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## Article

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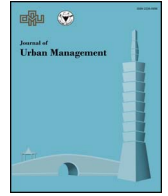


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# The realities of Lagos urban development vision on livelihoods of the urban poor

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## ABSTRACT

Similar to many other cities in sub-Saharan African countries, the struggle between urban development policies and the livelihoods of the urban poor is one of the urban development challenges facing Lagos. This paper examines the realities of the Lagos urban development policies and initiatives on the livelihoods of the urban poor. The state government embarked on series of what it calls sustainable urban transformation policies towards making Lagos ‘an African model megacity’ and a global economic and financial hub that is safe, secure, functional and productive, with a view to achieving poverty alleviation and sustainable development. This paper, through the lens of theoretical and analytical underpinnings of Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, however, argues that the actions of the state government contradict the whole essence of sustainable urban development and poverty alleviation, but reflect an agenda deliberately targeted to further impoverish the poor. While the Sustainable Livelihood was used as the theoretical and analytical framework, this paper essentially focuses on the Policies, Institutions and Processes component of the framework. This provides a unique entry point for understanding the implications of the Lagos urban development aspirations on the livelihoods of the urban poor. The research uses mixed methods research design with a broad range of data-collection methods, including household surveys, interviews, direct observation and photography, documentary review and policy document analysis. The study reveals that there is a disconnection between urban development policies and realities of the poor. The implementation of urban development projects and policies works against the urban poor and resulted in more hardship, through reduction in livelihood opportunities or complete loss of livelihoods. This study, therefore, suggests that one important element in reducing poverty in Lagos’ informal settlements is a policy framework that guarantees inclusive urban development, provision of livelihoods opportunities and accumulation of assets for the urban poor.

## 1. Introduction

Many of the sub-Saharan African major cities are rapidly going through a process of urban restructuring and physical transformation in their struggles to be integrated into the global economic system. Various assumptions, which described Africa as ‘rising’, the second fastest-growing region in the world and “last frontier of development” are propelling many of the African governments to strategically position their major cities to take the advantage through the process of series of physical urban transformations, an idea which [Goldman \(2011\)](#), based on the experience of Bangalore, referred to as ‘speculative urbanism’.

Lagos, just like many other sub-Saharan Africa’s large cities, is cut in the struggles of managing population growth, urban development challenges and quest for urban modernity. Over the years, Lagos has witnessed urban growth, relating to its physical

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configuration, population and socioeconomic composition of its population. Lagos witnessed unprecedented population growth and largely unplanned urban expansion, from its original lagoon setting to encompass a vast expanse of mostly low-rise developments, including as many as 200 different slums ranging in size from clusters of shacks underneath highways to entire districts (Gandy, 2005; Gandy, 2006). By this, the majority of the population live in informal settlements and make their daily living through informal economic activities.

Rapid population growth and urban expansion exert heavy burden on urban facilities. The provisions of housing, serviced land, infrastructure and urban services and livelihood opportunities have not kept pace with the population growth. Poverty, proliferation of informal settlements, overcrowding, and inadequate physical and social infrastructure are the most enduring spatial and socio-economic manifestations and consequences of urbanisation in Lagos (Morakinyo, Ogunrayewa, Koleosho, & Adenubi, 2012; Ilesanmi, 2010). To address these challenges, in recent time, the state government embarked on the implementation of a series of what it calls 'transformation urban development policies and projects.' The vision of this transformation agenda is to make Lagos State 'an African model megacity' and a global economic and financial hub that is safe, secure, functional and productive, while the policy thrust is to achieving poverty alleviation and sustainable development through infrastructure renewal and urban development policies and projects (INOVATELAGOS, 2013).

However, with the majority of its population living in informal settlements and making their daily livelihoods through informality, in practice, the ongoing quest for urban modernity seems inconsistent with the livelihood realities of the majority. This paper, drawing on series of examples, argues that the Lagos megacity development aspiration contradicts complex livelihoods realities of the urban poor. Against this background, this paper examines the contradiction between the quest for urban transformation and livelihood realities of the majority who evidently rely on informality. The materials presented in this paper are based on data from a research project which seeks to understand the complexity of factors which influence the livelihoods of the urban poor in Lagos' informal settlements, through the lens of the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA). While the SLA was used as the methodological and analytical framework, as part of a larger research project, the empirical data presented in this paper is limited to the component of the framework which helps to understand the implications of the Lagos megacity urban development aspirations on the livelihoods of the urban poor.

