



# URBAN PLANNING PRACTICE AND THE CONTROL OF INSECURITY: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR NIGERIA CITY

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## ABSTRACT

The research is urban planning practice and the control of insecurity, challenges, and prospect for Nigeria city. The scope of the study is on the activities of urban planning and it influence in the control of insecurity. The objective of the study is to examine ways urban planning practices enhances security in the urban environment. Qualitative approach was

## Introduction

Urban insecurity problem has become a global issue, which many countries of the world are struggling to curb. The absence of peaceful urban environment is threat in many ways to tangible human or physical development. Urban planning has a role in the control of insecurity through urban plans. Urban planning designs strategies that enhance urban security have not be fully practice by some planning institutions. According to United Nation Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat), (2007) the process of enhancing urban safety and security through effective urban planning, design and governance is still in its infancy in many parts of the world, although in some countries such as the UK, the US and Canada it is more advanced. The inability of urban planning institutions in some part of the world to adopt security prevention approach in urban plans and design has also contributed to incidences of insecurity in urban areas. Insecurity in urban area has resulted into fear, unrest, and threat to lives of city inhabitants.



*adopted for the study. The data collected for the study were from secondary sources and were analysed using content analysis. The finding of the study indicated urban planning practices have the potentials to create an environment that is less susceptible to insecurity. The adoption of crime prevention approach in design could minimise insecurity within the urban environment. In conclusion, to eradicate insecurity, land areas must have defined function, have defined paths for movement, outdoor areas should be juxtaposed with homes, and indoor spaces should visually provide for close watch of outside areas. The paper therefore recommends that appropriate crime prevention strategy be apply in every planning design. The neighbourhoods design concept should be strictly adhere to in any unit of residential development to foster togetherness. The paper also recommends capacity building that would engender innovative design towards hindering operation of people with criminal tendency.*

**Keywords:** *Crime, Insecurity, theory, Urban Environment, and Urban Planning Practices*

Insecurity is a situation in which individuals in a given society cannot go about their daily activities because of threat to and harmful disruption of their lives and property (Ogege, 2013). Piombo, Dearing, Jordt, Neal and Perazzola, (2012) were of the view that insecurity is a threat to the development of both human and physical environment. On the other hand, security as a concept is the existence of conditions within which individuals in a society can carry out normal daily activities without any form of threat to lives and property (Akin, 2008). There is a relationship between urban planning practices and incidence of insecurity in the urban environment. Best practices in urban planning would minimise the incidences of insecurity in an urban area. Urban planning as a discipline is involved in the art of shaping and guiding the physical growth of the town creating buildings and environments to meet the various needs such as social, cultural, economic, and recreational and to provide healthy conditions for man (Lakshmana, 2012). Margo and Andy, (2020)



conceive of urban planning to encompasses the preparation of plans for and the regulation and management of towns, cities, and metropolitan regions. By the activity of urban planning, urban environment are spatially organised giving opportunity to regulation and control the environment. The rate of insecurity, civil unrest, and conflict with governance challenges in many countries of the world is affecting economic growth and development. Through urban planning practices, safe urban environment is possible. Evidence abound where urban planning design is use in the control and prevention of insecurity in an area (See Newman, (1972; 1996); Design Council, (2003) etc.

Planning and design interventions are generally geared towards reducing vulnerability of people and property by increasing protection, discouraging delinquents and also reduce general risk factors by reducing opportunities for violence (United Nation Centre for Human Settlement (UNCHS), 2007). Theories in relation to urban planning design and crime prevention in the urban environment has shown that urban planning practice can enhance urban insecurity challenges. The development of an area based on the combination of urban planning principles and techniques, and adoption of crime prevention theories in planning design will create a safer city. In the context of this paper insecurity mean any condition that breach peace and security, whether civil, economic, ethno, religious, regional, social, and political that necessitate conflicts leading to destruction of lives and properties. The study seeks to answer these questions; how can urban planning practice reduce insecurity in urban cities? Why has the current practice of urban planning not able to reduce the incidences of insecurity in the cities, and what role can Urban Planners play in creating secure and healthy places? Worthy of note, the current urban planning practice without due consideration for crime prevention strategy is contributing to increase in crime and threats to life. The objective of the paper therefore, is to examine ways urban planning practice can contribute to enhancing urban security. The scope of the paper is on how urban planning practice can contribute to enhancing urban security.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study relied on secondary data sources from published and unpublished materials. The review of literature forms the basis in understanding the meaning and the concepts of the subject under



consideration. Database searches using the internet form an integral part of the data collection process. The analysis of the data was carried out through sorting of relevant information.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Urban Insecurity**

