



BETWEEN HUMAN AND ECONOMIC AGGLOMERATION: THE RATIONALE FOR SUSTAINABLE URBAN CONTROL

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ABSTRACT

Urbanization has been held culpable in environmental degradation but with a weak link and blurry understanding of the process. Against this background, this paper assumes a disparate argument on the critique of urbanization on the core of urban sustainability. From most treatises of urban studies, it has always been sustainability versus urbanization. However, agglomeration of economy has not existed without human agglomeration and sustainability has been argued to have economic dimensions. The case noted in this paper suggests that there is a need to understand the complex relationships between urbanization and sustainability; and we would see the resolve, finding expressions in spatiality.

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INTRODUCTION

Sustainable environmental development has received enormous attention in terms of conceptual clarifications, institutional development, policy and programmes adoption and general learning in the last few decades. (UN-Habitat, 1976, 1996) and their consequences have helped to guide the ongoing development of policy (UNICED, 1992). The rationale for urban environmental sustainability has found expression in best practices inherent in what scholars have pictured in ecological approach to city planning (Dizdaroglu *et al*, 2009; Ichimura, 2003; Newman and Jennings, 2008, p. 80). This involved wider issues of global warming and climate change, environmental disasters and so on (Oliver, 2007; UN-HABITAT, 2005). While all of urban greenery, poverty reduction, housing and transportation affordability and accessibility to adequate infrastructure among others are considered very germane to sustainability discourse, the threshold of population that can sustain wealth generation;

which is necessary to make the city viable to its functions is also an important factor. This has generated interesting scholarly debates. Scholars want to know if urbanization itself is important to city sustainability. But few scholars have open treatises on the social and economic aspects of urbanization in relation to urban sustainability. This is a serious concern when it is viewed against the pattern of population growth and city development the world over. A mental search for naturally decongesting cities may be an unsustainable thinking. Urbanization is visible everywhere in the world and it is racing speedily in developing countries (McKinsey, 2009; 32, 2010; 37, UN, 2008; 4). Several abatement techniques have been proffered and some applied, some worked, many failed; yet, the rural urban drift is increasing in trend (UN, 2003). Not all forms of urban development produce the same result; while some degenerate the urban environment, some are efficient, consume fewer resources and are more productive. Regarding city inefficiency therefore, it would be naïve to blame population agglomeration instead of the inability to manage the people as well as use their potentials to make the city a better place. The productive potential of the city is inexorably linked to efficient use of resources with vital implications (Frenchman *et al*, 2011). Sustainable development is therefore economic growth achieved through even cleaner industrial and

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energy production (Frenchman *et al*, 2011) it is the physical and functional organization of the city that influences all human activities and the efficiency of resource consumption. Cities are a product of human and industrial agglomeration yet, cities are the engines of growth. The literature has described this growth only in economic terms (UNCHS, 2001, Vliet, 2002). Uncontrollable demographic and spatial growth of the city has been clearly associated with unsustainability but the same scenario has been linked with economic growth. This leaves us with few questions when city growth is discussed. For instance, how do we define the growth? Are we to understand growth only in terms of the GDP and per capital income? What are the manifestations of growth and what sustainable response are adequate for them? If different components of the city grow, shall we measure sectorial growths to determine the overall city growth? When is this growth sustainable and is the said growth synonymous to, integrated with or only partly related to sustainability? While system approach is highly valued and encouraged, clarity for easy understanding and application should necessarily break the city into parts for attention and sustainability actions, and later aggregated to determine the sustainability index for any city.

Urbanization versus Sustainability

Urbanization is perhaps the most criticized phenomenon when discussed against the background of city liveability and environmental sustainability (Fazal, 2010; Oliver, 2007; UN-HABITAT, 2005). Problems listed to be emanating from rapid urbanization include shantytowns, unemployment, political and social unrest, delinquency, lack of basic infrastructure, overuse of resources and transportation chaos among others (Jiboye, 2011, 2005, Osasona, 2007). It has long been blamed for the ills of underdevelopment, but in fact can be an important development tool (Friedman, 1968). While increase in urbanization is anticipated as a threat to environmental sustainability, it may also mean an economy agglomeration as human and social capital aggregate to improve economic diversification and productivity; if proper actions are taken. This is because the world economy measured by the gross domestic product (GDP) has been growing with urbanization. It has increased six fold in the last five decades with average growth rate of 3.9% (Egunjobi, 2006; OECD, 2008).