Following this introduction, this paper proceeds with the discussion of conceptual and theoretical issues relating to urban development and livelihoods. The discussion is situated within the broader concept of sustainable development and Lagos urban development context. It then presents the research methodological approach, and analytical and theoretical framework. The understanding derived from the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings was then used to examine some of the urban development policies and projects of the Lagos State government and the implications on the livelihoods of the urban poor. The concluding section summarises the arguments presented in this paper. It advocates that the current urban planning and development policies frameworks must be modified to accommodate the complex realities of the majority and allow them to build on their strengths and use their assets productively.

## 2. Urban development and livelihoods of the urban poor

The struggle between urban development initiatives and livelihoods of the urban poor is one of the development challenges facing many developing countries, particularly sub-Saharan African countries today. Wiggins and Higgins (2008) equate development to transformations of society with sharp breaks from past trends, behaviours and institutions. As such, in this paper, urban development and urban transformation are used interchangeably. In recent years, the call for sustainable urban development has been central to development debate and is increasingly gaining ground in international development. The conceptualisation of urban development determines how it is treated by urban managers in planning and development policy circle. The primary objective of urban development, at least from theoretical perspective, is to improve wellbeing of the urban dwellers. However, the conceptualisation of urban development among urban managers varies markedly, from a narrow concept that defines it as a physical transformation, to a broader concept that incorporates the idea of physical, social and economic sustainability. While there are intense debates about the concept of urban development, there is a reasonable consensus that for urban development to improve wellbeing and contribute to poverty alleviation, it must be sustainable and inclusive (Kamete, 2002). A sustainable urban development ensures a balance between environmental, economic and social concerns while an inclusive urban development will mean that various groups in the society, irrespective of their socioeconomic class, are able to meet their livelihood needs.

There is vast amount of research on livelihoods, which suggest that livelihood is multidimensional covering different aspects of human endeavours. Various development agencies and organisations, such as DFID, UNDP, CARE, Oxfam and FAO, have contributed to the development and understanding of livelihoods (Carney et al. 1999). Also, livelihoods related issues have been widely examined by various researchers in different contexts and they have defined livelihoods in different ways (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Carney, 1998; Scoones, 1998; Ashley & Carney, 1999; Bebbington, 1999; Ellis, 2000; Rakodi & Lloyd-Jones, 2002; Rakodi, 2002a, 2002b; De Haan & Zoomers, 2005; Frankenberger & Drinkwater, 1999). However, Shackleton, Shackleton, and Cousins (2000) note that out of these numerous definitions, two major approaches can be identified – the first one focuses on production, employment and household income, while the second one adopts a comprehensive approach which integrates concepts of economic development, reduced vulnerability and environmental sustainability with emphasis on the strengths of the poor.

Within these two approaches, there is a common agreement that livelihood is concerned with the ways and means by which people make a living, and there is a common consensus that for livelihood to contribute to poverty alleviation, it must be sustainable. A livelihood is considered sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets (physical, social, human, financial and natural) both now and in the future (DFID, 1999). In this regard, there

is a common agreement between the primary goal of sustainable livelihood and sustainable development. Both seek to improve individual wellbeing and contribute to poverty alleviation in its multiple dimensions. From a livelihood perspective, a sustainable urban development will be a development which promotes livelihood opportunities and allows individuals, in the urban context, to build on their strengths and use their assets productively for the purpose of enhancing their wellbeing. It is based on this conceptual and theoretical understanding that this paper argues that the urban planning and development regulatory framework driving the Lagos megacity aspiration is disconnected from the livelihood realities of the majority and it is far from achieving a sustainable urban development, as conceived by the government.

Urban planning has been identified as a major tool by which a sustainable urban development can be achieved (UN-HABITAT, 2009). It is, however, noted that the nature of the current urban planning and development visions in many sub-Saharan African countries, which UN-HABITAT (2009) refers to as ‘modernist dream’, have failed to come to terms with the livelihood realities of the majority of the population. The realities are that the majority are poor and they are accommodated in informal settlements and make their daily living through informal economic activities.

In the quest for urban modernity, urban planning often tends to increase socio-economic exclusion and spatial inequality in the urban areas, through anti-poor policies and development projects, and a belief that in the modern city, the poor should at best be hidden or at worst swept away (Tibajuka, 2006). The quest for urban development is, therefore, used as excuse to institutionalise inequality and exclusion. This article does not, in any way, suggest that urban modernity is a bad idea. Not every quest for modern city is bad, but the problem is that the urban poor are largely excluded from such desire (Watson, 2013; Kamete, 2013). As such, the urban poor, who mostly rely on the informal sector for their means of livelihoods, often become victims of urban planning and development policy implementation.

