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Urban Vacant Land and Spatial Chaos in Ogbomoso North Local Government, Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Vacant land is seen as important component of urban environment capable of generating a detrimental effect on quality of life and the living environment. The study attempts to examine the characteristics, distribution pattern, utilization and the attendant challenges of urban vacant land within Ogbomoso north a local government area in Oyo State, Southwestern Nigeria with a view to assessing the level of maintenance of the vacant lands. In order to achieve these objectives, both primary and secondary data were employed. Primary data were gathered through direct survey and interviews. Simple random sampling was used to purposively select 320 adult interviewed from a compiled list of households obtained from National Population Commission. Secondary data were obtained from internet, books and journals. Data were analyzed making use of descriptive and inferential statistics to present discussion

Index terms— contiguity, environment, facilities, management, vacant land.

1 Introduction

n Nigeria, as in most other developing countries, there is no issue more topical than vacant land management if we are serious in enhancing the livability of urban environment. Therefore the uses of urban vacant land should not be overlooked in urban awareness and in urban studies as these uses play a daily role in the lives of urban dwellers. However, rapid spatial growth has become one of the most notable features of urban centres in Nigeria in the last few decades. This is a result of concentration of socioeconomic, recreational and administrative facilities the nation could boast of in urban centres. In developing countries like Nigeria, this urban growth has not been marched by a proportional increase in services, facilities and an efficient urban management. This has led to case of isolated, haphazard and incidental vacant spaces with their attendant negative consequences of the environment which led to urban decay and environmental degradation (Odedare, 1998). Olatubara, (2004) also stresses that the accelerating growth of urban centre has brought stresses and strains upon the city environment. Significant among the problems are those of overloading on existing facilities thereby causing traffic congestion, inadequate housing, slums, pollution in all its ramification, poor environmental quality and indiscriminate use of urban vacant land. Kufoniyi (1997) opined that the environment is made up of scenes of uncollected garbages and the infilling of vacant spaces and parks which contribute to the environmental degradation of urban areas. He also identified encroachment and illegal occupation of land as part of the urban land.

Nigerian cites have continued to grow at a faster rate than the facilities provided. The phenomenal rate of urbanization in Nigeria is considered as one of the highest in the world (Oyesiku, 2004). As increase urbanization exerts more pressure on urban facilities, the supply of these facilities is increasingly becoming inadequate. Since the last four decades, there has been unprecedented interest in different nature of urban problems. Unfortunately, nothing has more caused urban decay than the indiscriminate use of urban vacant land and vulgar disposition to vacant land management, and more than elsewhere Nigeria has visibly failed in paying attention to this component of urban structure.

Vacant land is a term of reference that has different interpretation for different people. Some refers to vacant land as land within the urban area that is not devoted to development like residential, commercial, industrial etc. Others refer to it as land on the margin of the urban area that is undeveloped. Generally, vacant land provides a function of creating openness in the urban expanse (space). In this study however, vacant from development or developed with low intensive uses. Vacant lands are parcels of land that are not devoted to any functional use or that have been by-passed by developmental activities of the urban area. Vacant land are used as reference to urban open space that are not devoted to any functional use, but not to vacated or razed buildings (Olaleye, 1998). Urban open spaces are parcels of land that have been by-passed by the developmental activities of the urban area and that exist as enclaves surrounded by parcels that have been converted to one or more types of urban use. They account for about one-fifth of the land area of the city (Falade, 1985).

Regarding the overall spatial setting where vacant land are found, one might consider the location of these parcels relative to different types of developed urban land. These spatial relationships can be expressed by means of coefficient of correlation between the amount of buildable vacant land in an area, such as a quarter-section and the distance to a specific major centre or focus in the urban centre, such as the central business district (CBD), a major commercial centre or an industrial district. Most important to note that in the course of planning and developing a town, the provision of open spaces is very vital among other things for hygiene and aesthetic; relaxation and entertainment, personal and social development; recreation etc. The planning and growth of human settlements is very vital to enable a community lives a meaningful and satisfying life.

