

AN INTERROGATION OF THE DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESSES OF THE FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY ABUJA, 1979-2007

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ABSTRACT

The foundation, development and eventual relocation of the Seat of the Federal Government to Abuja as Nigeria's new Capital Territory in December 1991, was a result of a carefully orchestrated policy of the Federal Government. Between 1980 (when physical construction work began in the area) and 1991 (when the Seat of Government was relocated from Lagos to the FCT), the city of Abuja witnessed massive development and remarkable transformation (or urbanization). However, the phenomenal transformation of the erstwhile undeveloped Abuja village area was at once dynamic and circumscribed; an enviable testimony to a well-planned and laid-out Capital City, whose adjoining satellite towns such as Karu, Nyanya, Gwagwalada and so on, were in inverse proportion to the aesthetic splendour of the Federal Capital City (FCC or City Centre). In other words, most of the satellite towns and surrounding settlements such as Keffi, Suleja, Minna and so on, appear more as mere accidental conglomeration of buildings and peoples, brought together by fate in a particular environment. That is, without plan, clear purpose or taste for living. Most of the earlier works were mostly undertaken by both the government and interested (partisan) writers, painting glitzy pictures of the Territory at the expense of balanced history. Issues like the changing patterns of development and its inherent problem in the FCT were hardly addressed. Among other issues examined are: Is the Abuja Master-Plan a mere government's cajoling tool for blindfolding Nigerians or is it a true strategic plan for sustainable development of the new FCT? What was the purpose of total neglect of the fourth phase of development of the FCT within the spectrum of government transformation of the FCT between 2003 and 2007? It is hope the paper would comprehensively outline and document such novel

issues as the internal stimulant of development within the matrix of ‘external’ influence, dynamics and contradictions of development (the emergence of urban decay) in the new and beautiful capital city, as well as the entire Territory. Essentially, the paper is an attempt to document contemporary history of the FCT, Abuja, when most of the key-players are still alive, and attempts a modest contribution to knowledge in this regards. Finally, the paper concludes on the note that even in the FCT, Abuja, the rich also cry in spite of the widespread impression (rightly or wrongly) that, “the Nigeria’s petrol-dollars flow on the streets of Abuja”.

Keywords: Development, Urbanization and Urban-decay.

INTRODUCTION

The establishment of a new Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria, like other capital territories around the world, has become an unavoidable phenomenon that is tied-up with the transformations in the socio-political and economic spheres of the preceding settlements of its area of domiciliation. The development and expansion of the Territory (here after describes as FCT) over time has transformed Abuja into a sprawling urban centre. But the transformation has not only manifested in the massive infrastructural and aesthetic appearance of the city centre, but also the acute shortages of the social amenities, especially in the adjourning satellite towns, (designed originally as ‘shock-absorbing’ settlement for the Capital City) hence, emergence of slums or decay in the new Capital Territory. However, the formation, expansion and eventual relocation of the Seat of the Federal Government to Abuja as Nigeria’s new Capital Territory in December 1991 is not an isolated case in history.

With the setting-in of civilization and modernization, some countries around the world started establishing cities that befit their political, economic, technological and social needs. In addition to meeting their ego, some nations also felt their capitals should depict their strength/national power and status amongst the committee of nations. It is a general knowledge in history that the only thing that is permanent is change. As humans change, so does their needs, tastes and activities. The relocation or change of capital cities around the world shows the susceptibility of man to taste and needs. For instance, the United States of America (USA) began the search for a new capital in July, 1790, and eventually, President George Washington chose a portion of land at the bank of the Potomac River. In 1800, the capital of USA was transferred from Philadelphia to that parcel of land named Washington DC.¹ The relocation of the capital to Washington DC, according to James Madison, was necessitated by the fact that the national capital needed to be distinct from the states, in other to provide for its own maintenance and safety.² It can be deduced from this that, the twin-issue of maintenance and security during war periods were the two overriding motives for the formation of Washington DC as the new Capital Territory for the United States in 1800 A.D.. However, the new city was distinct from other

American states, because it was a Federal District under the direct control of the national President.³

In the same vein, the establishment of Canberra as the new Capital City for Australia in 1927 was also a function of a well-coordinated plan by its Federal Government. One of the reasons for the relocation of Government Seat from Melbourne to Canberra was that, “the new nation requires a capital that was located away from other major settlements, such as Melbourne and Sydney”⁴. Canberra is thus created as a distinct Australian Capital Territory, and not a state.⁵ Like Washington, DC, the establishment and transformation of Canberra was the handiwork of an Act of Parliament. Essentially, the new capital was meant to depict the social status of Australia amongst the committee of nations.⁵ In other words, the capital city can be considered as Australian ‘national asset’.

The search for a befitting capital for Nigeria is as old as the country itself; it began from the colonial period. When the Northern and Southern protectorates were amalgamated in 1914, Lagos was chosen as the Federal Capital in opposition to the stand of Lord Fredrick Lugard, the then Governor - General of Nigeria, who preferred Lokoja.⁶ However, the capital was to remain in Lagos until mid-1970s, when the need arose for the relocation to Abuja as the new FCT in order to avoid the negative aspects of an urban city associated with Lagos, such as congestion, impossible terrain, traffic chaos, lack of room for expansion and so on.

Thus, for some salient reasons, the establishment of new or befitting capitals became a contagious ‘virus’ that has caught up with so many countries around the world over time, and the FCT, Abuja, like many of its kinds in history, is a deliberate effort of the Federal Government of Nigeria. Quintessentially, the eventual picking of Abuja amongst many other alternatives marks a watershed in the political landscape of Nigeria. The establishment of the Federal Capital City (FCC), Abuja and its transformation into a glittering urban centre was a result of a carefully orchestrated policy of the Federal Government of Nigeria. Thus Abuja, like some of the new capital cities in the world, was planned and constructed in a typically underdeveloped village area through the internal effort of her national government.

However, between 1980⁷ (when physical construction work began in the area) and 1991 (when the Seat of Government was relocated from Lagos to the FCT, Abuja), the new city had witnessed massive development and remarkable transformation. Though, the phenomenal transformation of the erstwhile underdeveloped village area was indeed dynamic, but it was also circumscribed; an enviable testimony to a well-planned and laid-out Capital City, whose adjoining satellite towns as Karu, Nyanya, Gwagwalada and so on, were in an inverse proportion to the aesthetic splendour of the Federal Capital City (FCC or City Centre). In other words, most of these satellite towns and surrounding settlements such as Keffi, Suleja, Minna

and so on, appear more as mere accidental conglomeration of buildings and people brought together by fate, (without plan, clear purpose or taste for living) in a particular environment.