Urban planning has a central role in achieving sustainable urban development. In the real sense, urban planning is about creating places that are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable, and that provide sufficient land for housing in appropriate locations, connected to the facilities people need to live (UN-HABITAT, 2012). The purpose of urban development is to improve the quality of life and standard of living of the urban residents by ensuring a balance between environmental quality, economic opportunity and social well-being (Lynch et al. 2011). Urban development can only be sustainable if people, particularly the poor, have adequate access to means of livelihoods. As noted by Seers (1969) development can be said to have occurred when it results in reduction and elimination of poverty, inequality, unemployment, and economic growth. Institutions, particularly government has a major role in achieving these objectives. The Lagos State government seems to understand the whole essence of urban planning and development, at least in theory. This is well captured in the statement of the Lagos State Governor during a lecture he delivered at the London School of Economics on 19th November 2010:

*“Lagos will ultimately be a city where life is sustainable, where the expectations of those who live there and those who come to do business there can be realised in a safe and orderly manner. Where everybody irrespective of his status would find a place, that is the city we dream of.”*

This paper, however, argues that in practice, the actions and inactions of the state government contradict the whole essence of sustainable urban planning and development, but seem like deliberate attempts to punish the poor.

### 3. Methodological, analytical and theoretical framework

The materials presented in this paper are based on data from a research project which seeks to understand the complexity of factors which influence the livelihoods of the urban poor in Lagos’ informal settlements, through the lens of Sustainable Livelihood Framework (Olajide, 2015). The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach presents a theoretical and analytical framework for understanding livelihoods assets and vulnerability context as well as Policies, Institutions and Processes (PIPs) (sometimes refers to Transforming Structures and Processes) (DFID, 1999) that mediate both assets and vulnerability of the urban poor. While the Sustainable Livelihood Framework was used as the methodological and analytical framework, as part of a large research project, the data presented in this paper is limited to the aspect which helps to understand the implications of the Lagos megacity urban development aspirations on the livelihoods of the urban poor. This paper, therefore, focuses on the PIPs component of the framework. It specifically explores how PIPs influence the livelihoods of the urban poor within the context of Lagos urban development and transformation initiatives.

Policies, Institutions and Processes may refer to the levels of government institutions and public policies, private sector practices and policy, and civic, cultural and economic institutions that operate in society, which together help to determine and set parameters for the livelihoods of the poor (Farrington, Ramasut & Walker, 2002). PIPs may also cover a wide range of norms, behaviours, laws and regulatory and legal frameworks as well as social, political, economic and environmental factors that determine people’s livelihood opportunities and livelihood choices (Moser & Satterthwaite, 2008). The need to focus on PIPs is premised on the realisation that they have both direct and indirect influence on people’s livelihoods. They influence household livelihood directly by determining which activities are legal or illegal and appropriate or inappropriate. Similarly, they also influence household livelihoods indirectly through their influence on access and control of resources (Carloni & Crowley, 2005). This means that, in the process of urban development, institutional context can either support or inhibit livelihoods of the poor. In this paper, from people’s entry point, PIPs were operationalised as regulatory frameworks, laws and regulations that mediate people’s interactions with government, markets and the environment, as emphasised by the respondents. This offers a unique entry point with which to explore the impacts of the implementation of Lagos urban development projects and policies on the livelihoods of the urban poor.

The adapted theoretical and analytical framework – Sustainable Livelihood Framework – enables quantitative and qualitative research design and a broad range of data-collection methods. Data were collected in four informal settlements – Ipaja, Ajegule, Oko-

Baba and Sari-Iganmu. In each settlement, a combination of data collection tools, including household surveys, interviews, direct observation and photography, were used. A total of 400 questionnaires were administered and 29 interviews were conducted, including key informants interviews, household in-depth interviews and group discussions. The research adopted non-probability sampling in all the four case study settlements because there was no reliable sample frame, either from census figures or communities' records, to support selection of sample size based on probability sampling. In addition, the settlements are haphazardly developed, which makes adoption of probability sampling techniques, such as systematic sampling and random sampling, practically inappropriate. Each settlement was divided into 100 clusters. From each cluster, one building was selected. Although the majority of the buildings are occupied by multiple households, only one household was sampled in each selected building. The actual household sampled was selected using the convenience sampling technique (Higginbottom, 2004).

