tombia roundabout, Swali market and Ekeki Park. People spend up to an hour going through a route that should have taken less than 10 minutes.

Conclusion

The city of Yenagoa is among the fastest-growing Nigerian cities. The acceleration rate is made possible by certain factors, such as the mass movement of people from different groups both within

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and outside Nigeria moving into the city. The city's current urban layout has been categorised into six ecological zones: The Fast-Emerging Big Commercial Zone, The Medium and Small Commercial Zone, Government Residential and Planned Zone, Indigenous/Non-Commercial Zone, Medium/Low Residential Zone, and the Suburbs.

It should be noted that no zone in the city is reserved for certain people or activities as almost some of the characteristics identified in a particular zone could be found in other zones, though in unequal form. For instance, we can still find some low or middle-income dwellers in the fast-emerging big business zone and the Government residential and planned zone. Likewise, some very wealthy people with political appointments reside in places like Obele, Gwegwe, Arietallin, etc., that have been termed places with high crime rates.

Finally, Yenagoa is yet to attain a standard city status in its true meaning. These could be seen in the dual pattern of residence with buildings being incongruous and residential areas co-existing with prayer houses, social clubs, schools, etc. Also, no strict adherence has been given to the building codes made by the Government due to some government officials' corrupt nature who approve any building plan as long as their "palms are greased," but will mark the houses of those who refuse to comply for demolition other factors such as poverty, inadequate land allocation policy by the Government, etc. have also contributed to denying Yenagoa the attainment of a world-class city.

Therefore, it is recommended that the State government make a conscious effort to implement and develop sustainable city development plans that will endure irrespective of the government in power. Again, the Government's land allocation policy should be done by categorising the city into well-recognised zones that can be easily identified and not the incongruous situations the city currently inhabits. Conclusively, the Yenagoa city master plan should be implemented as this will give the city a direction for development and not the current haphazard way the city is growing.

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