Earliest scholars defined urbanization from three schools of thought: population growth, industrialization or multi-functionality and plurality which cause anomie and anonymity. Nevertheless, there have been controversies and heated academic debate on the causal relationship between urbanization and economic development has challenged the existing theories supporting economy agglomeration and the spatial growth among constituent parts of urbanization process (Henderson, 2003; 2002a; Gallup Sacks and Mellinger, 1999, William *et al.*, 2002, Padiison, 2001; Daramola&Ibem, 2011). While the earlier school of thought posits that there is a causal relationship between urbanization and economic development, the other school of thought opine that urbanization only emerges as a part of economic growth, and that the claim of the association lacks econometric evidences. Dual economic models of urbanization have been said to be oddly static (Lewis, 1954; Rannis and Fei, 1961; Harris and Todaro, 1970; Ray, 1998; Kelley and Williamson, 1998; Becker, Mills, and Williamson, 1984; Fay and Opal, 1999; Davis and Henderson, 2001). Placing the two arguments together rather suggests a

cyclic relationship between them. There are two major issues; which are apparently two sides of a coin and cyclically relating consequences of urbanization in the cities. Economic development and increased urbanization seems to be in a continual relationship, and reproducing themselves at a higher scale as their scales increase. This is traceable to the fact that the chief reason for the mass exodus of people into cities has been noted to be a search for greener pasture. This results in population agglomeration but not without attendant environmental problems. While personal corporate and regional or national economic development is desirable, the environmental consequence of urbanisation has been monumental and worrisome. As part of their responsibilities, city planners, through the system and holistic approach of city planning are also concerned by regional economic growth and are working tirelessly to integrate physical development with all other forms of development (Keeble, 1969) for a consequent national and global sustainable development.

The concept of sustainable development has been used to articulate several essential shifts of perspective in how we relate to the world around us and, consequently, how we expect governments to make policies that support that world view (UN, 2005). "Governments face the complex challenge of finding the right balance between the competing demands on natural and social resources, without sacrificing economic progress. First, there is the realisation that economic growth alone is not enough: the economic, social and environmental aspects of any action are interconnected. Considering only one of these at a time leads to errors in judgment and "unsustainable" outcomes (Frenchman *et al*, 2011). Focusing only on profit margins, for example, has historically led to social and environmental damages that cost society in the long run. By the same token, taking care of the environment and providing the services that people need depends at least in part on economic resources.

Use of quality of life as part of place promotion and city marketing has placed most emphasis on a rather narrow conception of quality of life: one that is place-based rather than people-based (Rogerson, 1999). Against many opinions, it is argued here that strategies should be devised to steer a country along the difficult path of deliberate urbanization. Many authors have neglected to treat a more important relationship between cities and national development that would reveal the city as a decisive factor in the transformation of societies into modern and industrialised nation states through economic agglomerations. However, the positive characteristics of urbanization and the dynamics by which it creates development are suggested by the communications model of social development (Figueroa *et al*, 2002).

Urbanization and City Live ability

The question of what would be the stake of liveability in urban centers is not just evolving, but tends to becoming rhetoric (UN, 2012). The genesis of the concern for environmental sustainability and the fulcrum for the establishment of the world commission on environment and development emphasized two ideas: the well-being of the environment of economies and of people inextricably linked; and the global scale of sustainability. Environmental sustainability posits that life depends on a complex set of interactions between people, their natural environment and economic system. It follows therefore that, economic sustainability is inextricably linked to city liveability.

Rich cities tend to have what it takes to initiate explore and sustain the prerequisites for the welfare of its citizenry which eventually culminate into their city liveability. Cities of the world have been assessed over time using the variables of urbanization, economic development and city liveability based on certain criteria (UN, 2012). Adopting the UN (2012) ranking of the world cities on the ground of liveability; this study picked the top and the bottom ten and compared them on the basis of urbanization (using population as the surrogate), liveability and national growth (using the GDP as the surrogate). This reveals a linear relationship between the trios. It would be observed (Table 1, Fig 1)

Urbanization and economic growth go hand in hand; in fact no country has ever attained middle income status without urbanizing, and none has reached high income without vibrant cities that are centers of innovation, entrepreneurship and culture (World Bank, 2014). With cities accounting for some 70 percent of global GDP, recent economic thinking is reshaping how policymakers and development practitioners view urbanization. In other words, the policy debate has evolved from containing urbanization to one of preparing for it and of reaping the benefits of economic growth associated with urbanization while reducing poverty, congestion, crime, informality, and slums and fostering innovation and