Previous studies have shown that a sizeable percentage of urban problems arise from the negative impacts generated by the unguided incidental urban vacant land. **??**Filani, 1985;Falade, 1985;Onibokun, 1992) Moreover, they also slow down the space of economic growth. This study seeks to mitigate these negative effects and enhance the positive ones on the environment by the aid of technical objectives policies to properly maintain urban vacant land in Nigerian cities. However, a case study of Ogbomoso North Local Government, a typical historical Yoruba traditional city coping with contemporary growth and spontaneous anarchical and unguided developments shall be brought to focus. In the study area, there are many undeveloped vacant lands within the built-up area and the phenomenon keeps increasing. This study therefore intends to examine the concept and nature of urban vacant land, its characteristics, utilization, management and various challenges with a view to proposing the prudent use of urban land in the study area.

The study aims at studying the characteristics utilization, management and the attendant challenges of urban vacant land within the study area with a view to proffering objective policy recommendations for an effective management of urban vacant land in the study area. Specific objectives of the study are to: (a) examine the location, size, use, ownership and value of identified urban vacant lands, (b) study the contiguity of the urban vacant lands with the predominant use in the area, (c) evaluate the state of the vacant spaces within the study area, with a view to identifying their level of maintenance.

The hypotheses that guide this study are stated in null and alternate forms;

(i) There is no relationship between the size and values of urban vacant land. (H -Null hypothesis) There is a relationship between the size and value of urban vacant land (H -Alternative hypothesis). (ii) There is no relationship between the size of urban vacant land and its distance to the city centre (H -Null hypothesis). There is a relationship between the size of urban vacant land and its distance to the city centre (H -Alternative hypothesis). (iii) There is no relationship between the value of urban vacant land and its distance to the city centre (H -Null hypothesis). There is a relationship between the value of urban vacant land and its distance to the city centre (H Alternative h ypothesis).

2 II.

Materials and Methods The major procedure used in carrying out this research was a cross-sectional procedure in which all necessary information was collected from a set of observed vacant land within the study area. Both primary and secondary sets of data were colleted and analyzed for the study.

Primary data collection was through oral interview and questionnaire administration. Oral interview schedules were conducted with the Director of Town planning, Ogbomoso North Local Government. The questionnaire elicited information about the respondents, sex, age, religion, income, occupation,

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individuals about the vacant land and the environmental problems created by the available incidental vacant land among others. The questionnaire were administered on the residents and the users of the vacant land to collect information on the impact of the urban vacant land on them and what they would want to be done to such spaces.

The opinion surveys were viewed together with the market value, the location and the predominant use in the area to arrive at the optimum use for the vacant plots. With a view of knowing the appropriate market value of land, some estate valuers ”land agents” were consulted in the study area and an open market valuation was also adopted to elicit information on how much the people could afford to buy a particular piece of land if it were to

be offered for sale. Oral interviews were also held with occupiers or owners of the properties and the adjourning properties. Secondary data for this study were sourced from journals and books.

The structured questionnaire was used with precoded answers to the questions from which respondents were able to select best alternatives that were suitable their opinions. The questionnaire were randomly served on the residents of the adjoining plots and the occupiers (if any) of the identified vacant lands. The second types of questionnaire were filled on inspection of each plot by people employed to record information about each vacant plot's characteristics. A total of three hundred and twenty questionnaires were administered while two hundred and forty copies were retrieved.

The areas where the vacant land or undeveloped plots were situated were selected for sampling. The study area was divided into six zones and samples were drawn independently and randomly from each zone. In each of these zones or localities, respondents were selected using the random technique. In most cases, heads of the households were first respondent. However, where heads of households could not be found, male or female adults (who have right to vote) above the ages of 18 years were always in the forefront to respond to the questions. Notwithstanding, children were given the privilege of responding to the questions.

The data collected through the questionnaire, pilot survey and interviews were processed through the use of statistical packaged for social scientists (spss). Descriptive statistical analysis was employed to obtain the frequencies, distribution and percentages. Frequency count, tables and percentages were used to enhance vivid discussion of result. Correlation (coefficient) analysis using Pearson product moment was adopted to test the research hypotheses.

4 III.

5 Discussion of Findings

The following were the research findings for the study: a) Distance of Respondents with respect to vacant land in the study area With a view to knowing the public opinions about impact of urban vacant land on the quality of life on adjoining households, a total of two hundred and forty questionnaires were retrieved out of the three hundred and twenty (320) administered randomly on occupants of adjoining undeveloped plots in the localities chosen for the study.

