New Century New Metropolis: A study on the Transformation of Kano Metropolis in the 21st Century, with Particular Reference to Housing Estates

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ABSTRACT

Kano had accommodated, being accommodating and will accommodate different individuals from within and outside Nigerian area. It had been an important centre of commerce, religion, inter – group relations and peaceful co-existence. Trade and other socio-economic potentialities made Kano attractive, generic and accommodative city. This led to population increase and more demand for social amenities. Housing is one of these amenities and necessary for survival. Hence, various forms of houses were built and transformed in Kano to cater for the need of the populace. This study employed historical sources and expatiated on the transformation of Kano metropolis in the early decades of 21st century (2000-2020), with special reference to public housing estates. The study revealed that Kano used to change in every century. Many public housing estates were constructed in Kano in the second half of the 20th century. These estates witnessed transformation in the period under study. This aided the expansion and transformation of Kano metropolis in general.

Key words: Transformation, impacts, metropolis, socio-economic, Kano.

INTRODUCTION

Housing or shelter is one of the basic needs of man from the very inception of life. Since the Late Stone Age, man has recorded remarkable transformation in the history of civilizations. Since then, there has been increasing change in the types and styles of housing. The main essence of housing has been provision of privacy as well as security against enemies and harsh weather. That is why residential buildings are identified as substantial structures for providing shelter and security. Its ownership boosts one's status in a society. It plays significant role in the enhancement of human security, health, social and economic welfare of individuals in the society. This made housing among the basic requirements of life and important in all human societies.

Kano Region is a geographical area, which includes the city and the close-settled zones around it. It has been defined as the core region of Hausaland which contains two ancient “ports” of the Sahara, that is, Kano and Katsina. It occupies the southern rim of the Chad depression with elevation above mean sea level ranging from about 400 metres at the northeast to over 1000 metres at the highest southern tip. The geographical features of the region provided many opportunities. These made Kano an important commercial, accommodative and generic and populous city. This led to high demand of housing in Kano especially in the metropolitan area. As a result, many housing estates were built by different governments to cater for the demand of the populace. The evolution, development and transformation of Kano metropolis with particular emphasis on public housing estates are discussed hereafter.


The evolution and development of Kano metropolis

Geographically, Kano metropolis is situated on latitude 12°N and longitude 8.30°E within the Semi – Arid Sudan Savannah zone of West Africa about 840 kilometres of the edge of the Sahara desert. It evolved and developed in phases over centuries. Bello narrated that settlements in this area began in about 700 A.D around Dala hill. The most outstanding figure of this epoch was Barbushe. He served as religious priest bound to the worship of ‘Tsumburburai’. Bagauda arrived in 999 A.D. His arrival was a turning point in the history of Kano. His successors helped a lot in the growth of settlements in Kano and also built Kano city wall ‘Ganuwa’. The fortification was started by Gijimasu (c. 1095-1134 A.D) and completed by Tsaraki (c. 1136-1194 A.D). Moreover, Sarki Muhamadu Rumfa (c. 1463-1499 A.D) extended the frontiers of the city. He founded new palace and Kurmi market. In the sixteenth century, further extension was undertaken and new gates were constructed due to attacks from Katsina, Kwararafa and Borno. Further extensions were carried out during the reign of Sarki Muhammadu Nazaki (c. 1618-1623 A.D). The Sokoto Jihad of 1804 aided the expansion and development of Kano at rapid rate in the nineteenth century (Figure 1).

In 1903 Kano was conquered by British. The Emir Aliyu was replaced by Emir Abbas and colonialism became introduced in Kano society. Power was shifted from traditional to colonial officials. Traditional rulers were used as medium for ruling and discharging the affairs of the populace. This system is known as Indirect System. Colonial rule led to expansion of the city, construction of junior and senior staff quarters, establishment of new

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2 See Appendix. Presently, Kano metropolis is made up of eight local government areas, namely: Dala, Fagge, Gwale, Kano Municipal, Kumbotso, Nassarawa, Tarauni and Ungogo.
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settlements (mostly outside the walled city) such as Sabon Gari, Lebanese quarters, Nassarawa GRA and so on. The provision of some amenities like railways caused massive influx of people into Kano. This increased the population and housing demand in the city.