Based on the adapted analytical and theoretical framework, the data were analysed and discussed through the lenses of policies, regulations and laws with specific relevant cases and their implications on the livelihoods of the urban poor. To strengthen the research results and discussion, empirical evidences were equally triangulated with documentary review and policy document analysis.

#### 4. Research results and discussion

##### 4.1. Urban planning and development policy frameworks and livelihoods of the urban poor

Urban planning and development regulatory frameworks in many developing countries are inconsistent with the socio-economic realities of the majority (Lowe & Schilderman, 2001; Mcleod, 2001; Payne, 2001; Tipple, 2001; Majale, 2002a, 2002b; Watson, 2009; Kamete, 2013). Imposition of inappropriate regulatory frameworks often results in lack of respect, by the majority, for the official regulations. The case of Lagos clearly reflects this, as development of the majority of urban housing occurs outside the official regulations. The existing planning and land administration procedures are inappropriate for the urban poor to get their buildings approved. For example, legal title document (Certificate of Occupancy or Governor's Consent) is a prerequisite for building plan approval. However, informal settlements dwellers lack any of such documents. In addition, the stipulated conditions and the associated cost of meeting such conditions are out of the reach of the urban poor. The focus of the land regularisation programme of the Lagos State government seems to be more on revenue generation than delivering land titles to informal settlements dwellers, as the charges are beyond what the intended beneficiaries can afford. Landholders in such settlements, therefore, often build in violation of the official regulations (what the authority termed as illegal development), through processes of self-help and incremental development.

Combined influence of the current land policy, and planning and building regulations perpetuate informality of the urban poor settlements. From both legal and planning perspectives, the settlements remain perpetually illegal and informal to the policymakers. One of the key informants, an assistant director in the Lagos State Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development stated:

*“As far as we are concerned, people living in those settlements you are talking about are living there illegally. They do not have certificate of occupancy or governor's consent to live there [...] Even, common building plan approval, they do not have. We are professionally responsible for achieving harmonious physical development in the state...”*

The Lagos State Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development is responsible for formulation of physical planning policies and planning regulation while its agency – Lagos State Physical Planning and Development Agency (LASPPDA) – is responsible for building permit (building plan approval). Therefore, any building or community within the jurisdiction of Lagos State which does not have approval of these agencies is considered illegal and informal. During a media interview with the Channels Television on 2 March 2013, after part of Badia community (an informal settlement) was demolished, the Lagos State Commissioner of Physical Planning and Urban Development noted that the Ministry does not recognise any building that is not registered on its database:

*“You know what is important to me, as the Commissioner for Physical Planning and Urban Development; I will like to see the buildings in my database [...]. If anyone was going to put up any building, there was supposed to be a process of permit. Anything outside this is not recognised.”*

In this media interview, the commissioner, however, noted that the state government did not demolish anybody's house. He claimed that what was demolished was just refuse dump. Contrary to this claim, Fig. 1 shows that people's houses were actually demolished. To government, the houses do not represent anybody's place of abode, but to the evictees, it is home. Although, just as claimed by the state government, their general environmental and living conditions are very poor and their environmental conditions are not in line with the aspirations of the Lagos megacity, the houses have provided accommodation and means of livelihoods for the evictees for many years. However, based on the notion of illegality and informality, widely held against these kind of settlements, they are often not in the priority list of the policymakers for provision of infrastructure. Instead, the settlements are often targeted for demolition, under the disguise of urban development, in the various physical development plans.

In recent time, model city plans have become the physical planning framework to guide the re-modelling of different parts of Lagos in order to meet its megacity status. To this end, the state government has designed various model city plans, including Ikoyi-Victoria Island, Ikorodu, Ifako-Ijaye, Alimosho, Apapa and Mainland. Several informal settlements within the jurisdiction of these model city plans have either been earmarked for upgrading or total redevelopment, which is expected to displace some or all of the existing residents. For example, the housing strategy of the Apapa Model City Plan recommends Sari-Iganmu for a redevelopment, which is expected to gradually forcibly evict the current residents. Sari Iganmu is located along Lagos-Badagry expressway, which is



Fig. 1. Demolition in part of Badia community.  
Source: Channels Television, 2013.

currently undergoing expansion. It is equally adjacent to the proposed blue line (light rail) station. The plan is to redevelop Sari-Iganmu to a mixed-use area, to complement the proposed train station and the on-going road expansion. In this, the residents are under threat of forced eviction.