Earlier works carried out on the Abuja area, such as, “Government Policy on the Creation of the Federal Capital Territory: An Assessment, 1976-1999”, by H.A. Abubakar; *A Chronicle of Abuja*, by A. Hassan and S. Naibi and *All You Have to Know and See in Abuja*, by B. Mbang, to mention a few were mainly centred on the establishment of the Abuja Federal Capital Territory, relocation of the Federal Government Seat to Abuja, displacement of the earlier settlements in the Abuja Area and the likes.⁸ There is hardly any serious historical works that combine the impact of such massive construction works, government tinkering with the Abuja Master-Plan and the consequences of urban decay on the FCT, most especially on the surrounding satellite towns and other settlements in the Abuja area. Most of the earlier works were mostly undertaken by both the government and interested (partisan) writers; painting glitzy pictures of the Territory at the expense of balanced history. Issues like the changing patterns of development and its inherent problem in the FCT, as well as those of continuity and change in the study area were hardly addressed.

The most important research questions in this paper therefore, include: Is the Abuja Master-Plan a mere government’s cajoling tool for blindfolding Nigerians, or a true strategic plan for sustainable development of the whole FCT? If it’s a true strategic plan, why did government renege on the originally planned policy of relocation of the earlier settlers and ‘smuggled-in’ a new, but awkward policy of integration into the FCT? And, what was the purpose of total neglect of the satellite towns in the government transformation of the FCT between 2003 and 2007? These and a few other questions formed the crux of this research.

The paper discusses the history of the development, expansion, transformation and the inherent problems of urbanization in the new FCT, Abuja from a problem-solving approach, in order to provide an insight into why things were how they were within the Federal Territory between 1976 and 2007. Quintessentially, the study attempts to document an aspect of the contemporary history of the FCT, Abuja when most of the key-players and eye-witnesses are still alive, within the spectrum of critical historiography and some theoretical frameworks.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS:

Theoretical Framework

In their quest for objectivity, historians like their social science counterparts, are deeply influenced by certain factors that determine the course of history. Thus, there is the need to conceptualize such factors that determine the historical process under consideration. Quintessentially therefore, some research theories are discussed in this study largely because

they are essential tools of analysis. For a historical research on the transformation of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja from an undeveloped rural area in 1976 to a bustling and glittering urban centre of international standard by 2007, an understanding of the theory of external influence and independent development are necessary for a balanced historical analysis.

According to the theorists of evolution, every society, organisms and even inorganic institutions undergo a continuous process of change in which certain characteristics of the original form are retained.⁹ This theory is an off-shoot of Charles Darwin's theory on the evolution of species.¹⁰ In relation to the physical and socio-political transformation of the FCT from a sleeping rural area *ab Initio*, into a glittering capital city within a decade is an eloquent testimony to the dynamics of development of a city through the effort an 'internal agent of transformation' (the National Government of Nigeria) when compared with thousands of years of existence of people in our study area as Steve Anisere has explained in his forthcoming book, *Abuja: The Choice and Passion For A New Federal Capital Territory in Nigeria, 1976 - 2007*.¹¹ In this book, Anisere also argues among other things that, there were no documentary evidence of linear process of development that the study area transformed itself from a pure rural undeveloped area through evolutionary process into a more complex and urban society as advanced by this theory.

Since the evolutionary theory tends to assume that the possibility of external influence on the societal and institutional development is a foregone conclusion, a change of theoretical paradigm at this juncture becomes plausible. The theory of external influence, or what some scholars have conceptualized as theory of cultural diffusion, hinges on the assumption that, changes/transformations occur in a society as a consequence of the introduction of foreign influences from outside the society or community being studied. This theory is one and the same with the concept of Hermitic hypothesis.¹² Indeed, cultural and trade contacts serve sometimes as agents of transformation or urbanization among other factors, however, this theory like the evolutionist theory, often regards Egypt as the cradle of the most important developments or transformations witnessed in Africa, South of the Sahara.

Though this theory appears relevant as far as the transformation of the Abuja as the new Federal Capital Territory for Nigeria is concerned, but its assumptions are quite misleading, especially on the interpretation of historical events in the FCT between 1976 and 2007. This is so because the theory did not consider the possibilities of 'external influence' outside the confines of the Hermitic hypothesis. Since this present work is anchored on the 'external factors' as the major stimulant for the transformation of the FCT into an urban centre, the theory or perspective of local or 'internal' stimulant within the matrix of 'external' influence, therefore becomes imperative. The argument is that, while the transformation of the Abuja area was kick-started and implemented by a force outside the power/influence of original settlers in the study area. Thus, it

is devoid of the normal process of the well-known Hermitic hypothesis, because it is another force, located squarely within the geometric border of the same Nigerian nation.

The application of theoretical model of analysis to this study becomes imperative, because when one considers the magnitude of the changes in the Abuja area on a chronological basis, it defies all sense of linear logic of community self-transformation and most of the earlier works on the Territory were written out of mere emotion and passion, rather than from the viewpoint of professionalism. To this extent, this author propose the possibility of a new theory or better still, the perspective of ‘internal’ stimulation of transformation within the dynamics of ‘external’ influence. The principal agent of this ‘internal’ stimulant in the case of the FCT, Abuja within the period under review, is the Federal Government of Nigeria itself. In other words, The FCT, Abuja is an artificial creation of the Federal Government of Nigeria. No more, no less.

Conceptual Clarifications:

Certain concepts used in this work include, development, urbanization and urban decay. The proper definitions of these concepts are crucial in other to avoid unnecessary misconceptions of the essence of the whole work.

Development

According to J. Garr and N. Asokan in their work, towards a *Comprehensive Theory of Social Development*, the term, development can be defined as “...an upward ascending movement, featuring greater levels of energy, efficiency, quality, productivity, complexity, comprehension, creativity, mastery, enjoyment and accomplishment”.¹³ Quintessentially therefore, development is a process of a comprehensive change in the areas of human endeavours; it is more than just a set of policies and programs or mere growth without substance, it is growth with measurable substance.¹⁴ In another words, development can be considered as a relative term, because it needs to be tied to an aspect of human life to make a meaning. For instance, development can be attached to the social, political, economic, cultural, technological, educational advancements etc. Thus, development does not exist in abstract; development in any human or national life signifies both qualitative and quantitative transformations in the living standard of such person or nation. Indeed, when development becomes experiential in the life of a person or settlement, it means some levels of transformation have taken place. This was the existential reality in the FCT, Abuja that this paper seeks to unearth during the period under review.

Urbanization

Urbanization is a multi-disciplinary concept and therefore, has no universally acceptable conceptualization. Thus, scholars from academic fields like History, Geography, Sociology,

Urban and Regional Planning etc., have tried to explain the concept from their various fields of specialization. In fact, many students of tertiary institutions tend to confuse urbanization with modernization or westernization. Thus, for the purpose of clarity, it becomes imperative to examine some of the thoughts of leading scholars on the concept and zero-in on the aspect that best suits the discussion under consideration.