Urban security refer to various forms of crime and an actual or perceived lack of insecurity, which is largely determine by several factors some of them related with urban planning (URBACT, 2022). Security is the protection of a person, building, organization, or country against threats such as a crime or attacks by foreign countries (The Cambridge dictionary, (2021). It is a situation in which citizens are free from any form of threats to life and means of livelihood, safe from bodily harm, diseases, unemployment, and human rights violations wherever they may find themselves within a sovereign nation (Adegami, 2013). Insecurity of the urban environment according to Udeh, Okoroafor and Iheze (2013) is such activities relating to militancy, kidnapping, violent armed robbery, political assassination, ritual killings, and suicide bombings. Achumba, Ighomereho, and Akpan-Robaro, (2013) in a study; security challenges in Nigeria and the implications for business activities and sustainable development; rendered insecurity as a state of being subject to danger or threat of danger, where danger is the condition of being susceptible to harm or being exposed to risk. Urban insecurities are result of increasing crime and violence triggered by a number of socio-economic, religious, and political challenges translating into unsafe human settlements, anxiety and fear among the urban inhabitants (Innocent, Tinashe, and Abraham, 2016). The high level of insecurity in the urban areas has become more alarming and contributing to decline in the socio-economic and quality of life (Badiora and Afon, (2013); Marzbali, Abdullah, Abd Razak, and Tilaki, (2011). Supporting this statement Ewetan, (2014) stressed that there is a consensus in the contemporary literature that security is vital for national cohesion, peace, and sustainable development. Urban insecurity therefore, is the lack peaceful coexistence, freedom, and threats to life.



### Theories on Crime Prevention

There are various theories relating to crime prevention through urban planning and design of the urban environment. The use of these theories has the potential to enhancing urban security. Priyamvada, (2022) in a study how is urban planning an essential tool in crime prevention; noted that one of the central objectives of crime prevention is to reduce the opportunity to commit a crime what she called situational crime prevention (SCP) which includes design (at any scale) as a tool for offence deterrence. Priyamvada, (2022) further pointed out that Architects, Planners, and Designers have been using design for behaviour modification for a long time and to neglect its effects on crime would be a grave mistake as a city poorly planned, may become a breeding ground for criminal activities.

Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) is one of such theory; it suggests that crime has link to physical features of the environment and not only predicated on individual, structural, or institutional measures (Cohen, 2014). CPTED focuses on tactical design and the effective use of the urban environment, which when applied, reduces both crime and the fear of crime (Design for Security, 2022). The objective of CPTED is to reduce/remove the opportunity for crime to occur in an environment, and promote positive interaction with the space by legitimate users. Design for security identified five principles of CPTED:

- i. Physical security: (the measures which are used on individual dwellings to ensure that they withstand attack)
- ii. Surveillance (design ensuring that residents are able to observe the areas surrounding of their home)
- iii. Movement control (the restriction of access, egress and through movement).
- iv. Management and maintenance (the processes are in place to ensure that a development is free from signs of disorder), and
- v. Defensible space (the ownership of space in a neighbourhood should be clearly defined).



The application of CPTED in urban planning design result in environment, and its surroundings, discouraging criminal behaviour giving citizens opportunity for keep a watchful eye.

Defensible Space is another crime prevention theory by Oscar Newman, (1972). The theory suggests that the physical design of a living environment can reduce crime (Cohen, 2014). Newman, (1996) posit that three key elements – territoriality, surveillance, and image/milieu – act both individually and in concert to assist in the creation of a safe environment. According to The theory emphasis defining every area as public, semi-public, or private, therefore determines who has the right to be in each space (see Newman, 1996). Newman (1972) outlined five specific factors that would need to be present to create a defensive space.