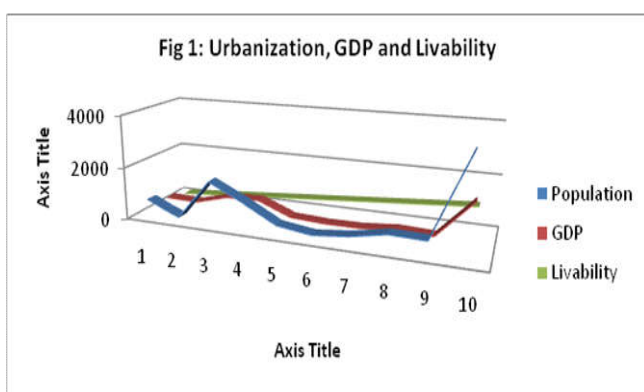
Table 1. Urbanization and City Liveability

| The top 10 City | Spatial Adjusted Liveability Index | RANK - Spatial Adjusted Liveability Index | RANK - EIU Liveability index (from city sample used) | Population (Million) | GDP (\$Billion) |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|---|--|----------------------|-----------------|
| Hong Kong | 87.8 | 1 | 10 | 7.12 | 350.4 |
| Amsterdam | 87.4 | 2 | 8 | 1.6 | 322.3 |
| Osaka | 87.4 | 3 | 3 | 17.01 | 671.2 |
| Paris | 87.1 | 4 | 5 | 10.76 | 715 |
| Sidney | 86.0 | 5 | 2 | 3.79 | 203.1 |
| Stockholm | 86.0 | 6 | 4 | 2.05 | 133.6 |
| Berlin | 85.9 | 7 | 7 | 3.50 | 143.3 |
| Toronto | 85.4 | 8 | 1 | 6.12 | 260.6 |
| Munich | 85.1 | 9 | 9 | 5.80 | 210.3 |
| Tokyo | 84.3 | 10 | 6 | 37.13 | 1616.0 |
| Bottom 10 City | | | | | |
| Tehran | 47.7 | 61 | 65 | 12.6 | 41.8 |
| Nairobi | 47.4 | 62 | 61 | 3.12 | 55.2 |
| Lusaka | 44.7 | 63 | 62 | 1.7 | 26.8 |
| Phnom Penh | 44.6 | 64 | 63 | 2.2 | 15.3 |
| Karachi | 42.8 | 65 | 67 | 18.2 | 78.0 |
| Dakar | 41.9 | 66 | 64 | 2.45 | 14.0 |
| Abidjan | 41.0 | 67 | 66 | 4.71 | 13.0 |
| Dhaka | 37.9 | 68 | 70 | 7.0 | 10.9 |
| Lagos | 34.8 | 69 | 68 | 11.55 | 91.0 |
| Harare | 33.4 | 70 | 69 | 2.8 | 14.0 |

Source: Adapted from UN/The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, 2012.

studying the top ten countries; that, while liveability increases with a corresponding increase in the GDP, the population also increases. On the other hand, it is also observable that liveability decreased with a decreasing economic growth as urbanization relatively reduced. One would deduce that, population growth does not necessarily reduce liveability if the economic growth is commensurate with population growth. It follows that, urbanization should not just be measured in terms of the volume of population; rather, the economic power of the large population is an important factor for city economic growth and liveability. Urbanization may not be a magic for economic development but an agglomeration of an empowered large population who are positioned in an urban ecosystem to both give and receive between city parts promises a sustainable urban growth.

entrepreneurship (Frenchman *et al*, 2011). Urbanization is a game changer that is reshaping the development dialogue at a global scale. But while the global policy debate is moving from the ills of urbanization to harnessing the gains from urban transformation, the jury is still out on the choice, timing, sequence and location of policy instruments and investments that can help in enhancing economic efficiency and environmental sustainability while balancing social, spatial, and environmental equity. Setting policy priorities and highlighting trade-offs is essential, particularly as the urbanization process and the urban economy are influenced by macro trends, investment decisions across sectors, and local policy efforts. However, multiple layers of actors and cross sectoral influences make this task particularly challenging especially since policy discourse, development assistance, and research on urbanization often run in sectoral silos. Urbanization has proven to be a powerful engine for sustainable and healthy economic growth.”(World Bank, 2014). One can learn from the experience of China that, keeping a high income through sustainable urbanization is fundamental to urbanization management; urbanization management also is prerequisite to becoming a rich country. The potentials of cities are effectively harnessed, thereby improving cities efficiency and promoting needed innovations for the desired growth. Good governance, strengthened urban environmental protection, pollution control, effective and efficient institutional mechanism; starting from the lowest to the highest environmental units are vital to develop inclusive and sustainable urbanization.



