

**URBANIZATION DYNAMICS ON LAGOS – IBADAN EXPRESSWAY CORRIDOR:
CASE STUDY OF MOWE**

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the features of emerging urbanization on Lagos-Ibadan Expressway with a particular focus on Mowe town. The spill-over of the ever increasing population of Lagos Mega city was found to be taking refuge in the town with indiscriminate housing development. Using household and building survey as primary sources of data to complement the existing secondary data the study uncovered a plethora of negative urbanization trends such as poor housing, uncoordinated and unplanned landuses as well as inadequate provision of urban facilities and services with disastrous planning implications. Timely adequate planning interventions were suggested to remedy the situation.

Keywords: Urbanization, physical planning, development, urban facilities, housing.

INTRODUCTION

Rapid growth of cities is a worldwide phenomenon in recent years though it is more intense in the developing countries than their developed counterparts. More than half of the world's 7.2 billion people presently live in urban areas. As recalled by Agbola (2005), from an insignificant level of less than 5 percent in 1800, urban population increased to 47 percent in 2000, and is expected to reach 65 percent by 2030. The remarkable difference between the trends of urbanization in the developed and developing countries was painted vividly by Kasim (2009) who stated that in the 1950s, 23 of the world's largest urban agglomeration were found in the developed countries but by 1985, the reverse was the case. In fact, at the turn of the century 17 of the world's 20 largest cities were said to be in the third world.

Nigeria is classical case of this emerging urbanization trend in the third world; with 45.9 percent of her 167 million people reside in urban centres. The urban growth in the country has been consistently increasing from 1950 when it was just 15 percent. Perhaps, more worrisome is the urbanization rate which is currently put at an average of 5.8%, as against the national annual growth rate of 2.2% (HDR, 2004). While there is nothing wrong in urbanization itself the danger lies in the near absence of appropriate institutional mechanism to meet its numerous challenges in the developing environment like Nigeria. Such challenges include housing, environment and infrastructural issues among others. For instance, evidence abounds in literature of the linkage between urban environmental factors and prevalence of many health problems, ranging from the common ones like malaria and dysentery to a more complicated one like mental illness (Egunjobi, 2011).

Urbanization in the study area presents a slightly different scenario from the usual trend of urbanization in Nigeria characterized by natural growth and rural urban drift as revealed in the literature. Here, we are confronted with an urbanization process largely driven by population spillage from the neighbouring over-populated mega city. Ogun state territory which account for about 60 percent of the total stretch of this

corridor provides an excellent setting for the study. And Mowe town which is strategically placed among the emerging urban centres in the area with adequate historical data was picked as a case study.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Urbanization is an omnibus term which can refer to the process of transformation of a rural area to an urban centre or the consequence of such a transformation as reflected in the urban ways of life and associated complexities. As observed by Fagbohun (2007), it is traditionally used to describe an increasing proportion of people in an area relative to the surrounding areas, especially the exodus of people from the agrarian rural communities to urban community due to certain factors. The history of urbanization in Western Europe is particularly traced to such exodus starting from the industrial revolution era (Kingsley, 1973).

Two major forces said to be responsible for urbanization are ‘push and pull factors’ otherwise known as centrifugal forces of dispersion and centripetal forces of attraction. The former has to do with all the negative factors that drive people away from a lagging region or community such as unemployment, lack of basic amenities and infrastructure while the latter is concerned with the presence of different forms of attractions that lure people to urban centres such as job opportunity, access to basic amenities, social facilities, better housing, etc. However, these original forces of attraction can over the years turn into forces of dispersion in the face of population pressure. Corroborating this view, Agbola (2005) noted the usual paradox of cities as economic and cultural centres but at the same time centres of ‘dramatic crises, ranging from unemployment, environmental degradation, and deficiencies in urban services...’ Cities find themselves in this situation when the initial forces of attraction are left unmaintained, unreplenished and unupgraded for a long time in the face of mounting population pressure. This eventually led to a situation where those who could not cope leave the congested city to find succor in the nearest probable place as currently witnessed along Lagos – Ibadan Expressway.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data for this research were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data used include the household survey in which 400 household heads picked through cluster sampling were interviewed on a wide range of issues from socio-economic to housing characteristics.

A household head was picked in each of the first willing household met in the 400 houses selected as sample for the survey. The survey was equally complemented by personal observation. The research also made use of existing data on the historical development of the study area and record of landuses in recent times. These categories of data came from the local government and planning authority in charge of the area. The data analysis was basically descriptive.