1. Territory: the home of an individual is sacred ground.
2. Surveillance: the physical characteristics of the home must provide a person with an ability to see or know what is going on around them.
3. Image: The home is structure in such a way that it can provide real security, or the sense of security.
4. Milieu: Features of the home must also provide a sense of security, such as its location near a police station, the installation of a security system, or a proximity to a busy commercial area.
5. Safe Areas: If the primary space of the home is breach, there must be a safe adjoining area that provides higher-level services in the other four key points that can be accessed.

As asserted by Newman (1996) the criminal is isolated because his turf is removed" when each space in an area is owned and cared for by a responsible party

Design against Crime (DAC) is multidisciplinary approach for reducing crime and security issues in towns and cities. DAC emphasizes the contribution of architecture, interior design, graphic and other design disciplines to crime prevention. The goal is to reduce the incidence and adverse consequences of insecurity and crime through design of products, services, communication in an environment. This goal is



achieved when design professional are equipped with the cognitive and practical tools and resources to design out crime. As noted by Design Council, (2003) the approach seeks to broaden the thinking and practice of all design professionals to address security issues.

Adoption of Routine activity Theory: This theory as crime prevention methodology focuses on essential elements that make up a crime and insecurity (Cohen and Marcus, 2014). It is one of the main theories of environmental criminology. The theory suggests that a crime occur when the following three elements come together in a given space and time. i. an accessible target (a person, an object or a place), ii. the absence of capable guardians that could intervene (it has a human element: police patrol, security guards, vigilant staff and co-worker etc.) and the presence of motivated offender (look at crime from an offender point of view).

Crime Pattern Theory (CPT) in urban planning and design; Odongo, (2012) CPT is a central component of environmental criminology; it considers how people and things involved in crime move about in space and time. According to the theory, crime happens when the activity space of a victim or targets with the activity space of an offender. Meaning crime will occur if an area provides the opportunity for crime and it exists within an offender's awareness space. The theory has three main concepts: nodes, paths, and edges. "Nodes" a term from transportation, refers to where people travel back and forth. Such places not only can generate crime within, but also nearby. The word "node" conveys a sense of movement and hence carries extra meaning about crime opportunities. The path that people take in their everyday activities is related to where they fall victim to crime. Edges, refers to the boundaries of areas where people live, work, and shop, or seek entertainment. Some crimes are more likely to occur at the edges – such as racial attacks, robberies, or shoplifting – because people from different neighbourhoods who do not know each other come together at edges. Crime pattern theorists and other environmental criminologists have shown that the design and management of town, city, and business areas can produce major shifts in crime rates. In adopting any of the above crime prevention strategy, Urban Planners have to aid natural



surveillance in their plan by placing residential buildings facing each other, making the street attractive and with activities on the street, planning of public spaces, and street furniture in ways to improve visibility.

### **Urban Planning**

Urban planning is an interdisciplinary field that includes social, engineering and design sciences (Simandan, 2018). This mean the practice of urban planning involves other related disciplines such sociology, criminology, political science, and engineering field. Urban planning is also seen as a technical and political process in developing the use of land, protection and use of the environment, public welfare, and the design of the urban environment (Rufai, 2016). According to Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP), (2013) urban planning is a systematic, creative way to influence the future of neighbourhoods, cities, rural and metropolitan areas, even the country and the world. This implies that practice of urban planning influences overall healthy built environment. In Nigeria context, urban planning or town planning is the ordering and control of the siting and erecting of buildings, other structures, and the provision of open spaces and similar use of land, as the case may be, for the improvement of the human environment (LFN, 2004). The submission on the definition or meaning of urban planning shows that the main target of planning is in achieving public interest and the safety of built environment.

Urban planning administrations in Nigeria fall under the three tiers of government, the federal, states and local councils. Practice of urban planning activities is by the statutory agencies, boards and institution establishes to function in such capacity. The National Urban Development Policy (NUDP) revised edition of 2012 is deficient of specific crime prevention strategy to address insecurity challenges through urban planning practices (See NUDP, 2012 Chapter 14 Section 14.3).