According to H.P. Fairchild in the *Dictionary of Sociology*, “Urbanization is the process of becoming urban; the movement of people from rural to urban areas or the increase in the population of a hitherto small community”.¹⁵ In his own opinion an eminent geographer Akin Mabogunje has defined the concept as “...the process whereby human beings congregate in relatively large number at one particular spot of the earth surface”.¹⁶ However, he went on to opine that “... no formal theory of urbanization exists”.¹⁷ Thereby laying to rest much ado about nothing. This paper subscribes to Mabogunje’s position because the author agreed that, all theories only represent a simplification or generalization of complex realities, they do not represent a complete description of a particular situation in a concrete form.

However, for a working definition of urbanization in this article, some basic indices of the concept should be bear in mind. For instance, Enoch Oyedele has argued and correctly that, for a meaningful understanding, urbanization should be seen from two major perspectives: the evolutionist and the political-economy perspectives.¹⁸ The evolutionists’ perspective sees urbanization as the product of changes that take place in the society. Under this spectrum of analysis, the economic changes stand out. The economic changes make many of the individuals in a particular settlement to be more particularly focused or professional in the area of production where they have relatively comparative advantage.¹⁹ On the political-economy perspective on the other hand, Oyedele sees urbanization as a relationship between different classes in the society.²⁰ In other words, there is a close relationship between an increasingly growing population in a structural social differentiations for mutual gains and their political relevance as a community of people.

It can be deduced from the above that, there is a close correlation between the changing conditions of development in a society and the increased number of the population in that community. Quintessentially the transformation in the Abuja capital city can be said to be a harbinger of the phenomenal increase in the population in that area. However, an uncontrollable increase in population in a particular spot of the earth surface, could lead to the problem of urban-decay in the area concerned – detailed analysis very soon.

Urban-Decay

One of the associated problems of urbanization is urban-decay. In this study, the issue of urban-decay is conventionally seen as a process whereby a part of an urban city is neglected (intentionally or unintentionally) to a state of disrepair; it is characterized by property abandonment. Examples of urban decay in Nigeria are found at the FESTAC town, Ajegunle and Apapa communities, as well as Gowon-Estate among others in Lagos, while Nyanya, Karu and so on, can be found in the FCT, Abuja. The general characteristic is that such areas accommodate the low income earners and extremely poor segments in the society. Those places are barely habitable as there were no provisions of basic social amenities in them. The result, according to Dupe Olatunbosun is the emergence of slums and squatters.²¹ (This can be label as Type-A of urban-decay). The Type-B urban-decay are usually caused by faulty urban planning decisions or by government policies which are not clearly thought-through. The type of urban-decay witnessed in the FCT is such that combined both the Types-A and B of urban-decay adumbrated above. Detailed analysis follows shortly.

The Need and Proposal for the Establishment of Nigeria's New Federal Capital, 1975-1976

The major inadequacies of Lagos as the capital of Nigeria have been obvious right from the time of Lord Lugard, (who argued vigorously against the designation of Lagos as the capital of the amalgamated Nigeria). Among his (Lugard's) arguments against Lagos were lack of land for expansion and the impossibility of separating the Europeans from the natives.⁵ In addition, the dual role of Lagos as the political capital of Nigeria and provincial headquarters of a state within itself, were other reasons advanced by Lugard. These reasons became more obvious in 1975, when the 12-States were created. The dual role led to the emergence of certain inadequacies that eventually culminated in the desire and eventual relation of the Federal Capital to the FCT, Abuja barely within 11-year after.

Moreover, as a Federal Capital, the then Military Government of Generals Murtala Mohammed/Obasanjo Olusegun saw that there were other problems militating against Lagos as the nation's capital. Among such problems are poor topography, limited land mass for development, perennial traffic congestion, inadequate housings, environmental pollution, and relative insecurity, as a result of its vulnerability to external attacks, because Lagos was located practically on the Lagoon beach. In addition that Military Government was also averse to the reality that Lagos was located on the peripheral part of Nigeria, which means many Nigerians had to travel long distance to reach their capital, and that the Lagos capital city belongs to one particular ethnic group of the country. A situation they argued made it difficult for the Seat of Government to be truly national in outlook.²³

Based on the above inadequacies, a 7-man panel headed by Justice Akinola Aguda, with Dr. Tai Solarin, Prof. O.K. Ogan, Colonel Monsignor Pedro Martins, Chief Owen Fiebei, Alhaji

Mohammed Musa Isma, and Prof. Ajato Gandonu was constituted, with Chief E.E. Nsefik as Secretary, to find a lasting solution to the above stated problems. The panel was inaugurated by General Murtala Mohammed on August 9th, 1975 with the following as terms of reference:

To examine the dual role of Lagos as a State and Federal Capital and advise on the desirability or otherwise of the city retaining that role. If the committee found that Lagos was unsuitable for the dual role, it should recommend which of the two governments should move to a new capital. If the committee found that the Federal Government should move out of Lagos, it should recommend suitable alternative location, with regard to the need for easy accessibility to and from every parts of the country.²⁴

After extensive tours both within and outside the country, receipt of numerous memoranda from the general public and exhaustive deliberations, the committee submitted its report in December, 1975 with the under-stated recommendations.

Lagos was incapable of performing the dual role as federal and state capital due to the problem of inadequate space for development commensurate with its status. The city (Lagos) was identified with predominantly one ethnic group, which by implication, could not provide equal access to Nigeria's great diversity of ethnic and cultural groups. A new capital was desirable that would be secured, ethnically neutral accessible, comfortable for the Government business, with adequate land mass and natural resources to provide a promising base for urban development. Finally, that a new capital was needed as a symbol of Nigeria's aspirations for unity and greatness.²⁵

Considerations in Selecting the New Federal Capital Territory:

Government accepted the above proposals/recommendations and based on them, asked the committee to search for that ideal new capital for Nigeria. Places suggested in the quest for a new capital included Auchi, Okene, Kafanchan, Makurdi, Ife and Abuja among others.²⁶ In other to arrive at a generally acceptable new capital, certain criteria were employed and rated as shown in the table below:

Table I: Considerations in Selecting a New FCT

S/N	CRITERIAL	WEIGHT BY PERENTAGE
1.	Centrality	22
2.	Health and Climate	12
3.	Land Availability	10
4.	Water Supply	10
5.	Multi-access Possibility	7
6.	Security	6
7.	Existence of Local Building Materials	6
8.	Low Population Density	6
9.	Power Supply Resources	5
10.	Drainage	5
11.	Soil	4
12.	Physical Planning Convenience	4
13.	Ethnic Accord	3
	Total	100