EVOLUTION AND GROWTH OF MOWE

Historically, Mowe was founded in the early 19th century as one of the farming villages of Igbein people of Egba Alake. The original settlers were therefore the Egba who engaged in farming as their major occupation. It is located in a low lying flood plain area. It remained a village of very few houses for almost a century until late 1970s when the construction of Lagos/Ibadan Expressway changed the situation (see fig. 1). Therefore, there are two recognizable phases of development of this settlement. The pre 1978 era when the settlement was characterized by scattered homesteads under the administrative jurisdiction of Ofada District Office. Then there was no visible traces of modern amenities or utilities and value of land was minimal and post 1978 era when the area began to open up. The transformation of that era was attributed to many factors which include the construction of Lagos/Ibadan Expressway in 1978, the construction of Mowe/Ofada road in 1992 and the subsequent attraction of many private housing estates such as Redemption Camp to the area (Abolade, 2011). Today, the exodus of people into the town has led to diversification of landuses ranging from commercial, industrial and institutional thereby pushing agriculture into

the background as revealed in table 1, where only 5 percent of household heads are farmers presently.

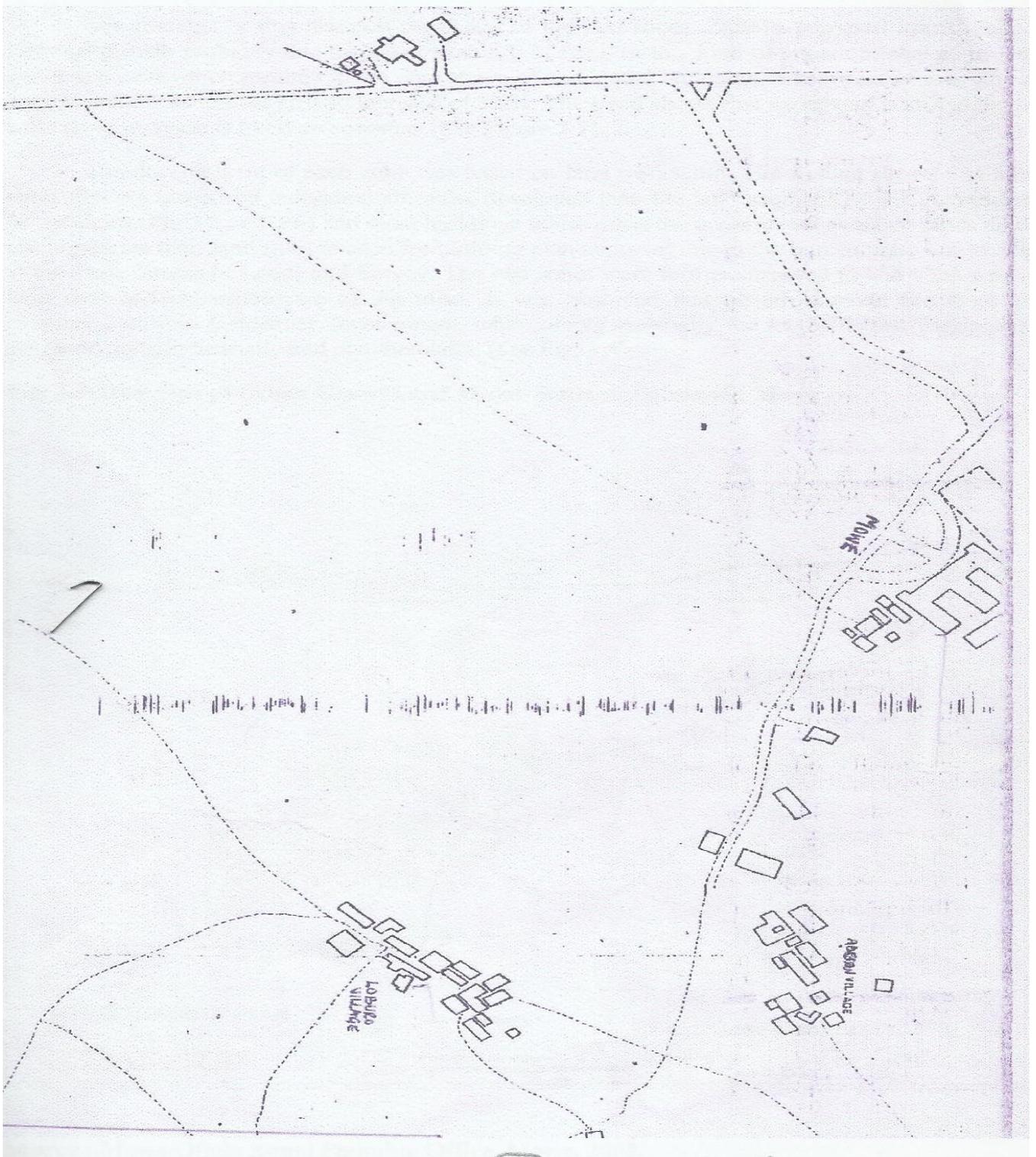
Table 1: Occupation classification of Household Heads in Mowe

Occupation	Number	Percentage
Farmer	20	5
Civil Servant	100	25
Trader	160	40
Student	16	4
Artisan	64	16
Others	40	10
Total	400	100

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2011.