### **THE RELATIONSHIP OF URBAN PLANNING PRACTICE AND INSECURITY IN THE CITY**

Urban areas have become larger and more densely populated with poorly planned urbanization trends, armed conflicts are increasingly being fought in cities resulting in displacement, injury, and death, having cumulative and long-term impacts on essential services, with





consequences for people's health, education, livelihoods and dignity (ICRC 2016). A city is considered peaceful when it achieved victory on the security front where victory spells freedom from fear as well as on the economic and social front where victory means freedom from want (UNDP, 2007). Milliken (2016) observed that inadequate urban development and local governance and social and territorial exclusion patterns encourage crime and violence. In this perspective, to have a safe urban environment a citywide and participatory process to address the risk factors, and above all, protection factors of insecurity in cities, creating the conditions for more sustainable, inclusive, cohesive and just cities (Milliken, 2016). As asserted by Bako (2021) the current security challenges in Nigeria is traceable to unmonitored development and outright absence of physical planning of cities and towns. According to him, more than 70 per cent of towns and cities in Nigeria are not planned nor have their master plans violated. Stewart, (2004) in a study development and security; identified three types of connection with development and insecurity; the immediate impact of security/insecurity on well-being and consequently development achievements; the way insecurity affects (non-security) elements of development and economic growth, or the security instrumental role, and the way development affects security, or the development instrumental role. Odongo, (2012) in a study stressed that urban planning practice contributes to successful crime prevention strategy in urban area.

Therefore, planning practices that neglect human behaviour and basic needs result in failure in managing insecurity in the urban environment. The spatial plan of city contributes to efficient monitoring of incidences of insecurity. Evidence has shown that the design of buildings, streets, parks and other public places can deter criminal activity and enhance urban safety. A planned neighbourhood reduces the incidences of insecurity, as every piece of land is assigned for a particular use and is under the control of either individual or public control. Cozens (2011) noted that Planners should be aware of what urban criminological evidence indicates about crime and permeable street configurations, mixed-use developments and higher densities and how land-use patterns and crime interact. This calls for adequate and requisite knowledge on crime



prevention strategy through urban planning design. Unplanned environment are susceptible to crime and insecurity due to the lack of organise space resulting in the development of shanty structures or slum environment that serves as hide out with individuals with criminal tendencies. Urban planning project on slum upgrade lead to improvement of security of an environment known for insecurity. Evidence abound in violence crime reduction of an area characterized by increasing crime rates, poverty, high unemployment, and high HIV rates as a result of an urban upgrading project (Violence prevention through urban upgrading, VPUU) in Khayelitsha, Cape Town South Africa (Odongo, 2012),

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Challenges to Urban Planning Practice in Insecurity Control**

The findings from the study indicated the following as the challenges for urban planning practices in the control of insecurity in Nigeria cities.

- i. Existing national urban development policies is deficient of crime prevention strategy in urban planning process.
- ii. The study shows that there is a significant relationship between insecurity and unplanned environment. Spatially organised urban environment reduces the insecurity compared to unplanned environment.
- iii. There is a significant relationship between urbanization and increasing crime rates in the city.
- iv. The study identified success of the approach through participatory approach by engaging individual, community, and relevant stakeholders in planning decision-making.
- v. The result shows that some nations of the world have developed a national urban planning framework integrating security issues in plan design.

## **DISCUSSIONS:**

### **CASE STUDY OF URBAN PLANNING PREVENTION STRATEGY FOR URBAN INSECURITY**

#### **The Bradford Unitary Development Plan**

The Bradford Unitary development plan adopted in October 2005 has the policy that development proposals should be design to ensure a safe and



secure environment and reduce the opportunities for crime (UN Habitat, 2007). The policy seek to get developers to think about crime prevention as part of the design process, rather than as a later add-on. Part of the requirement for proposals presented for approval by the planning authority will make crime prevention as integral to the design. The policy draws on the traditions of CPTED, as expressed through the British Police's Secured by Design scheme. To this end, developers have to think, in particular, about the following issues:

- a. Natural surveillance of public and semi-private spaces, especially in relation to entrances to developments, paths, play spaces, open spaces and car parks;
- b. Defensible space, which should be created with the clear definition, differentiation and robust separation of public, private and semi-private space so that all spaces are clearly defined and adequately protected in terms of use and ownership;
- c. Lighting of the development and, in particular, of streets and paths;
- d. Design and layout of pedestrian, cycle and vehicular routes into and within the site, including how these integrate with existing patterns;
- e. Landscaping and planting, especially to avoid the creation of hiding places and dark or secluded areas.