A study of the distance of the respondent to the vacant plots showed that (45 percent) of the respondents live next door to vacant plots 24 percent lives within 100 meters from one vacant plot or another, (22 percent) of respondents live at more than 100 meters while the remaining (10 percent) respondents lives at more than 200 meters. See Table1. Source : Field survey, December, 2011.

b) Characteristics of land ownership in the study area Significant majority of the respondent (72.5%) provided information on the ownership status of the vacant plots in terms of whether privately or publicly owned. Forty-seven (47) of the vacant plots identified were held by individuals while the remaining eight (8) were held by public institutions. A further analysis shows that, out of 47 plots held by private individuals, 39 were held by Ogbomoso indegenes while the remaining 8 plots were held by other indigenes but not of Ogbomoso origin. Out of the eight held by public institutions, two undeveloped plots belonged to the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), another 2 plots belonged to the Anglican Communion/ Diocesses, one was held by the Ogbomoso Chapter Muslim Society of Nigeria and the remaining three belonged to the government (Ogbomoso North and Oyo state Governments). See Appendix 1.

When asked about the visitation of owners to the vacant lands, 13 percent could identify those that visit their plots on monthly basis, one percent identified those that visit bi-monthly, 18 percent say the owners rarely visit the plots, 8 percent could identified those that visit annually. Five (5) percent visit on weekly basis while about 56 percent of the respondents did not know when owners visit their vacant plots.

6 c) Perversion of current vacant land use in the area

The field survey as represented in Table 2 revealed that not all the urban vacant lands within the town were really vacant or bare (that is, those that were not put to any use and most of the time were bushy), this represents about 15 percent of the identified vacant land. These undeveloped plots were in most cases being used as hideouts for hoodlums and about five cases of robbery were reported to have been(D D D D) B 2013

perpetuated through the use of these undeveloped/bushy plots. Nine plots (about 16 percent) were being temporarily cultivated. There were seven plots (13 percent) being used for block making. 11 plots (20 percent) being used for automobile mechanic workshop, 16 percent of such plots have been unofficially committed to refuse dumping sites. 5 plots were being used by children as playing ground. The remaining six (6) undeveloped plots (11%) were committed to petty trading activities.

The study also established that the large percentage of urban vacant land in the area was being put to one temporary use or the other which was in most cases not compatible to the dominant uses in the area. For instance, about nine (9) refuse dumping grounds were found located at various places within the residential locality. This has been proved to a greater extent in contributing to pubic health hazard like outbreak of diseases such as cholera, malaria, typhoid, tuberculosis, pneumonia (upper respiratory infection).

The study revealed the non-existence of conscious planning for open spaces. There was no designated open space in the study area. However, there were spaces between buildings, spaces in and around the area, spaces within or enclosed by the individual yards and spaces along the streams and streets which were often used as depots of refuse and human wastes. Likewise, after completing building operations, the remaining unbuildable parts of land were always used in providing commercial kiosks, provision of additional rooms to the house due to the present dire need of places to trade and places of abode respectively.

It was observed that the rights of ways were also discovered to have been taken over by mechanic workshops, street trading, places of worship even right under high voltage electric cables which endanger lives of many inhabitants of the study area.

The study shows that there is a general lack of proper rational uses of land and this makes the development of land for various activities to grow in most haphazard manner resulting in incompatible land uses. The problems and the challenges posed by the rapid rate of uncontrolled and unplanned urban growth are immense in the study area. Most of the localities are growing without adequate planning. People live in substandard and sub-urban environments plagued by slum, squalor and grossly inadequate social amenities. Low level of awareness on the part of the people, absence of effective advocacy and inappropriate programmes of development have further compounded the problems of growth and development of the study area. The findings revealed that the area is devoid of a well landscape space with facilities for different forms of recreation like active and passive recreation of different ages groups.

Instead, the spaces have been so bastardized by turning them to dumping sites, farmlands, mechanic workshop, block making industries etc. thereby making them to loose their potentials and proper functional uses they could have been

The land use study revealed that the area is a predominant built up residential area. Other uses spring up in the area with little or no regard for conforming uses or zoning policy. Source : Field survey, December, 2011.