Territorially, the town has spread to engulf some of the surrounding villages such as Loburo, Agbo, Pakuro and Adesan and still extending at exponential rate. Although, some leap frog developments are noted, the settlement presently covers approximately 11 square kilometers as against the estimated 12,500 square metres in the early 1960s (compare figs. 1 and 2). This is a rise of 879 percent within a period of 50 years. This perhaps makes it one of the fastest growing urban agglomeration in Nigeria based on land coverage when put side by side with previous studies. Bello (2001) estimated the increase area coverage of Ibadan at 2680 percent in 68 years (1934 – 2001) while Jinadu (2004) put that of Abuja at 622.76 percent in 14 years (1987 – 2001).

Fig. 1: Map of Mowe and Adjoining Villages in 1960



Source: Obafemi/Owode Local Government, Ogun State.

Fig. 2: Areal Imagery Map of Mowe showing Direction of Growth



Source: Goggle Earth, 2011.

CHALLENGES OF URBANIZATION IN MOWE

A sleeping village of Mowe in the early 1960s was a settlement hardly prepared for urbanization challenges it is facing today. With little or no infrastructural facilities outside the strategic arterial roads that pass through the settlement, the stream of new entrants seem to take solace only in the relatively cheap housing and nearness to the commercial city of Lagos. In specific terms, the study uncovered the following challenges.

Inadequate Housing Development

There is evident of indiscriminate housing development by different categories of developers with utter disregard for planning rules and regulation. Only 26% of the surveyed houses claimed to have building plan approval. This trend was also buttressed by the low level of building permit applications recorded in the settlement over the years as indicated in table 2.

Table 2: Building Plans Registered and Approved in Mowe Area 2006 – 2010

Year	Plans Registered	Plans Approved
2006	258	125
2007	921	569
2008	299	160
2009	249	154
2010	325	202
Total	2025	1210

Source: Mowe/Ofada Zonal Planning Office, Mowe 2011.

Inadequate Landuse Planning and Development

The craze for housing in the town has put the consideration for the provision of other essential human needs into the background as revealed in table 3. In 2010, plan approval for housing constitutes 91.5 percent of the total number of approvals

undertaken in Mowe while commercial, public and industrial landuses trail far behind with 4.9, 2.4 and 2.0 percent respectively. Recreational and agricultural landuses recorded no approval in the year. This trend could not have been possible in a well planned emerging urban environment.

Table 3: Plans Approval by Land Use Development in Mowe 2010

Months	Res.	Com.	Public	Rec.	Agric.	Ind.	Total
January	20	-	-	-	-	1	21
February	11	-	-	-	-	-	11
March	19	1	-	-	-	1	21
April	16	1	-	-	-	-	17
May	11	1	1	-	-	-	13
June	13	1	1	-	-	-	15
July	9	2	1	-	-	-	12
August	15	1	-	-	-	-	16
September	16	2	-	-	-	2	20
October	27	1	1	-	-	-	29
November	6	-	-	-	-	-	6
December	20	-	1	-	-	-	21
Total	183	10	5	-	-	4	202

Insufficient Urban Services and Utilities

Urban centres are supposed to be centres of culture and improved social life. The present situation in Mowe is a negation of this ideal as many of the facilities and utilities are seriously lacking. Only 44.8 percent of the residents have access to potable water, 64 percent to electricity, 10 percent to proper refuse disposal and 8.4 percent to outdoor recreational facilities.

Planning Implications and Recommendations

There is no doubting the fact that if the scenario painted above is allowed to continue in Mowe and by extension in other emerging settlements on that corridor, the area might become one huge sprawling development in no distant future. Unfortunately, the resultant nuisance will not be limited to these settlements alone but spread to the strategic Expressway that runs through them. It is instructive to note that despite the

public acquisition of the 2km wide stretch of the Expressway in this area, illegal private developments continue unabated on the land in the absence of firm institutional mechanism to control development. Similarly, it should not be forgotten that the area lies in an ecologically sensitive area, flood plain of Ogun River, which called for restraint in terms of physical development and other human activities.

Therefore, adequate planning intervention is needed to firstly address the issue of mad rush from our over-populated cities such as Lagos by attending to the most pressing problem of housing as a push factor. Secondly, new urban centres springing up in the fringe or within the catchment area of our over-populated cities should be closely monitored and planned for their new urban roles to ensure effective urban governance in the country. Siting of planning authority and public land acquisition alone can not forestall indiscriminate urban development but strong institutional control mechanism and provision of adequate infrastructure that would attract credible developers.

CONCLUSION

Urbanization by its nature is not a problem but like the proverbial elephant in a Chinese shop, if not properly guided it can wreck havoc. It is against this backdrop that conscious efforts must always be made in the developing nations to avoid the bad side of urbanization because of our high level of vulnerability and low level of coping mechanism in the event of any environmental disaster. Mowe and other similar settlements may be a disaster in waiting if urgent action is not taken by the concern authorities before it is too late.

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