The vision of the Mainland Model City Plan is to unlock the unprecedented potential for Lagos to grow, thrive and prosper by improving its urban performance to deliver economic, social and environmental benefits (Dar Al-Handasah, 2012). Long before now, it has been the intention of the state government to demolish Oko-Baba community (one of the informal settlements within the model city plan), as part of its aspirations to transform Lagos to ‘a modern megacity’. One of the key informants, the Bale (traditional head) of Oko-Baba stated:

*“This issue of demolition has been on for a long time. The first time it came up was during Jakande’s government. It later came up during Tinubu’s government and now Fashola’s government. I think the state government is very serious about it now [...]. They have already discussed with the sawmillers and they have shown them the plan of where they are taking them to, but they never discussed anything with us, we the residents. Government said it has no business with us.”*

The plan is to relocate the sawmill to Agbowo, a remote area of Lagos state, while the residents, mostly tenants, who constitute the majority, will be forcibly evicted. With the preparation of the Mainland Model City Plan, in a way, the intention of the Lagos State government has now been ‘legalised’. According to the model city plan, Oko-Baba is designed for a mixed-use development. Fig. 2 shows visual impression of the proposed Oko-Baba waterfront. At the time of the field work, the effects of the proposed demolition have started manifesting on the livelihoods of the residents, considering the response of a male respondent who works as a labourer at the sawmill:

*“Before now, there were a lot of machines here. There were machines in those empty spaces, but many of the sawmillers are already moving their machines away, to as far as other states. It is really affecting us. A lot of us, who work for them, are out of jobs now.”*

The effects of the proposed relocation are not limited to those who work directly at the sawmill, but also extend to those who render auxiliary services to the sawmillers and their employees. For example, a female food vendor during a group discussion stated:

*“Business is so slow now. Some of my customers no longer come to work, while those who come always complain of no money. They don’t buy food like they used to. Many a times, I have to sell to them on credit because a lot of them are my old customers.”*



Fig. 2. Proposed Oko-Baba Waterfront.  
Source: Dar Al-Handasah <http://dar.dargroup.com/Projects/LAGOS-MAINLAND-CENTRAL-MODEL-CITY-MASTERPLAN>).



Fig. 3. Protest by the Okada Riders against Government's Ban.  
Source: <http://news.naij.com/12422.html>.

Another member of the group noted that, when the sawmill is finally relocated and the community is demolished, it will have multiple effects, as many of them will no longer have a means of living and a place of abode.

#### 4.2. The traffic regulation: ban of motorcycles as means of public transport in Lagos

On the 1st of September 2012, the Lagos State government signed into law a bill to provide for road traffic administration and make provision for road traffic and vehicle inspection in Lagos State (new traffic law), as part of its efforts to address transportation challenges in the state. Various reasons have been put forward for the promulgation of the new traffic Law. These include security, safety, environmental and economic reasons.

One of the major provisions of this law is the prohibition of motorcycle (*okada*) as a means of transportation (both commercial and private) on some specific roads. The law in Section 3 (1), which deals with the control of motorcycle and tricycle, states: "No person shall ride, drive or propel a cart, wheelbarrow, motorcycle or tricycle on any of the routes specified in Schedule II to this Law."

Schedule II of the law listed 11 highways, 41 bridges and 496 routes across the state. The Law also went further to ban commercial motorcyclists from Ikoyi, Victoria Island and Lekki. Though the Law covers a wide range of traffic issues, the particular provision which bans *okada* was received with mixed feelings by the populace. On the one hand, a section of the society sees it as a welcome development that has been long overdue. On the other hand, another section of the society sees it as counterproductive and unrealistic provision, which does not take into consideration the economic realities of the majority, and transportation and mobility challenges of Lagos' residents.

This provision generated a lot of controversies and protests among the operators and the users (Fig. 3). This is against the backdrop of the economic importance of commercial motorcycles. Before the promulgation of the law, commercial motorcycles were a major source of employment as well as one of the major means of public transportation in Lagos State (see Fig. 4). Motorcycles are used for both intra and inter-urban mobility as well as short and long distances across Lagos State.

Commercial motorcycles provide means of livelihood for a large number of people in Lagos. It is one of the major household productive assets, as shown in Table 1, where a significant proportion of the selected households own motorcycle.

Before the enactment of the law, the court had ruled that the proposed ban and restriction of the operations of the *okada* riders in Lagos by the state government constitute a violation of human rights, including freedom of movement and access to adequate means



Fig. 4. Okada, a Major Means of Public Transportation in Lagos state.

Source: <http://www.osundefender.org/?p=47545>, <http://jidesane.wordpress.com/2012/05/05/court-voids-proposed-ban-on-okada-in-lagos/>.

Table 1

Production equipment and household items.