7 d) Contiguity of Ogbomoso North Vacant Land

The study shows that most of the identified vacant lands exist in isolation. Only seven of them representing about 13 percent were contiguous with another vacant land.(See Table 3) Owners of the seven (7) contiguous plots were not ready to surrender them for any consolidation programme. Their reasons vary from one owner to another. Three argued that the land (undeveloped plot) symbolize their attachment to their origin, two lamented unstable and uncommitted nature of the government to such programmes of resettlement in the past while the remaining two said that their reasons are purely personal. The study again established the fact that vacant urban land is the part of the overall urban environment and that the vacant land within cities owned their existence to diverse reasons.

 Some of these vacant lands were not put to any use and were either taken over by bush or junk yard and this has been seen to be generating negative effects on the occupiers of adjoining parcels of land. For instance, eight vacant plots were found being taken over by bush and served as hideout for hoodlums who threatened lives and properties of the residents and users of the adjoining parcels of land.

constituting "eye sore" within the urban setting. Those that could be taken as being fairly maintained represent 29 percent while those that were adequately maintained represent 16 percent of the identified urban vacant land in the area. (See Table 4). Note:

Good -The plot is adequately maintained For instance, the field survey revealed that various functional uses (such as residential, commercial, institutional etc.) were being proposed to developed some of the identified vacant land in the study area especially those that were classified or certified as fairly maintained. Source : Filed survey, December, 2011.

Therefore, since their existence was part of the urban scenario, it then becomes imperative that a pragmatic approach should be evolved to manage them within the larger context of urban environment planning and management.

IV.

8 Testing of Hypotheses

The details of computation of the correlation coefficient are presented in table5.10.

Extracting from the calculation using the pearson product moment correlation analysis between (i) the size of identified vacant plots and their corresponding distances (in kilometers) to Oja'gbo (the city centre); (ii) the distance from the city centre (Oja'gbo) and the appropriate value of plots; (iii) the size and the value of plots. correlation analysis shows a positive relationship of +0.9 at 0.05 level of significant between the distance and the size, which implies that the farther one moves away from the city centre, the bigger the sizes of the undeveloped plots. For example, Takie is closer to Oja'gbo than Oke Aanu. When the sizes of vacant plots at Takie area range between 20 by 20 square meters to 40 by 30 square meters, the sizes of the vacant land at Oke Aanu area range from 25 by 30 to 35 by 70 square meters. This could among other reasons be explained by the larger concentration of development within the city centre and scanty development as one move to the outskirts of the town. Another reason could be larger parcel of land acquired by the Government at the periphery for future development. For instance, a large parcel of land was acquired as a new site for Ogbomoso Girls High School

located at Oke Aanu area. Moreover, a large parcel of land was allocated for the Federal Government low cost Housing project along Ayoka road. Another reason could be the fact that new areas always grow out on layouts where adequate provisions are made for roads, buffer zones, recreational centers, neighborhood playing ground and so on. These among other things account for the reasons why there are bigger sizes of vacant land at the periphery of the city than the city centre.

The results also show that there is a strong relationship between the size and the land value as indicated by the positive correlation of +1 at 0.05 level of significant that existed between sizes and values of urban vacant land identified in the study area.

over by refuse and human wastes as dumping sites and

The relationship between distances and sizes of identified vacant plots were computed and found to behave in accordance with the expectation. The V.

9 Recommendation and Conclusion

In spite of a myriad of problems and challenges of urban vacant land as identified in this study, a maximum practicable degree of aesthetic environment can still be achieved by proper utilization and management of the vacant land. Most of vacant land with reasonable sizes could be re-designed so as to add glamour to the town and afford the kids and adults with appreciable facilities to recreate. This will encourage and improve the active recreational habit of the generality of the populace.

It is therefore suggested that a redevelopment proposal for the vacant land of considerable sizes within the city (especially those that belong to the government) be made. The redevelopment proposal should make provision for the aged people relaxation area, children active relaxation area; children passive relaxation area, adult active and passive relaxation areas. Other provisions should include parking lots, water fountain It shows that, the larger the sizes of the vacant land the higher its economic value. For instance, the appropriate values of vacant land with sizes 20 by 20 and 20 by 25 square metres range from 50,000 to 60,000 naira while those with sizes 30 by 30 square metres and above range from 65,000 to 140,000 naira. Fair -The level of maintenance has not started generating negative impacts Poor -The plot is not adequately maintenance in terms of weeding, cutting, sweeping and general hygienic and is generating lots of negative impacts to its surrounding. This study has revealed some of the ways in which large parcel of urban land are being utilized in a less intensive manner, if put to use at all. The study also dealt with various ways in which urban vacant land are developed/evolved, managed and administered by both public and private sectors. Moreover, the study showed the dynamic nature of urban vacant land utilization because their present roles are likely to change from one use to the other with the passage of time, such as vacant land being utilized for functional uses. service building, security etc. All these facilities are to be located with due regard to compatibility, accessibility and maximum security.