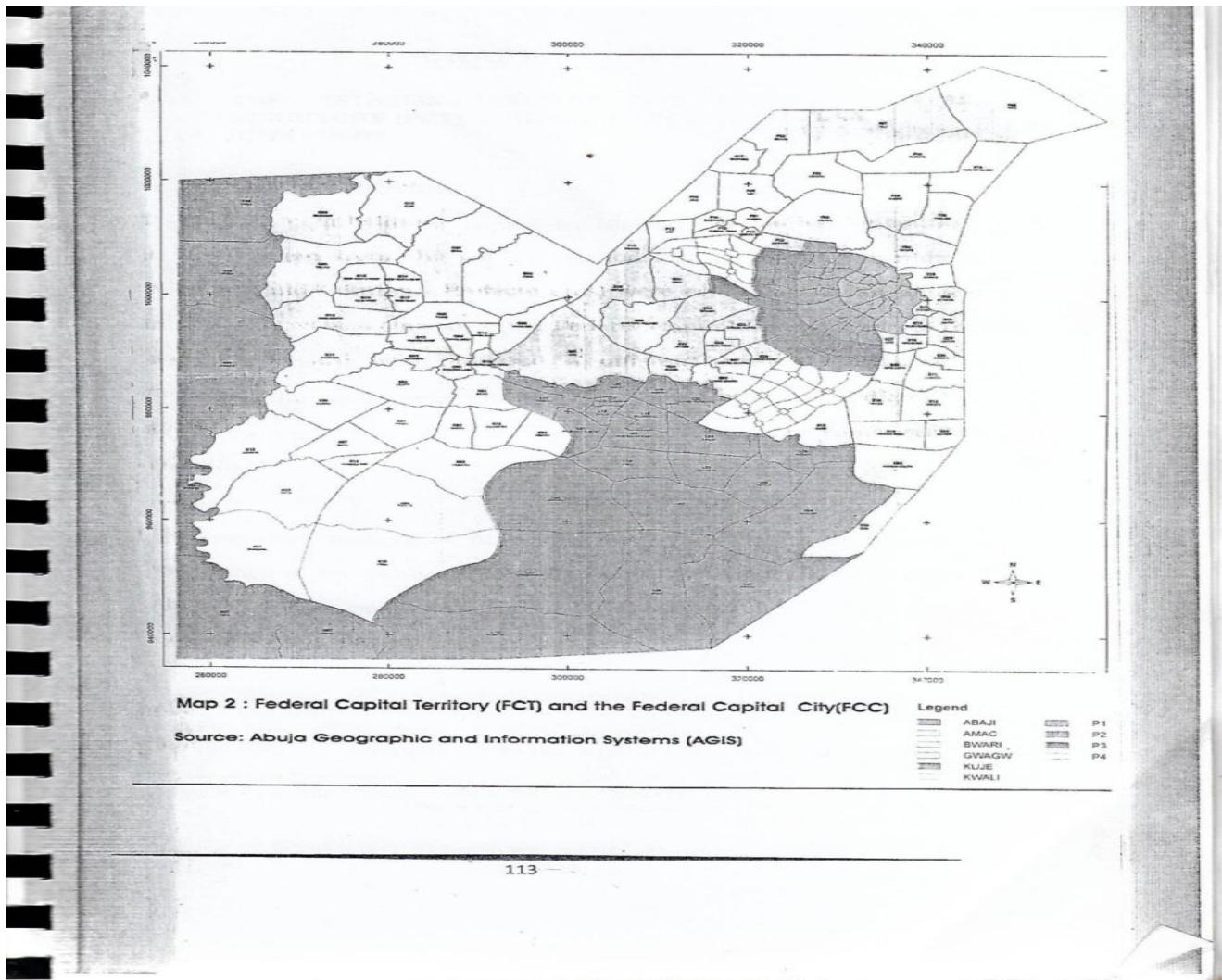
Source: U.S. Ago, and I.U. Jubril, (Eds.), *Report of the Ministerial Committee for the Appraisal of Physical Planning and Development: Issues in the Federal Capital Territory*, (Abuja: MFCT/FCDA, 1999), P.37.

Based on the above criteria the committee, after an extensive search, finally chose Abuja as the most suitable FCT. The entire Territory was to be carried out of the old Niger State, (that contributed about 79-percent of the land mass), old Plateau State (contributed about 16-percent of the land mass) and old Kwara State (which gave-up about 5-percent of the land mass).²⁷

On February 3rd 1976, General Murtala Muhammed, (the then Military Head of State), made a nationwide broadcast accepting the recommendations/proposals of the committee without any modifications. To this end, the Federal Military Government therefore, promulgated Decree Number Six (known as the Federal Capital Territory Act) on 5th February, 1976. The decree vested ownership of all lands in the said Territory, Abuja, in the Federal Government. In the decree, the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) became the Government Agency responsible for the design of the Master-Plan, construction and management of the new Capital Territory.²⁸ Abuja therefore, officially became the new Federal Capital of Nigeria. The need for a befitting capital was truly visible, but the task ahead was how to establish and maintain it. This need gave birth for the installation of a Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA), which

in-turn commissioned an American consortium to produce a master-plan for the new capital territory.

Map 1: Map of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja



The Establishment of Abuja as Nigeria's New Federal Capital Territory, 1976 - 1991

The establishment of Abuja as a new Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in 1976 is clearly a sequence to the Nigeria's Government overwhelming desire to find a befitting capital city for the country. As stated earlier, the search for a befitting capital is not novel in Nigeria; Lagos was chosen by the Colonial Office as the Federal Capital in opposition to the stand of Laggard, who

preferred Lokoja.²⁹ However, the capital was to remain at Lagos until the middle of the 1970s when the need for relocation became clearly discernible.

The eventual choice of Abuja as the Capital Territory for Nigeria marks a watershed in the political development of the country. As an FCT, Abuja was an artificial creation which requires a carefully orchestrated policy of Nigeria's Federal Government. Thus, its establishment was a result of an 'internal' initiative within the spectrum of 'external' influence. The Territory, like some other capital cities around the world, was planned and constructed in a typically previously undeveloped rural area. However, it has overtime metamorphosed into a bustling and glittering city that has transverse its previous political, social economic and physical landscapes. For instance, in 1976 the study area had no single settlement with a population which exceeds 5000 people.³⁰

When construction work in Abuja started in 1980,³¹ it marked the beginning of massive structural transformation of the FCT area within a short space of eleven years (1980-1991). For this massive transformation, the Federal Government during the General Ibrahim Babangida Military Regime decided to relocate the Seat of Government to the FCT, in December 1991.³² The massive development and spatial expansion of the new city is a testimony to a well planned and executed master-plan, which when compared with the poor condition in all its surrounding satellite towns and the older settlements, makes the older surroundings appear more as accidental conglomeration of buildings and people brought together by mere chance.