	Names of settlements			
	Ipaja	Ajegunle	Oko-Oba	Sari-Iganmu
Kerosene stove	96.0	100.0	100.0	90.0
Telephone (mobile)	91.0	93.0	100.0	100.0
Fan	92.0	96.0	95.0	100
Television	87.0	90.0	94.0	95.0
Radio	75.0	90.0	73.0	80.0
VCD/DVD player	73.0	84.0	72.0	80.0
Generator	54.0	83.0	53.0	51.0
Refrigerator	52.0	53.0	51.0	55.0
<b>Motorcycle</b>	<b>44.0</b>	<b>33.0</b>	<b>42.0</b>	<b>50.0</b>
Freezer	25.0	27.0	31.0	20.0
Vehicle	20.0	16.0	17.0	15.0
Air conditioner	3.0	6.0	11.0	5.0
Gas/ electric cooker	6.0	10.0	6.0	5.0
Internet	3.0	11.0	5.0	0.0
Computer	8.0	21.0	0	20.0

of livelihoods. Despite the ruling of the court in favour of the motorcyclists coupled with the fact that government is obliged to providing individuals with access to adequate means of living, the Lagos State government still went ahead to enact such law.

The implementation and subsequent enforcement of the new traffic law resulted in more hardship for many households, who rely on commercial motorcycles as a means of livelihoods. Though there are no exact figures of those who have been thrown out of jobs, there is evidence to conclude that it has affected livelihoods of many households. For instance, less than a month into the enforcement of the Law, over 3, 000 motorcycles were reportedly confiscated and crushed by the Law enforcement agency of the state (Fig. 5).

Also, Fig. 6 shows two pictures of the same location in Ajegunle, one of the case study settlements, where motorcycles are popularly used as a means of public transportation before the ban. The picture on the right was taken by the author before the implementation of the law. Here, the commercial motorcyclists were having a booming day. However, the picture on the left, which





Fig. 5. Confiscated and crushed motorcycle at the Lagos State Government Secretariat, Alausa.  
 Source: <<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/07/celebrating-lagos-road-traffic-laws-first-year>>.



Fig. 6. The effect of Okada's Ban.

was taken after the commencement date of the Law, shows a contrasting scenario. In this picture, no single motorcycle was seen in operation.

The use of motorcycles as a means of livelihoods started in the late 1980s during an economic crisis caused by SAP, which resulted in loss of jobs and high incidence of unemployment (Olawole, Ajala & Aloba, 2010; Adoga, 2012; Umaru, 2013). Apart from the economic importance of commercial motorcycles, they also complement the unregulated and inadequate transportation system in Lagos. Lagos State government has made efforts to improving road transportation with the introduction of Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) system, which operates on dedicated lanes in some few areas in Lagos. However, the capacity of the BRT buses in addition to the existing unregulated mini-buses remain inadequate to meet the travel demands of Lagos' residents, particularly the urban poor who are unable to afford private cars.

Motorcycles became a favourite means of intra and inter urban mobility among Lagos' commuters as a result of intractable transportation challenges, resulting in traffic jams (*hold up or go slow*). Another unique feature of the motorcycle is its flexibility to manoeuvre in little spaces and to beat traffic jams, which helps to reduce travel time. As such, it is used as a means of mobility among all ages, genders and socio-economic classes, particularly when there is a need to meet up with appointments.

Contrary to this accepted view among the operators and the users, government claimed that the use of motorcycles largely contributes to traffic problems and traffic jams in Lagos. Therefore, according to the governor of Lagos State, the Law is expected to address this problem, as reported in Thisday newspaper, published on 17th August 2012:

*"... the new traffic law is meant to assist residents and business owners in Lagos State spend less time travelling on roads and reduce the wastage of man hours in traffic gridlock and thereby ensure that businesses and the economy of the State enjoy rapid growth through the easy movement of people and goods at all times."*

Despite the ban of motorcycles, as a means of public transportation, there is no evidence, yet, to suggest that the traffic situation

has improved. But what is evident is that, it has rendered many individuals jobless (both the operators and those who provide auxiliary services for the operations of motorcycles); reduced livelihood opportunities for many households and it increased mobility challenges. Therefore, its ban represents one of the inappropriate policies and high-handedness of the policy makers towards the poor. Also, it represents a disconnection from the economic realities of a large number of people and inconsistency in government policies. For example, the Lagos State government in 2003, through the National Poverty Alleviation Programme (NAPEP), distributed motorcycles and tricycles (keke NAPEP) to the poor (Oni, Fashina, & Olagunju, 2011). Also, in 2010, during a stakeholders meeting on *okada* operations, the Lagos State Governor noted the importance and challenges of *okada*, as he stated that:

*“...as the population of the State continues to grow, the demand for efficient mass transportation provided a challenge for those in government just as it provided a market for the services of commercial motorcyclists also known as Okadas...we have tolerated the operation of Okadas within our territory as a demonstration of our sensitivity to the needs of people who demand the service and the survival needs of those who provide the services as a form of livelihood.”*

Commercial motorcycle, as a means of public transportation, has been criticised for its safety and security challenges, as it is becoming a major source of road accidents (Umaru, 2013). However, it can be argued that its ban is not necessarily the appropriate policy for addressing the identified challenges, considering the economic realities of the operators and transport challenges in Lagos State. A productive policy would have been provision of safety and security measure such as provision of dedicated lanes for motorcyclists and non-motorised transport users, and enforcement of the use of protective devices – crash helmets. At one point in time, government had enforced the use of helmets before the promulgation of the new traffic law. Government, at both the state and local government levels, provided crash helmets for the commercial motorcyclists, while some local government chairmen and lawmakers also provided motorcycles as part of their community development projects and poverty alleviation programmes. One of the participants of a group discussion in Ipaja highlighted the inconsistency of government actions, as he stated:

*“In 2010, this same government distributed crash helmets for them (okada riders) free of charge. They were mobilised to vote. They promised that they will not disturb their operations. But see what is happening now, they are chasing them like rats. It is now a criminal offence to ride Okada in Lagos.”*

Another participant stated:

*“I am a direct victim. My okada was seized last week and it was taken to Alausa. [...] I know before the end of 2014 they will relax the law because another election is coming in early 2015.”*

As noted by another member of the group, the intention of the Lagos State government to ban *okada* started in 2010, but government decided to discontinue its implementation because of the 2011 general election. However, after the election, government revisited the plan. It is evident that the act of generosity shown to the *okada* riders was just for the purpose of winning the election. One year after the election, the real intention of the government was implemented.

#### 4.3. The Environmental law and environmental taskforce – hawking and street trading prohibited

The importance of informal sector to the livelihoods of the urban poor in Lagos is evident, as shown in Fig. 7. Street trading and hawking are forms of informal employment which are common in Lagos. In recent times, the activities of street traders and hawkers have come under serious criticism from the Lagos State government. They have been accused of abusing the environment, which constitutes an environmental nuisance. Also, street traders and hawkers have been accused of engaging in criminal activities, such as robbery. The Lagos State Commissioner for Environment, as posted on the Lagos State website on 28 November 2011, stated:

*“It will not be business as usual for street traders in Lagos State as the state government will commence a state-wide enforcement of the ban on street trading and other environmental sanitation offences along major highway and other roads in the state [...] Our government will not sit by and allow our earned gains of the last four years to be eroded by unscrupulous elements with bad environmental habits.”*

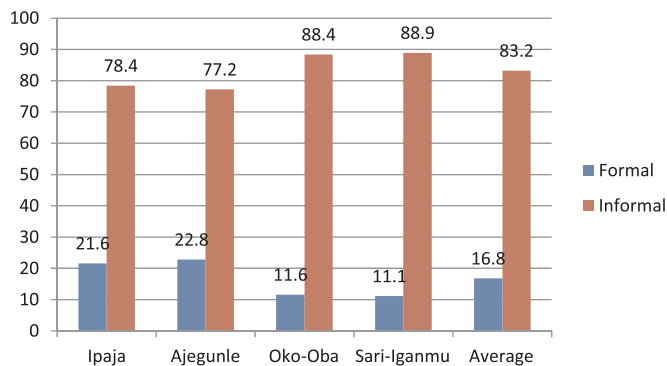


Fig. 7. Nature of main occupation (percentage).