The policy also advises developers to make early contact with the police architectural liaison officer for Bradford when considering significant development proposals (Kitchen, 2007) in (UN-Habitat, 2007)

#### **b. Western Australia's Community Safety and Crime Prevention Strategy**

The Western Australia's Community Safety and Crime Prevention Strategy is guided by seven principles: sustainability; working better together; inclusiveness; targeted efforts; evidence-based decision making; focusing on results; and sharing knowledge (UN-Habitat, 2007). There are five key goals, with a set of priority actions. These include; supporting families, children and young people; strengthening communities and revitalizing neighbourhoods; targeting priority offences; reducing repeat offending; and designing out crime and using



technology. The other two primary components of the strategy involve the development of partnership processes, and the establishment of various forms of grant funding which target is at helping with the implementation of the priority actions. A community safety and crime prevention plans is prepared with partnerships between communities, police, local government and other public agencies. Specific fund established in support the adoption of CPTED principles in the planning of new development and infrastructure improvements.

**c. The Safer Nairobi Initiative**

The Safer Cities Programme is an example of an international initiative applied locally, which is about improved local governance, local capacity building and providing a framework within which the ability of local communities to tackle their own problems improve over time (Masese, 2007) in (UNHSCR, 2007). It is also about the establishment of a culture of prevention so that key issues identified and tackled through activities that engage a wide range of key partners and local residents. The strategy involves a two-year action plan based upon four pillars; better enforcement of existing laws and by-laws; improvement of urban design and the environment; community empowerment; and socially oriented measures providing support for groups at risk, including children, youth, women, and street families. The core value of the programme is to change the ways in which crime and public safety issues are tackled in Nairobi. There have been some specific successes in the programme of lighting Nairobi's streets and slums, improvement on aesthetic and in addressing some of the people's fear of crime and violence (Masese, (2007) in (UNHSCR, 2007).

**Prospect of Urban Planning Practice for Mitigating Insecurity in the City**

- a) Developing national urban planning framework that integrates security issues in planning urban planning proposals will contribute to improving insecurity issues in towns and cities.
- b) **Security Conscious Design:** The design of an area with the view to checkmate intruders by allowing juxtaposition of dwelling interiors with exterior spaces and the placement of windows to allow residents to naturally survey the exterior and interior public areas



of their living environments. Improvement of spatial design, urban planning and development of security by design concepts, better protection of public spaces and improvement of the resilience of buildings and infrastructure.

- c) **Planning Standard and Regulations:** Urban planning and design standards/regulations are effective instrument in the control of criminal opportunities. For instance, the erection of fence in a dwelling should follow the required standards. Unnecessary increase in height of a dwelling or other uses fence could attract criminal to a particular area.
- d) **Neighbourhood Design Concept:** A neighbourhood is a small residential unit with necessary facilities to take residential needs of the residents. Due to the small size of the area, residents with area would be familiar with those that leave around the area. This help to check intruders into the neighbourhood.
- e) **Streets and House Naming:** This is one of the statutory functions of urban planning institution. Therefore, appropriate and adequate streets naming and house identification number would be instrumental to tracking locations of the offenders. Applying urban planning design standard in an area would reduce the opportunity for hideout of criminal and if by chance, their location could be trace.

### **Conclusion**

The beauty of any urban environment is to have unhindered secured city for human interaction. Unplanned environment with slum characteristics is a thriving ground for criminal activities. Evidence has shown that through urban planning practice and its various activities has been able to reduce the incidences of insecurity. Therefore, to reduce or eliminate insecurity in the urban areas, urban planners should integrate crime prevention strategy in urban planning project or design.

### **Recommendations**

The study therefore makes the following recommendations; there should be emphasis by the development control department of urban



planning institutions to ensure that crime and security issue is integrated into planning proposals. In this case any developer without detailed crime prevention strategy be deny any developer of development permit of project(s) Urban Planners to adopt crime prevention approach to urban planning design. Appropriate urban planning design and government political will to implement security conscious design would eradicate high level of insecurity. To deter crime and improve upon security challenges, every land areas should have defined functions. There is need for a paradigm change of what the urban planners think of the urban environment and the current trends in the society.

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