The Abuja Master-Plan: Its Implementation and the Emergence of A New Urban Capital City:

The Abuja Master-Plan

The Master-Plan for Abuja (the new Federal Capital of Nigeria), was a result of the commissioning of the International Planning Associates (IPA). A consortium made-up of three American firms; PRC Corporation; Wallace, McHarg, Roberts and Todd (WRT) and Archi Systems International to produce a Master-Plan for the new Capital City and Territory.³³ Prior to the commissioning of the IPA, 6-previous reports had been submitted that formed the background to the eventual development of the Master-Plan. These reports include, Recommendation on the Population; Employment and General Land Use (that is, the requirements associated with the new capital up to year 2000); Site Selection (which is a description and analysis of the natural features of the FCT); Draft Regional Plan (which was the plan describing the allocation of the resources of the FCT, as well as the future use of land required by the Capital City itself); Concept Plan (a supplementary report that focused on the Central Area and which combine the advantages of flexibility, efficiency, image, ability and site

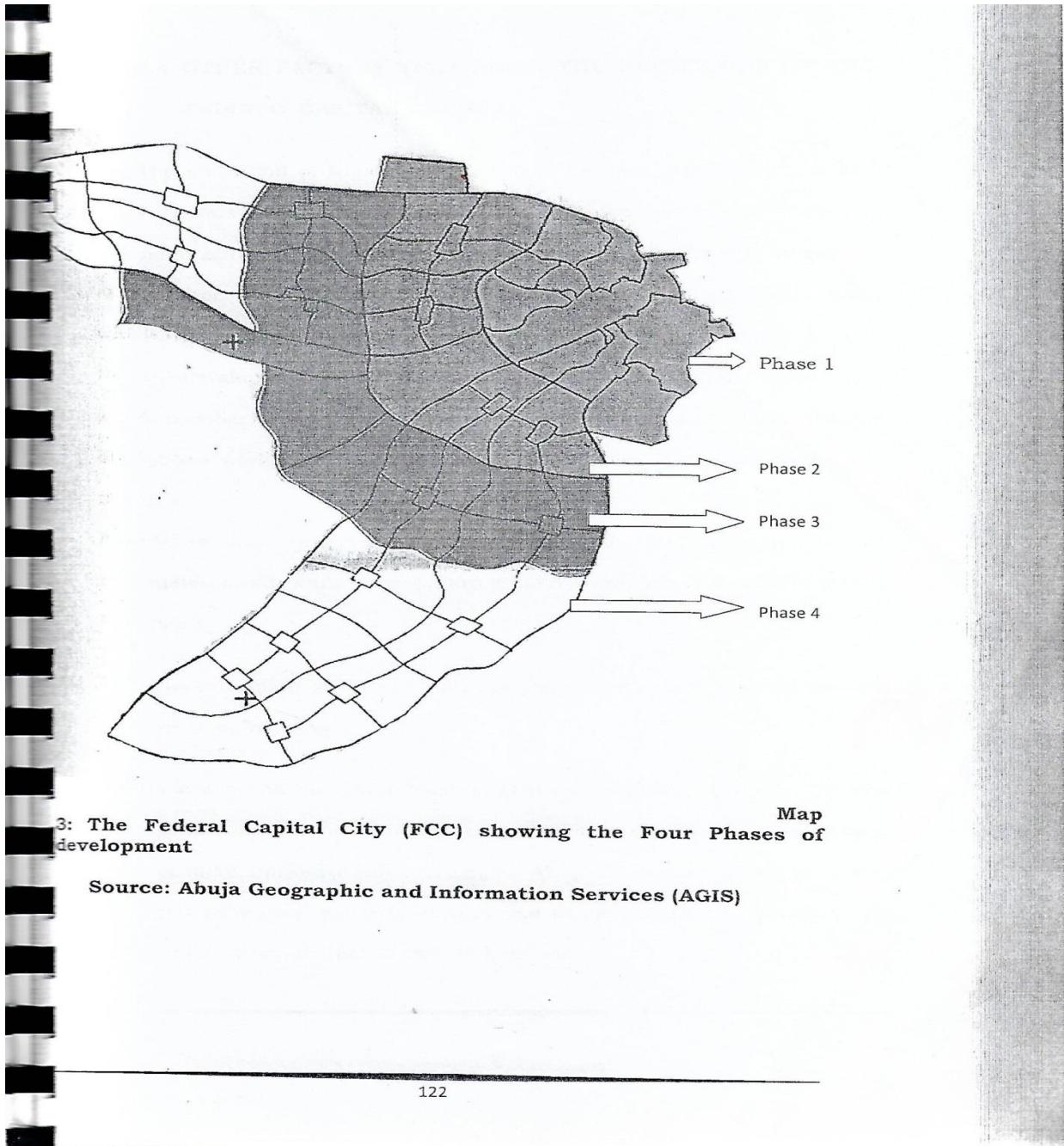
adaptability); Draft Capital City Master-Plan (or the developed plan showing the basic concepts in terms of a long- term, stage-plan and programs for the major functional systems for the new FCC); as well as the Logistic Plan (which entails the most cost effective strategy) to ensure that the FCDA's time-table was met on schedule. It also included the estimates of the needed labour force, material, equipment and other facilities.³⁴

The Master-Plan therefore, was a culmination of intense technical efforts as reflected in the above reports and submissions with detailed the plans, data-base, and the reviewed assessments of panel reports. The execution of the Master-Plan was supervised by the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) under the leadership of Mr. Mobolaji Ajose-Adeogun as the Commissioner and Chairman of the new Territory along with ten others; a twenty seven Man Technical Assessment Panel and an International Review Panel of four persons from the United States of America (USA), Tanzania, England and India.³⁵

The IPA designed the Master-Plan in a way that combined cost effective, dignity and qualities appropriate for a new Federal Capital, as well as provided for an exemplary environment for its residents. To this extent, the plan took into cognizance, the principles of equal access, equal citizenship, environmental protection, aesthetic or beautiful and functional city, effective regional development and rapid national economic growth. Above all, the Capital City was planned mainly as an Administrative City under the distinct control of the National President of Nigeria and not as a State. Thus, the new capital is without the characteristics reminiscent of the other large cities in Nigeria or of a typical urban center.³⁶

Another aspect of what makes the Capital City unique is that it was deliberately planned in such a way that the space structure was based on longitudinal geo-system; retaining the streams, valleys and water-course both for drainage and aesthetic purposes. Besides, the City has a linear transportation system; consisting of parallel transit corridors, each forming a central-spine of development corridors to house both government's activities and members of staff. In addition, the development work was segmented with linear paradigm consisting of phases I, II, III and IV.³⁷ See Map II below.