The chairman, State Task Force on Environmental and Special Offences Unit, as reported by Awosiyan (2011) in The Nigerian Village Square, also stated:

*“Many of the street traders are into crime but pretend to be selling products to the public. They carry short guns to rob innocent people of their belongings while hawking on the roads. The government is now out to enforce all environmental laws to the letter [...]. As a result of this, we are banning street trading and hawking in the metropolis.”*

Though, the enforcement is erratic, as people still violate the law, its effects on the livelihoods of the actors (street traders and hawkers) cannot be denied, as exemplified by the responses of two different respondents in Sari-Iganmu and Oko-Baba respectively:

*“They (police and Kick Against Indiscipline brigades) come at will to scatter and take away our markets (goods). Many a times, they collect money from us so that we will not be arrested, while they still destroy our goods”*

*“Last two weeks I was arrested with some other people while hawking. My husband had to arrange money for my release. Now, everybody is afraid to hawk because you don’t know when and how they will come. Just yesterday, they came around and arrested some street traders. They took them to the third Mainland Bridge and drop them after they seized their goods and collected their money.”*

## 5. Conclusion

To actualise the vision of becoming ‘an African model megacity’ and a global economic and financial hub that is safe, secure, functional and productive, the Lagos State government embarked on the implementation of various urban planning and development regulatory and policy frameworks as well as urban development projects.’ The policy thrust of the vision is to achieving poverty alleviation and sustainable urban development. This paper, however, demonstrated that the actions of the state government contradict the whole essence of sustainable urban planning and development and poverty alleviation, but reflect an agenda deliberately targeting the activities of the urban poor and informal sector.

The future of the urban poor in Lagos continues to be blurred and remain uncertain, as urban planning and development regulatory frameworks and policies, across the state, are evicting them from their homes and where they make their daily living. Many of the informal settlements around the core of Lagos metropolis have been earmarked for either demolition or relocation through various model city plans. Usually, forced eviction comes with no compensation or alternative arrangements. When alternatives are given, the evictees are relocated to remote areas, where they are faced with more livelihood challenges.

The Lagos State government often sees the urban poor, particularly in informal settlements, as obstacles to the attainment of sustainable urban development and urban modernity. In order to overcome these obstacles and achieve what they considered as a sustainable urban development, the state government often manipulates planning and urban development regulatory frameworks to afflict the poor. The Lagos State government has consistently done this through implementation of inappropriate urban development policies and regulations, which are disconnected from the complex realities of the urban poor. Such policies and regulations undermine the strengths and efforts of the urban poor and, therefore, further impoverish them. The study reveals that there is a disconnection between policies, and realities, aspirations and needs of the poor, as urban development policies largely work against the ingenuity of the urban poor. The implementation of inappropriate urban development regulatory frameworks resulted in actual and threat of demolition, forced eviction and relocation of the urban poor from their established social networks. The implementation of the new traffic regulation – ban of motorcycles as means of public transport in Lagos – resulted in the harassment of the operators and confiscation of their means of livelihoods. It equally worsens urban mobility challenges in Lagos. Hawking and street trading are major components of informal sector, which provide employment for the majority of the population of Lagos. The prohibition on these activities also resulted in the harassment and extortion of the operators and confiscation of the goods. Consequently, the cumulative effects of these urban development projects and policies resulted in more hardship for the urban poor, through reduction in livelihood opportunities or complete loss of means of livelihoods. The outcomes of urban development projects are socially and spatially inequitable. This study, therefore, suggests that one important element in reducing poverty is a policy framework that guarantees inclusive urban development and takes into consideration livelihood realities of the poor majority.

The realities are that the majority of Lagos’ residents are accommodated in informal settlements and make their daily living through informal economic activities, including hawking, street trading and riding of motorcycles. Proliferation of informal settlements and informal economic activities may not be ideal for Lagos megacity aspiration, as claimed by the government, but these are part of the realities that the poor majority has found themselves. Also, living in precarious conditions is obviously not ideal for any human being, but this is the socio-economic reality which the political-economy and governance system presented to the poor majority. It is, therefore, imperative that this same system should not further complicate the already precarious condition of the urban poor, through the implementation of inappropriate policies, in the name of urban development and urban modernity.

Solutions to contemporary megacity aspiration of Lagos require different types of approaches and not the current ones that seek to run the poor out of the city. Informality and the urban poor are not the problem; rather it is an approach of intervention. Unarguably, the current urban planning and development policies must be modified to accommodate the complex realities of the majority and allow them to build on their strengths and use their assets productively. Urban development decision-making processes in Lagos must take the above-mentioned realities into consideration. It is important to note that urban modernity may not be totally wrong. This paper, therefore, does not in any way suggest that urban modernity is a bad idea. What this paper offers is that, as Lagos State government thinks globally about urban modernity, it needs to act locally. There is a need for an inclusive and sustainable development, and coherent policy framework for urban development. A sustainable and inclusive urban development for Lagos will need

to understand the complex realities of how people live and make a living, and develop projects and policies based on the realities. By this, the socio-economic and livelihood realities of the majority will be accommodated in the quest for urban modernity. It is based on this that individual can enjoy the long-term benefits of urban development.

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