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However, other undeveloped plots within the study area should be protected, conserved and adequately maintained. The adequate maintenance will enable it achieve the objectives of its existence. The unkempt ones which are either bushy or turned to dumping sites could be uniquely designed so as to enhance a greater utilization, maintenance and compatibility to the surrounding uses.

Based on the findings of this study and knowledge gained from field survey, a stern government action needs to be taken against the occupation of the right of ways by the automobile mechanic, the artisans that occupy the right of ways of high voltage electric cables and unauthorized vendors. Strategic locations of mechanic workshops within the city should be introduced and the mechanic village programmes on a sustainable basis should be resuscitated. The artisans and vendors should be made to leave the right of way of high voltage electric cables. This will reduce the risk of human lives and add to the aesthetic of urban form.

The study revealed that the management of these vacant lands is under the individuals, families and some public institutions. The study showed that the urban plots could be better managed if handled by the community organization. The involvement of Landlord Association of all quarters or localities in the management of vacant plots in their domains will go a long way in checking some of the negative externalities of these vacant plots as earlier mentioned. Individuals and the community in which landlord associations are, are the immediate occupants or users and they live within the area where the vacant land exist, so they will be in better position to manage, monitor and protect the spaces. They can properly handle the management and monitoring of urban vacant land in the study area so as to reduce to its barest minimum the negative challenges of vacant land in Ogbomoso North Local Government. The suggestion made above can be effective if backed up by efficient institutional outfit. Public authorities of all levels must support development control at local level if vacant land generated nuisance is to be prevented in our communities. Also, long-term solution must be set in motion whilst at the same time immediate needs must be addressed in order to confront the circumstances that generate or facilitate urban decay, Therefore, what is required to maintain proper utilization of vacant spaces is not a new creation of new bodies or institutions. What government needs do is to strengthen the capacity of the existing bodies (Town Planning Officers and Environmental Health Officers) in term of personnel, training and equipment in controlling development, monitoring environmental sanitation and in the discharge of the professional and legal obligations

imposed by law. Conclusively, we must all work together for the collective good. Environmental management is everyone's responsibility if we are to enhance the livability of our community.

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Figure 1:

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Next plot	108	45
Within 100m	56	23.33
Above 100m	52	21.67
Above 200m	24	10.00
Total	240	100.00

Figure 2: Table 1 :

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[1]© 2013 Global Journals Inc. (US) land within the cities is defined as the area generally free highest educational qualification, perception of2 20

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[3]BUrban Vacant Land and Spatial Chaos in Ogbomoso North Local Government, Oyo State, Nigeria

[4]Urban Vacant Land and Spatial Chaos in Ogbomoso North Local Government, Oyo State, Nigeria

2

Uses	Number	Percentage)%
Refuse dumping	9	16.36
Mechanic workshop	11	20.00
Trading activities	6	10.91
Farming	9	16.36
Bare (hideouts)	8	14.55
Block making	7	12.72
Playing ground	5	9.10
Total	55	100.00

Figure 3: Table 2 :

3

Nature of plots	Number	Percentage (%)
Plots that are contiguous	7	12.72
Non-contiguous plot	48	87.28
Total	55	100.00

Source : Filed survey, December, 2011.

e) State of Maintenance of Vacant land in the Study Area

Assessment of maintenance level of these undeveloped plots within the built up areas shows that 55 percent of them were poorly maintained which resulted in them being overgrown with bushes, taken

Figure 4: Table 3 :

Figure 5: B

4

Level of maintenance	land in the study Area Number	Percentage (%)
Poor	30	54.55
Fair	16	29.09
Good	9	16.36
Total	55	100.00

Figure 6: Table 4 :

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