Furthermore, after independence the Greater Kano Planning Authority (GKPA) was created in 1962. It played a significant role in the physical development of post-Colonial Kano. It compiled Twenty Years Development Plan (1963-1983). It also collaborated with Northern Nigeria Housing Corporation (NNHC) also joined and initiated the construction of Housing Estate called Ja’oji in 1964. The estate was handed over to GKPA in 1967 (the year in which Kano State was created). Formally, this estate marked the beginning of housing estates in Kano metropolis in Post-colonial era.

The construction of public housing estates in Kano metropolis 1967-1999

Kano state was created in 1967 from the then Northern Region by the federal military government under General Yakubu Gowon. Police Commissioner Audu Bako was the first military administrator of Kano from 1967-1975. He executed many projects and recorded many achievements. He founded Kundila housing estate and Kano State Investment and Properties Limited (KSIPL). The federal military government initiated another estate in Zoo Road in 1975 under the Third National Development Plan. The subsequent military administrators, such as Colonel Sani Bello and the first Civilian Governor Alhaji Muhammad Abubakar Rimi (1979-1983), followed suit and built additional estates.

The Table 1 shows a summary of public housing estates built in Kano metropolis from 1967-1999.
Table 1: Public housing estates in Kano metropolis, 1967-1999.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Name of Estate</th>
<th>Year of Establishment</th>
<th>Founder</th>
<th>No. of Housing Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Kundila (Unguwa Uku)</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Kano State</td>
<td>837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Zoo Road (Kundilar Gandu)</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Started by federal government and completed by Kano State</td>
<td>850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Sharada (Gandu GRA)</td>
<td>Between 1980 and 1983</td>
<td>Kano State</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Shagri Quarters</td>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>Federal Ministry of Housing and Environment</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Sharada (Police Station)</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Federal Housing Authority</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Danladi Nasidi (Gida Dubu)</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Started by Federal Housing Authority and completed by Kano state</td>
<td>970</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from various written and oral sources as well as from field trip.
Sources differed on the total number of housing units in some estates due to among other the changing nature of the estates.

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Transformation in Kano metropolis 2000-2020

On May 29, 1999 democracy or civilian rule was restored in Nigeria. This ushered in the beginning of Third Republic. From this period to 2019, Kano witnessed the administration of three governors, namely: Engineer Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso (1999-2003 and 2011-2019), Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau (2003-2011) and Dr. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje (2015-2019). A number of projects were executed in Kano, especially in the metropolitan area. These include dualization and rehabilitation of roads such as Aminu Kano Way, State Road, Gwarzo Road, Sheikh Ja’afar Road, Yahaya Gusau Road France Road, Sabuwar Kofa (Nasiru Ado Bayero) Road among several others. Construction of new roads such as Kuntau (Dorayi Babba) Road, Kwalli to Dan Agundi Road, Sabuwar Gandu to Western Bye Pass Road and so on. Flyover bridges and underpass were constructed in some locations in the metropolis. Some city gates like Sabuwar Kofa, Dan Agundi, Na’isa, Waika were rebuilt. This transformed the metropolis. It also eased transportation and aided businesses. The public housing estates also witnessed transformation (Figure 2).

Transformation of public housing estates, 2000-2020

It is pertinent to note that the estates were built to accommodate civil servants for effective service delivery as well as to reduce housing deficit in the country, particularly among the low-income earners. But ownership and physical structure of the estates were transformed due to population growth, increase of housing demand and other basic needs of the people.

Ownership transformation

Initially, most of the houses were allocated to the civil servants. The residents and government served as tenants and landlord, respectively. The residents used to pay rent charges on monthly basis to the government. Rents were charged base on the total number of rooms in the housing units. For instance, the modest month rent charge for a housing unit in Ja’oji housing estate in about 1970 was ₦20. The monthly rent charges in Gwammaja estate for two (2) and three (3) bedroom around 1980 were ₦20 and ₦30, respectively. Kano state government used to deduct rents from salaries of its civil servants that occupied houses, while the federal and other individuals used to pay charges personally to Kano state. The houses were later sold to the occupants through owner-occupier scheme. This scheme was started in 1980s, but most of the transactions were completed in the 21st century. Certain processes were followed in implementing the scheme. The house occupants were instructed to obtain, fill and submit application. Conditions were also enumerated for the applicants. The conditions include the following:

1. All applicants for the houses (ownership) must be existing legal tenants who are indigenes of Kano (later Jigawa state indigenes were considered).
2. A tenant (who wished to apply for ownership) must have stayed in the house for a minimum of ten years before being considered for the scheme.
3. All recovered houses will be sold to Kano (and later Jigawa) indigenes.