Map II: Map of the Master-Plan of the Federal Capital Territory



Besides, the Master-Plan provided that the new Capital would have a limited number of light-industries, agricultural research institutes and housing facilities in order to make room for a faster pace of government business. Finally, it also provided for a group of satellite towns for the

necessary supports. In another words, the Federal Capital Territory, especially the Capital City was not designed as an urban centre, rather as a viable or manageable Administrative City purposely for housing the Seat of the Federal Government, with the complement of its full range of government businesses and other complementary activities. Physically, the overall land-use pattern was designed in crescent-shape; defined by land availability for further extension and developmental purposes, as described by the Map II above. However, the Plan was designed to be implemented in phases; phases 1 - 4.

Implementation of the Master-Plan

In a bid to ensure accurate and timely execution of the Master-Plan, a fast-track method was recommended which segmented the whole process into 4-phases, in other to make for sequential development in other to avoid work-congestion, delay and time wastage.³⁸ In addition, other special recommendations made for the timely implementation of the plan include: Base Technical Studies (that is, the detailed data about capital city area, such as geology, hydrology, topography and meteorology); Architectural and Engineering Planning (which has to do with the designs, frameworks and detailed specifications on each of the projects called Site Development Plan); Logistic Plan, (this enables the FCDA to maximize their resources; using appropriate mix of labour, materials, equipments and facilities without management problems); Staffing and Financial Management, Operation Planning; Capital City Construction Phasing; and the Regional Infrastructural Development (RID). By the RID, certain infrastructures needed to support other construction activities were carefully installed as specified by the Master-Plan before the major constructions started, while at the same time, liaising with other appropriate government agencies that are critical to the development of the new Capital Territory.³⁹ These specific support-services projects include: the Development of Water Supply and Waste Treatment Plants; Power Supply Distribution System; Airport Facilities, the Construction of Highways A-2, A-124 and A-234; Project Management Information System; Logistics Up-to-Date System and Financing Program Scheduled for Phase-One of the Plan.⁴⁰

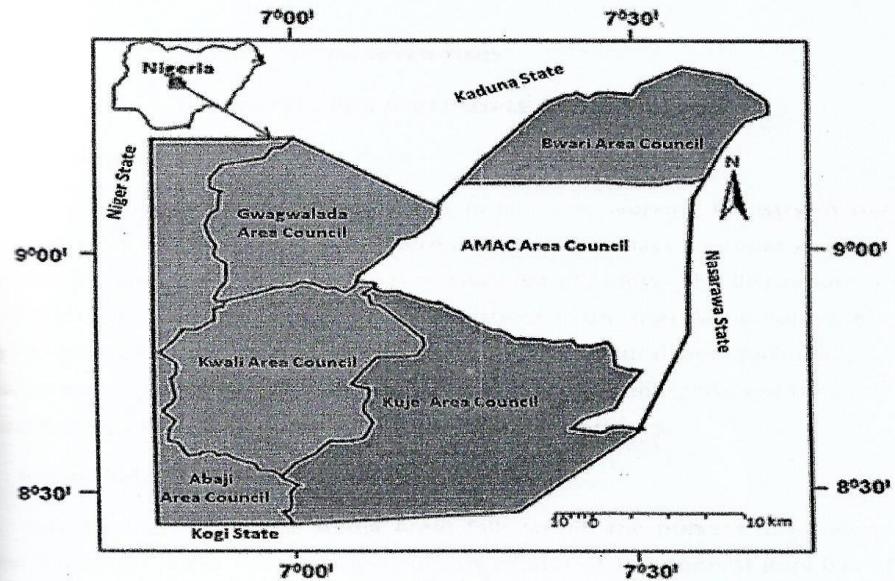
Between 1980 when construction works started in the new city and 1982, the city had been so transformed that the Government of President Shehu Shagari made the first, but an abortive move to relocate the Seat of Government to the FCT, (albeit, four years ahead of the original date specified by the planners of the Territory). We will revisit this issue later in the study. But by December 1991, the City-Centre had become so splendid and spectacular to behold and inhabit, hence, the Military Government of General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida eventually succeeded in relocating the Seat of Government to the FCT, Abuja. However, the Government relocation heralded other unintended events which eventually turned the envisaged administrative city into an urban centre within a very short space of time.

The Emergence of a New Unban Capital (Administrative) City

As stated earlier, though the capital city was not planned to be an urban centre, but an administrative city, but events that followed the actualization of the master-plan, and the eventual relocation of the Seat of Government to Abuja in December 1991 made it so. It stands to reason that, if the condition in a rapidly developing city (like the FCT, Abuja) continues on the positive and linear projection, more and more people will be attracted to it for various reasons. Following the movement of Government Seat to Abuja, the resultant movement of civil servants, other government officials, embassies, as well as the headquarters of international organizations/multinationals and other large companies dependent on the government with their employees, also relocated with the Government into the new capital city, and this definitely swelled-up the population of the new Territory beyond the Government's expectations.

These groups of people were aside legions of other service-providers like artisans, petty-traders, food-vendors, hair-dressers and barbers, area boys, commercial bus drivers and bike-riders, job seekers and so on, who flocked to the new Capital City in droves, believing in the aphorism that Nigeria's petrol-dollars flow on the streets of Abuja. This sort of uncontrollable movement of people into Abuja inevitably turned the FCC, (the supposed administrative and beautiful capital city), into an unforeseen urban centre. In fact, the consequences of this unforeseen urbanization had even weightier consequences on the various satellite towns within the broad framework of the FCT, Abuja – emergence of decay in the beautiful Capital Territory.

Figure 3: Administrative Map of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, 1991



Source: Adapted from Land and Survey Dept., Federal Development Authority, Abuja, 1991

Emergence of Decay in the Beautiful Capital Territory

Distortion of the Master-Plan by the Federal Government herself was the first factor in the explanation of the emergence of decay in the glittering city. To ensure a gradual developmental process, the IPA Consortium divided the entire development of the FCT into 4-phases. There are 5-districts in Phase-I; the Central, Garki, Wuse, Maitama and Asokoro Districts. There are also 5-districts in Phase-II; Kado, Durumi, Gudu, Utako and Jabi Districts. Phase-III has four districts, which are Mabuchi, Katampe, Wuye, and Gwarimpa Districts. All these 3-phases of the development formed the National Government Administrative City, called the Federal Capital

City (FCC). The suburban of the FCC are the satellite towns and they formed the fourth phase of the development plan. This phase (popularly called the satellite towns) also has 5-districts, which are Nyanya, Karu, Gwagwalada, Kubwa and Jukwoyi.

As at 2007 (when this study terminates), Phase-I was 95-percent completed, Phase-II was at 50-percent, and Phase-III was at 5-percent, while phase-IV (the satellite towns) was still at the design level.¹ In other words, there was supposed to be an evolution of two main areas of spatial development within the broad framework of the FCT; the Federal Capital City (FCC), which consists of the first three phases and the suburb or satellite towns, (which consist in the fourth phase) of the master-plan. While developmental works were at various level of completion in all the phases in the FCC, it was at zero level in the satellite towns as at 2007, when this study terminates. Now the question is, did the Government intended the Master-plan to be a mere cajoling tool of blindfolding Nigerians, or is it a true strategic plan for even and sustainable development? Tinkering with the master-plan might be taken as the foundation of the emergence of decay in the new Capital Territory.

