



City as Habitat; Assembling the Fragile City

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Received 12 December 2019; Accepted 12 April 2020

Abstract

The African continent is urbanizing at a breakneck pace and our cities are in a state of crisis. The causes may vary, so also is the degree of severity, but there is a widely felt sense of urban problems requiring urgent solutions. The nature of the problems is complex, with economic, social, educational, political and physical factors playing major roles in exacerbating the situation. Yet, whatever is perceived to be the most serious physical problems in a city, one key underlying question always present is: What can be done about the disaffection of people for their own urban environments? This issue of fragility may be seen in simple terms of a drop in the perceived desirability of the city as a place one can live, work or shop in. Whatever the name, the fact is that too many Nigerian cities are becoming unattractive to many citizens and residents. This paper aims at identifying the various ways of assembling a fragile city. Through the review of existing literature, the paper highlights the causes of city fragility focusing on three Nigerian cities. It also discusses fragility as the main hurdle to implementing Sustainable Development Goals and how fragile situation birth architecture of fear. Then, it concludes by noting that developing nations in sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria need to be proactive in deconstructing their fragile cities.

Keywords: Fragile Cities; Urban Environment; Population; Physical Problem; Nigeria.

1. Introduction

One of the most drastic demographic changes in human history is the sheer pace and scale of urbanization in recent times. The global population that resides in cities is more than half. According to Muggah [1], the speed and extent of the urban revolution is spellbinding. Available statistics indicates that in the early 1800s only about 3 percent of the world's population lived in cities as compared to over 50 percent today. In the 1950s there were just 83 cities with over one million people and only three megacities. However, in 2015, at least 500 cities have population figures above one million, with over 28 megacities having ten million or more dwellers. Currently, there are over 4,000 cities with population of more than 100,000 inhabitants within the different geographical location in the world, providing homes to over 4 billion persons but only 600 of the cities account for more than two thirds of the global gross domestic product. Among the latter are 34 megacities that provide home to one-fifth of humanity. It is also observed that the greater part of future urbanization will be concentrated not in hyper or megacities, but in small and medium-sized cities in low and medium-income countries in Asia and Africa. The future geography of security and development will be marked by little known and insignificant cities. More surprising is the fact that the global slum population will increase from 1 billion to 2 billion people by 2040 [1]. This suggests that there are tremendous opportunities in these fast-growing settings, but there are also unsettling risks associated with this.

With the direction of urban population growth shifting dramatically, it is challenging to discern with certainty in this 21st century where and why cities will falter and/or fail. Predicting which cities will thrive and survive is even

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 <http://dx.doi.org/10.28991/cej-2020-03091536>



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