Physical transformation of the estates

Another important aspect of the changing nature of the estates is the physical transformation. From their establishment onwards, most of the public estates witnessed physical changes. There were many deriving factors responsible for this transformation. One of these deriving factors was the promulgation of the Land Use Decree (now Act) of 1978. This act substituted pre-colonial and colonial land tenure systems. It was designed to revolutionize and unify land tenure systems in Nigeria, and nationalize land in the country’s geographical space. It vested the land of each state on the governor of the state. The act faced challenges. It did not work effectively to transform land tenure in the country due to various technical hitches, institution reasons and political will in the part of various governments to implement it.

In the same vein, Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Act was promulgated in 1992. This act stated the functions of government at various levels for physical urban and regional planning as well as development. According to this act, the responsibilities of federal government in urban and regional planning include among others formulation of national policies for urban and regional planning as well as development, the preparation and implementation of the

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16 Interview with Alhaji Sirajo Ibrahim Gaya, 67 Years, Retired Civil Servant (Pensioner), at his residence Zoo Road Housing Estates (Kundilar Gandu), on 9/01/2020.

17 Interview with Dr. Aminu Barde, c. 60 years, Lecturer, at his residence in the estate, on 9/01/2020. Houses in Danladi Nasidi housing estates and federal housing estates were sold via mortgage.


National Physical Development Plan and regional plans on recommendation of the minister. It entrusted state governments responsibilities such as the formulation of a state policy for urban and regional planning within the framework of national policies, the promotion and conduct of research in urban and regional planning, the dissemination of research results for adoption by user organizations among several others. Local government councils were also given responsibilities which include the control of development within their areas of jurisdiction other than over federal and state lands, preparation and implementation of local plan and so on.\textsuperscript{20}

Furthermore, the act conferred power on federal, state and local governments to establish planning authorities. Following this, many planning authorities were established in different states of the federation by states and local councils to regulate physical development.\textsuperscript{21} For example, Kano Metropolitan Development Board (KMDB) was transformed to Kano State Environmental Protection Agency (KASEPA) and later Kano State Urban Planning and Development Authority (KNUPDA).\textsuperscript{22} The major task entrusted to this agency is development control. Development control means the way and manner in which physical development of land is regulated. It aimed to ensure the orderly arrangement and control of all man’s activities in relation to land.\textsuperscript{23} KNUPDA designed and enforced guidelines for physical development on any land in the state, especially urban areas. These guidelines include the following:\textsuperscript{24}

1. A person must obtain land from ministry of land.
2. He or she must get building design and plan from professionals like Architects, Civil Engineers and so on.
3. He or she should submit copies of land grant and building plan to KNUPDA for assessment and approval.

Despite the existence of KNUPDA and its efforts in checking and regulating physical development, some people bypassed the agency in developing their new and old lands in the metropolis (estates included), due to political reasons and so on. This practice is common in almost all Nigerian capital cities.\textsuperscript{25} Most of the estates residents after completing payment of the houses decided to renovate the buildings. In the course of this renovation many houses were redesigned. Additional structures such as rooms and parking spaces were erected in some houses. Temporary shades and shops were constructed in front of some houses. Upstairs were built particularly in the estates that have detached and semidetached houses. The private wealthy individuals that bought houses in the estates mostly rebuilt them. These led to transformation of the estates. It changed the houses from uniform to unique structures. It affected the layout design of the estates and town plan. Sometimes, it also aids congestion and flooding in the estates.