The first level of the foundational distortion came as the resultant shifting of the date of government relocation, first by the Government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari in 1980. This shift led to helter-skelter building activities within the City-Centre to provide accommodation for the incoming population. Thus, most of the structures were substandard and uncompleted. While the Shehu Shagari's Administration was guilty of bastardizing the FCC, (because his hasty, but aborted relocation attempt resulted in the erection of many substandard structures within the FCC itself), the Babangida's rushed relocation completely 'killed' the master-plan's provisions for the satellite towns. Personal visits to the satellite towns by the researcher reveal that there are a good number of buildings in each of the towns, but they all appeared abandoned in the early stages of construction. For instance, during fieldwork, the researcher saw that the Nyanya and Gwarinpa Housing Estates were abandoned since 1981. In other words, those estates have been completely turned into slums long before 2007.

What was more, the structures in these estates are collapsing with impassable roads. The result of this hasty relocation directly led to the emergence of shanty towns in the beautiful FCT. However, such places are found more in the satellite towns, though a few numbers of such anomalies were also seen in the Capital City itself. Consequently, most of the buildings in the satellite settlements appear more like collapsed buildings erected in some very dirty environments, because little or no provisions were made for the accommodation of the over-populated towns, where large number of low-income earners congregated. The satellite towns in another words, can be described as shanty towns.

Another area of government tinkering with the master-plan is on the issue of indigene and indigeneship and so, the resettlement issue became very problematic. The initial plan after Abuja was designated as the FCT was to relocate all the earlier settlers in the old Abuja area to another place, with the aim of freeing the Territory from claims by anybody or group(s) of ownership of land or indigeneship of Abuja, as was the case with Lagos. According to the Act setting-up the FCT, it was considered that. "...the ownership of the land comprised in the Federal Capital Territory shall likewise be vested absolutely in the Government of the Federation".⁴² It was therefore planned that the inhabitants of the Abuja area will be resettled outside the territory at government expense. However, between 1976 and 1981, there were policy summersaults on the part of the government. In fact, according to Ibrahim Usman Jubril, there were 4-major policy changes/summersaults on the issue of resettlement between 1976 and 2006. This issue has led to the emergence of a situation where indigenes of older settlements are laying claims to the new Abuja – the administrative city of the nation's national government.⁴³

The first policy summersault was after the enumeration of the population to be resettled, it was discovered that the initial anticipated few population of about 25,000 to 50,000 people has suddenly jumped-up to 150,000 and the compensation that would have ordinarily cost the government about ₦150-million has subsequently climbed-up to over ₦229.8 million.⁴⁴ The government was not willing to part with such huge sum and therefore, back-tracked on the issue of resettlement on July 13th 1973, during the military regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo. On that day, the government announced among other things that,

Those not affected by the first phase of resettlement, but wish to move out of the FCT may do so, but such will have no claims on the FCDA. Inhabitants not moved out during the present exercise; who decide to stay will now be deemed citizens of the FCT, and FCDA will soon appoint an Administrator to look after their welfare.⁴⁵

Expectedly, this policy change was very attractive to many, because it gave room for many to stay back in the FCT as citizens, and this has emboldened many of them over the years to start selling lands indiscriminately, ostensibly to share in the 'blessings' of Abuja. This second policy change came in 1992, when the government opted for "Integration Policy". By this policy, the government planned to integrate whoever remains in the Territory into the budding Master-Plan. That was why Garki district (or the old Gariki village) became part and parcel of the FCC.⁴⁶

The third policy summersault appears to be deliberately tailored to favour the so-called 'indigenes' living within the entire Territory. Against this background, houses were constructed at Jibi at government's expense for those to be 'integrated' from Kado, Jabi and Gwarimpa to move in.⁴⁷ However, government security personnel took-over the buildings and nothing was

done by the Government about it; leading to scramble for all available buildings (whether completed or not) by the people who were supposed to have moved into Jibi estate. The result was an emergence of more and more shanty towns and slums all-over the satellite towns. A visit to these areas shows clearly that these estates are just conglomeration of people and buildings without plans, purpose or taste for descent living.

The fourth policy summersault was the government's attempts at the restoration of the Abuja master-plan from 2003 onward. This was pursued with vigour but without alternatives provisions for those who were affected by the exercise. The restoration was aimed at correcting the anomalies occasioned by the distortion of the master-plan, as well as thwarting the activities of fraudulent allocation and sales of lands within the City-Centre by the Abuja 'indigenes'.⁴⁸ But the attempt to solve this problem within the FCC, resulted into more complex problems in the suburbs and other surrounding settlements in the adjourning States. All these policy summersaults indeed made the issue of the indigenes and indigeneship very complex.

The master-plan was aimed at giving the best to the FCT, but inconsistencies has led to the distortion that appear very hard to correct, mostly because of the ever-increasing influx of people into the study area from all over the country. Consequently, unauthorized places like sewage lines, green areas, shop corners, and roads were flagrantly allocated, most especially by Lt. Gen. Jerry Useni during General Sani Abacha's regime.⁴⁹ The distortions greatly defaced Abuja and subsequently resulted in the emergence of decays in the beautiful city. In addition, buildings in the satellite towns were initially expanded, but abandoned early in their construction. These abandoned units were turned by many uninvited people in Abuja into squatters' settlements. Quintessentially, activities of squatters and shanty town dwellers like prostitution, pollutions, dirt, dwelling in dilapidated buildings, over-congestions, criminal activities, and illegal night clubs became common features in these satellite towns.

Just as it was in the satellite towns, decays were also found in the city-centre, but in lower degrees. Few of the structures in the FCC were substandard and uncompleted; many of the facilities and social amenities were also not installed. This led to the problem of lack of toilets, pipe borne water, electricity supply etc. The results were what they called 'flying toilets' and open defecation of the road sides, gutters, streams and streets in the new capital city. By tinkering with the master-plan, any little undeveloped plot of land in any part of the city centre or any of the so-called estates in the satellite towns was inadvertently turned into public toilet. In fact, a little deviation from the shoulder of the seemingly clean road in the whole FCT is a messy side. In addition, most artisans scattered all over the FCC, (who used empty lands as workshops for their services) do not have access to the residential and government offices' toilets, hence, they prefer the 'flying toilets' style.⁵⁰ (That is, faeces thrown away in polythene bags).