“It is necessary to put people at the core of urbanization, supported by institutional and systemic innovation, and unleash the development potential of urbanization through reform. We need to accelerate reform of the fiscal and tax system as well as investment and financing mechanisms, promote the application of the public-private partnership (PPP) model, to help build a diverse and sustainable urban financing mechanism. We need to gradually address the issue of basic public services for rural migrants, and create a mechanism to link the financial payment system for rural migrants transferring to urban areas, in order to achieve the goals for people centered urbanization.” (World Bank, 2014)

China has been growing. The country’s population has been projected to rise above one billion by 2030. To this end, China’s leadership instead of decrying urbanization seeks an effective coordination of its process. China has been able to harness its urbanization for sustainable growth through land, labour and infrastructural resources; lifting half a billion residents out of poverty.

“If China stays committed and implements the necessary reforms, it could become a global model on urbanization, while winning the war on pollution, sustaining high growth rates for its economy, making cities more livable and allowing more people to benefit from development.”(World Bank, 2014)

Sustainable Environmental Development: An Overview

The concept of sustainable cities and its links with sustainable development have been discussed since the early 1990s (Dodman *et al.*, 2013). Sustainable cities should meet their “inhabitants’ development needs without imposing unsustainable demands on local or global natural resources and systems” (Satterthwaite, 1992). In this sense, consumption patterns of urban middle- and high-income groups are responsible for the use of a significant portion of the world’s finite resources and contribute significantly to the production of polluting wastes. Sustainable development should focus on better living and working conditions for the poor, including affordable access to, and improvement of, housing, health care, water and sanitation, and electricity (Dodman *et al.*, 2013). The 1992 Rio Declaration integrated the economic, social, environmental and governability dimensions of sustainability and argued for the eradication of unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, the eradication of poverty, and the role of the State, civil society and international community in protecting the environment (UN, 2012). Agenda 21 (UN, 1993), defined sustainability in the context of economic, social, environmental and governance issues, noting the decisive role of authorities and civil society at the local, national and international levels for the implementation of sustainable development policies. Yet, Agenda 21 did not explain how the concept of sustainability could become the basis for the creation of sustainable cities. The Habitat II Agenda (UN, 1997), held in Istanbul emphasized the multidimensionality of development, and the necessity of urban sustainability to harness. Nevertheless, some issues such as of climate change was excluded. The dynamism in the sustainability movement is one of the reasons for the difficulty in defining it. Putting it together in the exact words of CDS from Tshwane, South Africa

“A sustainable human settlement is a settlement that works for its residents, both now and in the future. It is a settlement in

which people live; in which they shop, seek entertainment, care for their children, and socialize. A sustainable human settlement is a settlement in which residents access social amenities such as healthcare clinics, libraries, schools, open space, and so on. A settlement is sustainable when its residents can breathe fresh air, where the water quality is good, where waste is managed so that they don’t face health risks, and where the continued existence of ecological habitats is supported and ensured. A sustainable human settlement is also a settlement in which people vote and express their opinions freely; in which they work and pay taxes; and in which all of these things are possible without putting undue stress on the community, the family, the individual, the economy, or the environment. Finally, a sustainable human settlement is a settlement where residents can expect that all these things will be true for their children and their children’s children.” — CDS from Tshwane, South Africa

Sustainability has been traditionally defined as meeting the current needs without compromising the future generation’s ability to meet theirs (Bruntl and Commission, 1987). However, Core to the tenets of sustainable development are three pillars of the society, economy and environment. Sustainable development has become a conceptual touchstone; one of the defining ideas of the contemporary society. Much has been said about environmental sustainability. Disaggregating this into physical social and economic sustainability gives it a new complex look.