Other reasons that caused the physical transformation of the estates were the increment of housing value in the metropolis and other parts of the state as well as rising standard of individuals and so on. Government surveyed the environment and undertook Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) before constructing the estates. The assessment showed that these estates will impact in expanding and strengthening the metropolis, especially the semi-urban areas bordering the frontiers of the metropolis. Hence, most of the estates were built in the then outskirts of the metropolitan areas. The establishment and development of these estates attracted many people into their neighbouring areas. As a result, government, community associations and other philanthropists provided social amenities like roads, hospitals, schools among several others in the estates and their neighbouring communities.\textsuperscript{26} These infrastructures helped in sustaining the population and attracting more people into the areas. It also led to redesigning of the estates layout, curving out of plots and additional increment of housing value in the estates. The influx of people into the neighbouring areas of the estates and construction of modern expensive houses in the areas also encouraged the estates residents in redesigning and reconstructing of their houses.\textsuperscript{27}

However, cultural and religious reasons were among the deriving factors behind the physical transformation of the estates. The housing units in some estates like Sabo Garba housing estate were built without boundary walls. This structure expose household to the neighbours and passersby. This contradicted cultural and religious norms of Kano people.\textsuperscript{28} It necessitated erection of boundary walls for the protection of each household especially housewives and security. Islamic propagation also made scholars of various sects to obtain land and spaces in the estates. They utilized these lands for the construction of mosques, schools and accommodation.

Similarly, the quality of building materials used in constructing the houses also contributed to the transformation of the houses. Some of the materials used were not qualitative. This led to the decaying of some structures. Hence, the residents decided and renovated the

\textsuperscript{20} Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Act, 1992.


\textsuperscript{22} Group interview with Surveyor Badamasi Tahir, 53 Years, Director Development Control and Architect Aliyu Dada, 48 Years, Deputy Director, at KNUPDA on 06/08/2020.


\textsuperscript{24} Group interview with Surveyor Badamasi Tahir, 53 Years, ... p. 152.

\textsuperscript{25} The rising population of Jankulo and its neighbouring communities led to the conversion of Imam Wali Local Government Staff Development Centre into General Hospital. The population increase of Shagari estate and its surrounding communities contributed in necessitating the construction of road from Zoo Road to Western Bypass and so on.

\textsuperscript{26} Interview with Haruna Alaramma, 45 Years, Estate Agent, at Dorayi Babba Yamadawa, on 11/03/2021.

\textsuperscript{27} Qur’an Chapter 33 Alhzab: Verse 53 and Chapter 24 Nur: Verse 27.
houses. Some residents reconstructed the houses, completely.

Politization and corruption also played role in changing the nature of the estates. In most Nigerian capital cities, political masters and their agents used their status in sourcing and obtaining curve out and lands in various locations. This practice occurred in some estates. Curve outs and lands were allocated inappropriately within and around the estates. There were also reserve lands allocated to political allies and other influential individuals. As mention above, this practice is the major challenge facing development control in Nigerian capital cities. The political masters, their agents and other influential individuals used to erect structures on these lands mostly without considering town plan and building regulations. They proved themselves untouchable by planning agencies, because confronting them with the law by any officer will simply mean putting his or her job on the line.29

Conversion in the estates

The renovation and reconstruction of houses in the estates due to aforementioned reasons, had also led to conversion and partition of houses. Some houses were converted from semi-detached or detached to duplex and even pent houses. This affected neighbourhood. It caused conflicts in some places. Population growth and demand for additional social amenities made government and other individuals to convert houses into other structures. For example, a housing unit was converted into community centre at Danladi Nasidi housing estates. There were many individuals that converted residences into private schools and clinics. These were majority of the conversions. It helped in providing income and jobs creations to many people and government. But the atmosphere affected teaching and learning in the schools. The ventilation was mostly not properly provided in the buildings, because most of rooms were initially designed to serve as bedroom for few people, but later converted into classrooms, that usually contain many pupils or students.

Conclusion

Kano is an important centre in West Africa. Since pre-colonial era Kano had been witnessing many developments. These include the advent of various people, establishment and development of settlements within and outside the walled city. The establishment and development of public housing estates are also among these developments. These estates were built in the 20th century, and mostly transformed in the 21st century. This aided transformation of metropolis, particularly from 2000-2020.

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