Government's Efforts at Containing/Eradicating the Decay, 1999-2007:

The general decay in the beautiful city became much pronounced between 1993 and 1998 during the military regime of General Sani Abacha, when Lt. Gen. Jerry Useni was the Minister for the FCT. By the time when a civilian administration took-over the reign of Government in 1999, the purpose and ‘spirit’ of the Abuja Dream was almost completely gone. The Civilian Administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo, in its efforts to restore the original master-plan of the Territory and rid the new city of the festering decay, (as typified by his second Minister of the FCT, Mallam El-Rufai, between 2003 and 2007), embarked on massive removal of illegal structures all over the Federal Capital City, (FCC). Accordingly, 46,701 structures were pulled-down in 23-settlements within the City-Centre.⁵¹ In the same vein, all the corner shops, illegal extension of government buildings, encroachments on the green-areas, roads, sewage-lines and recreation parks throughout Wuse II, Garki, Maitama and Asokoro districts were all destroyed by Mallam El-Rufai.⁵²

Government’s efforts in fighting the menace of urban decay in the FCC were also visible in the area of road decongestion. The near impossible traffic hold-up on the Abuja - Nyanya Expressway prompted the government to award contract for the dualisation of the Abuja - Keffi road, which was completed within scheduled.⁵³ Also, the contract for the construction of the Asokoro (A.Y.A.) flyover was also awarded and completed on schedule, in other to ease the traffic problems in the new Capital City between 1999 and 2006.⁵⁴

This issue of widening the roads within the FCC in other to ease the traffic chaotic situation there, brings to the fore its twin-issue of transportation problems in the Capital City. From 2003 to 2007, the existing government-owned transport company (Abuja Urban Mass Transport Company - AUMTCO) was repackaged and strengthened. The company went into contract with some private transport companies such as Sonic Global Services, and they were able to deploy many buses to all the FCC roads to service Abuja and its environs in a private-government joint venture. For instance towns outside the FCT like Mararaba, Keffi, Madalla, Suleja and Kaduna roads amongst others that serve the manpower needs of the FCC, were also covered. These buses which are painted in yellow, brown and green colour-mixture are popularly known as “El-Rufai buses”.⁵⁵ In addition, government has since paid its own 25-percent counterpart fund of ₦366 million for an additional 550 luxury buses that operate as Rapid Mass Transit Buses on specially marked parts of the extended roads.⁵⁶ In the same vein, private companies and group of individual transport operators were also licensed to ply certain parts of the Abuja roads in other to eliminate such problems of ‘one-chance’, ‘419’ and so on, associated with transport problems in the FCT in the past.⁵⁷

The restoration of the Abuja master-plan was not only in the area of removal of illegal structures and straighten-up the transportation system, it also consists the reversal of the reclaimed areas into their original designated use. This is more prominent in the areas where illegal corner-shops and neighbourhood centres were removed as they mostly usurped the “Green Areas”, “Park Gardens” etc., around the Capital City. Most areas cleared of illegal structures had been reverted to their original designated use by mid-2007.⁵⁸ This effort has resulted in the re-beautification of the Capital City through massive greening, planting of flowers and trees, as well as construction of many recreational parks.

Government was also involved in the establishment and strengthening of regulatory agencies for the purpose of maintaining the reclaimed beauty of the City. For instance, agencies like the Abuja Metropolitan Management Agency (AMMA), responsible for ensuring strict adherence to the ‘spirit’ and letters of the Abuja master-plan in terms of erecting structure and ensuring compliance with the laid-down standard. Abuja Geographic Information System (AGIS) was also established to ensure the geo-spatial administration of lands in the FCT, purposely to eradicate the problem of land rackets and speculations. Moreover, the Abuja Environmental Protection Board was also established to clear the dirt, stinks and maintain the aesthetic nature of the Capital City.⁵⁹

However, from the researcher’s observation, it seems the government could not find any solution to the problems of ‘indigenes’ and local rulers participating in the administration of the FCT nor could they do anything meaningful to develop the satellite towns within the period under review. For instance, the traditional ruler of Garki (a re-integrated settlement) within the City Centre is firmly on ground (in a supposedly ‘no man’s land’), and kept enjoying government patronages. In the same vein, all the government’s efforts at restoring the Abuja master-plan seems to be concentrated on the FCC alone, leaving the satellite towns worse than they were before 2007. This was because all the so-called ‘area boys’, commercial cyclists (*okada*-riders), street-hawkers, beer-parlour operators, artisans and prostitutes banned from the metropolis (that is, FCC), moved en-mass into both the satellite towns and the neighbouring settlements.

Thus, the difference between the FCC and the satellite towns, both areas located within the same FCT lies more in the quality of life and social amenities available within both enclaves. While one part of the Territory (the FCC) experienced the dynamics of development, the other (the suburbs) wallowed in the contradictions inherent in any typical urban area. What was more; it appears the government have no answer or lacked the political-will to address these contradictions during the period under review.

CONCLUSION

As stated above, the FCT, (like other artificially created capital cities around the world), was planned and constructed in a typical virgin or undeveloped land-setting. However, over a few period of time, the city had been transformed in to a glittering and bustling urban centre which had transverse its old physical and socio-economic landscapes. Though the FCT area has been an area of early cultural developments which rested on the fulcrum of external influences before 1900 A.D., the study area was no doubt, a corridor of cultural influences from both Hausaland and Chad Basin in the north, and the surrounding communities in the Niger-Benue valley area.⁶⁰ The implication of being a melting-pot of culture and the eventual transformation from a ‘sleeping’ area into a bustling and glittering city between 1976 and 2007, is a subject of contemporary history. From the discursion so far, it can be deduce that the issue of local initiatives for development of a new Capital Territory devoid of any traces of Hermitic hypothesis or European influence is an historical experience of the FCT, Abuja in recent times.

Abuja was (and is still) perceived by many people around the country-side as a land paved with Nigeria’s petrol-dollars. Hence, many flock into the FCT uninvited, ostensibly in-search of the ‘blessings of Abuja’, only to arrive and found that money was not flowing in the streets of the FCT. Probably out of shame or something else, most of these people could not go back to the places where they came from and so, became struggle, squatters and destitute; living in most sub-standard environments and abandoned structures scattered all over the Territory, most especially in the satellite towns.

However, it is the submission of this paper that, no matter how beautiful the Capital Territory might be on the surface, underneath is the problem of development lop-sidedness, which clearly defines the realms of the differences between the FCC and its satellite towns during the period under review, and even till date. The paradox of the FCT is that, as the positive side of the restoration of the master-plan grows in the FCC, so also does the negatives aspects became more complex in the satellite towns. The bottom-line is life is more difficult for the low-income individuals who were caught in the grip of searching for means of livelihood and accommodation in the suburbs and forced to squat in shanties and pick the floor and dustbins in other to survive. In the same vein, the rich also cry in the City-Centre.

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