

## Chapter 16

# Land Use Policy and Urban Sprawl in Nigeria:

## Land Use and the Emergence of Urban Sprawl

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### ABSTRACT

*Land use policy is central to the development of urban life and the emergence of cities. In many developed capitalist societies, both the planning and expansion of the cities are usually anchored on sustainable urban land policies such that the growth of urban sprawl is effectively controlled. In most developing countries, land use policies are not only disparate, they are usually not connected to the growth of cities because policy makers are after the money they could make from private investors. This chapter argues that though the coming of the Land Use Act 1978 ended the era of disparate land law regimes, it has, over the years, sealed the control of urban lands to state governors, a development that has created massive corruption and arbitrariness in the allocation and utilization of urban lands. This approach to land administration has also hindered effective and sustainable urban and regional planning in many Nigerian cities. This study suggests the review of the 1978 Land Use Act and effective utilization of modern technologies in the monitoring of urban sprawls.*

### INTRODUCTION

Land use policy is very central and critical to the development of urban life and the emergence of cities. Whether in the developed or less developing societies, adequate knowledge of land use and the growth of urban sprawl, are very important to the development of urban life and administration of urban services. In the United States as in other developed countries, the concern of government is on how to synergize land use policy with urban development in order effectively monitor the growth and development of the cities (Sholanke, 1990; Butler, 2012; Otubu, 2010; Mehran and Kiani, 2014). The synergy between the

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two, when carefully tapped, can go a long way in ensuring secured property rights, stable investment climate, effective regional planning across the cities in Nigeria.

Land use policy is as important as urban and regional planning because it helps government shape its decisions on the amount of land that will be allocated to or shared by each segment of the society; human settlements, the industries, road construction, the transportation systems, the economy, urban infrastructure and rural areas (Atilola, 2010). As good as land use policy is for urban development, not many governments around the world particularly in the developing world have succeeded in pursuing effective land use policies and urban administration that are capable of reducing urban poverty and the debilitating human conditions in most urban sprawls (Sun, 2015). Although, the growth of urban sprawls, is inevitable in the evolution of cities, countries where urban sprawls are poorly managed tend to make citizens vulnerable to urban problems such as armed robbery and unsecured property rights.

This chapter discusses the role of land use policy in the emergence and growth of urban sprawls in Nigeria. The objectives of the study are to: 1. examine the challenge of urban sprawl in Nigeria 2. Interrogate the land use policy of Nigeria 3. examine the effect of Nigeria's land use policy on the nature of urban sprawl in the country.

## **BACKGROUND**

The concept of "Land Use Policy" is often used to refer to government's blueprint or regulatory framework pertaining to procedures, methods and approaches the state will adopt to control the acquisition, allocation, distribution, management and utilization of public lands for the benefits of the citizens (Abiodun, Olaleye, Dokai & Odunaiya, 2011). Sholanke (1990) opined that a land use policy is the government's blueprint guiding the reform as well as the administration of lands for urban and rural development. In many parts of the world, land use policy often determines a number of other government policies pertaining to investment growth and economic development. No wonder, it is so central to wealth creation and the development of the city (Oluyede, 1985; Aluko, 2004; Mabogunje, 2009; Otubu, 2010).

Urban sprawl, on the other, denotes a pattern of human settlement on the fringes of the city caused by a combined forces of urban expansion, increase in population size and density, pressure on urban infrastructure, public health and traffic conditions in the city and increasing road networks to the hinterlands (Sun, 2015). In the developed world, urban sprawl is a matter of preference for those who are willing to live on the fringes of the city, in the developing countries, it is matter of necessity. It is a matter of necessity because citizens' movement to the area, is usually as a result of the pressure on urban land use, population density and access to resources in the inner part of the city (Bekele, 2005). Urban sprawl, when, considered, within the context of land law, can also be describe an abnormal spatial expansion of the city to low-density areas due to the inability of people to have access to legitimate land rights or fulfill their legal requirements as prescribed by law. In Nigeria, urban sprawl also entails the construction or erection of buildings in areas not approved by city planners or government's land bureaus.

Bekele (2005) argued that "Sprawl is the spreading out of a city and its suburbs over more and more rural land area. This involves the conversion of open space (rural land) into built up, developed land over time". Owei, Obinna & Akalo (2008) stated that;

*Urban sprawl is commonly used to describe physically expanding urban areas consisting largely of a pattern of low-density expansion of large urban areas, under market conditions, into mostly surround-*

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