Sustainable urbanization/Urban Control: The Imperatives

Historically, marked changes in the city have been as a result of technological innovations and applications. The nineteenth century change was an accompaniment of the mechanical revolution and technological application to almost all aspects of human living and enterprises. The gravitation in theoretical underpinnings that guided planning understanding and technique has been modelled by technological transformations too. At each time, planner’s thought of the city have always changed with changes in the level of technology that is available to his city. We have thus seen a new way of understanding, planning and solving city problems. The dynamics of the city was informed by the transition from the era of the man of foot to the man on wheel. There is need for a new paradigm that suits the transition of cities to digital era. A blind embrace of the modernist’s city ideology of the 1920s put planning far behind the pace of time in the fast moving 21st century. The modernist movement was triggered by the popularity of the automobile, thinking of man in the city to be on wheel than on foot. Then, city efficiency was achieved through standardization, segregation (zoning) and repetition of functions. Fuel was cheap, air was clean, humans and vehicles were fewer, and type of economic activities, mode of production, employment, business logistics, social interaction as well as life style choices were different. Planning with obsolete modernist ideas at this time would result in failure (Frenchman, 2011). The incapability of planning in developing countries to take advantage of urbanization in cities is its inability to win the race against time. Growth would occur at any circumstance and the already urbanize cities may not downsize. This knowledge can enable planning achieve sustainability at little or no cost. Looking for a ‘one-size-fits-all’ model is reverting back into the modernist inventions. Our search for city liveability and sustainability should emphasize cultural diversity and liveability, which will necessarily vary from place to place. City sustainability against the background

of rising urbanization should necessarily involve the preparing of the city for large population so that the next generation of city may emerge based on smarter systems. (Dirks and Keeling, 2010; Capra, 1996, 2002), The 21st century planning paradigm seeks to concentrate and mix people with the aid of advanced technology such as transportation, electronic and other digital systems. The Improved technology weaves the physical, social and economic fabrics in harmonious interdependence. Land uses mix in satisfactory way, Reduce amount of travels. Encourage compact city development and so encourage walking; promote social interaction. Urban systems are more efficiently managed- traffic flow, waste management, community lighting, spaces are reclaimed supporting re-use. Electric cars use less energy and space (Mitchell *et al*, 2010). Smart connected cities can be greener (Wim Elfrink, 2009). Cities may reduce overall energy consumption by 30% through online transactions and new forms of collaborations (Frenchman *et al*, 2009). The level of preparedness of cities to anticipate and provide to meet for the demands of urbanization entails complex interrelated efforts. All aspects of the city needs this preparation. Sustainable thinking that produces livable environment need to be implemented from time to time to accommodate the inevitable city growth. The city itself should be positioned to make the maximum social, physical and economic gains. While energy efficiency measures are very important towards pollution abatement, relevant energy and environmental conservation methods should be put in place through policies and regulations such as the green building programs. Efficient waste management system, renewable energy use and kerbside recycling should be a part of urban culture; engineered by Government policies, conscious environmental education and incentives to motivate stakeholders to both challenge and encourage residents to stick to good practices which would lower health, environmental and sundry risks. These should necessarily be complimented by open space, water quality and environmental sensitive area protection. Efficient transportation system is also very important. When this is done, economic development is guaranteed. Bridging the gap between city characteristics of developed and developing world will certainly find expression in technological investments in cities.

Adapting the smart city approach to controlling our cities and making the city liveable for more residents is an imperative. Economically, sustainable urbanization can be achieved with smart growth measures. This involves agricultural protection zoning, brown field reclamation, cluster or targeted economic development, eco-industrial park development, infill development, tax incentives for environmentally friendly development, urban growth boundary and/or urban service boundary, business retention programmes, empowerment/enterprise zones, local business incubator programmes. Sustainable urbanization and urban management cannot be achieved without conscious and cautious urban land management systems. Inability of the Government to gain absolute control over land will hinder the equal access to basic facilities and the result is sprawl that brings along several environmental problems (World Bank, 2014). City forms are noted to have been guided by economic prosperity. Reminiscent of the land use theories and the peculiarities of the urban context, the 'haves', middle income and the 'have nots' have their decisions and choice of where to stay within the city, based on which type of economic opportunity is available to them and the level of affluence they already

attained. There is the need to re-shape the local, regional and National urban policies that supports and accentuates the contribution of urbanization to economic growth. This is needed to be backed by efficient administrative framework that will ensure the execution of the policies geared towards sustainable urban growth. Such execution should be made to prioritize the integration of the urban poor in to the city's social and economic fabric. If the right processes are understood and followed especially in the developing world, income redistribution and healthy urban systems can become the aftermath of urbanization producing very liveable cities in the future. The length to the future now depends on our eagerness or ineptitude to change.

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