

## UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF SETTLEMENT PATTERN IN MAKOKO AREA OF LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

Current global trends in urban development with the backing of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals stipulate and emphasize the importance of protecting the rights of indigenous people who live in indigenous slum communities. Today, global trends in urban development are expected to be based on the understanding of existing priorities and evolution of indigenous communities. However, in Makoko area of Lagos State, where many of the residents are an integral part of the city, their right to live safely within the city is not recognized or protected. The lack of a comprehensive policy on the distribution and access to land has resulted in social and structural inequalities, resulting in poor living and environmental conditions in informal settlements. The paper questions the urban development policies of the Lagos State government which are often stratified and based on segregated systems, where the poorest and less educated do not hold security of land tenure. The paper aims to examine the historical and social dynamics of settlement pattern in Makoko area of Lagos State and the strong attachment to place often exhibited by the indigenous residents. The research utilizes the social choice theory as a method for explaining the social stratification of access to land in Makoko. The paper reveals that Makoko residents are not opposed to policies that improve their wellbeing as long as they are guaranteed rights of occupancy and the right to remain after renovation exercises. This paper argues that although residents of Makoko are regarded as an indigent population, they are clearly very rational and have made calculated choices to live within the city in order to ensure their continued access to the limited socioeconomic opportunities available to them. The Lagos State government come up with better pro-poor policies that will guarantee security of tenure to the residents of Makoko as this may also encourage them to come up with several community development initiatives which will yield positive results.

**Keywords:** Makoko, social dynamics, settlement pattern, urban development, rights of occupancy

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Makoko is a waterfront informal settlement established in the eighteenth century as a fishing village in Lagos State, Nigeria. A large part of the area rests on structures constructed on stilts above the Lagos Lagoon. The community is bordered by two neighbouring communities, Oko – Agbon and Ago Egun. These three interlocked communities are connected and share common history, features and challenges. Hence, the reason for referring to the whole area as Makoko area of Lagos State.

Oko-Agbon was first populated by the Ilaje from Ondo State, while Ago-Egun was first inhabited by the Egun people from Badagry and the Republic of Benin. According to community leaders in the area, the Ilajes and the Egun first settled at Agege-Odo, the site where the University of Lagos is located today. The Ilaje and the Egun were later evicted by the government in the 1960s, when University of Lagos was to be built (Ajayi, 2019).

According to the Mainland Local Planning Authority, the population of the residents of Makoko area of Lagos, including those on the shanties along the waterfronts of the Lagos Lagoon and the adjoining hinterland was estimated at 234, 420 in 2016 (Population Reference Bureau, 2016). The residents include landlords, shacklords and tenants. These were both male and female residents in the community, and they were mainly fishermen, traders, sand miners, artisans and civil servants.

Makoko the study area of this study, is a prominent informal slum settlement in the heart of Lagos city, with a long history as a waterfront indigenous community. Unfortunately, it faces the type of crisis that scholars depict as a “wicked problem” which requires a holistic and multi-faceted approach to overcome (Fung, 2015).

However, instead of helping the waterfront community to overcome their development challenges, the Lagos State government issues eviction notices to Makoko residents, the most recent was issued on 16th July, 2012, and it stated that the residences at Makoko waterfront have continued to occupy and develop shanties and unwholesome structures on the waterfront illegally, thereby constituting environmental nuisance, security risks and impediments to economic and gainful utilisation of the waterfront for navigation, entertainment and recreation. The eviction notice ordered the residents to vacate their community within three days without plans for their resettlement (Lagos State of Nigeria Official Gazette, 2012).

This study uncovers critical issues in urban administration and development by revealing that if the Lagos state government’s “Eko’ oni baje”/mega city vision is driven and implemented with a rights-based approach to development, there will be sustainable urban development which guarantees equitable distribution of resources and property rights for both the poor and rich within the State.

### **1.1 The Origin and Evolution of Makoko**

In a study carried out by Ajayi (2012) during an in-depth interview with the Baale (Chief) of Makoko, Chief Raymond Olaiya, on the evolution of Makoko Area of Lagos State, the following insights were given:

I am a direct descendant of Oba Akinsemoyin from the Sa’deko branch of Lagos. The original owners (first settlers) of Makoko are the Oloto family. Makoko was bought from the Oloto family by my great - great maternal grandfather, Adamo Emmanuel. I paternally, I’m Akinsemoyin, Adamo Emmanuel had a daughter named, Ramotu Emmanuel, it was from her that we inherited Makoko. She had five children. My own grandfather was her second son, and the second Baale of Makoko and because of our inheritance from Ramotu Emmanuel, people then began to say that we are enjoying our mother’s wealth, hence the Cognomen: ‘Olaiya’ and over the years the name ‘Olaiya’ overshadowed ‘Akinsemoyin’ (R. Akinsemoyin, personal communication, June 28, 2012).

The Baale (Chief) further revealed that Adamo Emmanuel came from Iseyin in Oyo State. He also came from a royal family called ‘Aagbole Alase Orun’, the lineage of King-makers. Ramotu Emmanuel, his daughter was a traveler and after inheriting Makoko from her father, she travelled for about twenty-five years. But before she left, she asked one Arobielu to be her caretaker while she was away. By the time she came back, she found squatters; one of them was Mumuni Abdullahi. She took him to court and Makoko was given back to her (Ramotu Emmanuel) by the Supreme Court. Mumuni Abdullahi’s father was the one who squatted but when he died and Mumuni grew up; he started telling all kinds of stories, claiming the ownership of Makoko. He told a lot of stories in court, but he lost. In the early years of Makoko, her borders extended to Adekunle, towards Sabo. In fact, the present Lagos State’s Criminal Investigation Department’s location, commonly known as ‘Panti’ was donated to the Nigerian Police by the Olaiya family. Also, the present Yaba Local Council Development Area’s Secretariat was also given to them by the Olaiya family. In addition, the present Red Cross Site was part of Makoko; the Boys Scout’s Site today was also part of Makoko.

While shedding more light on the historical background of Makoko settlers, Chief Olaiya explained thus:

When Ramotu Emmanuel settled, she got married to Kadiri Akinsemoyin, who was the grandson of the Oba of Lagos, Oba Akinsemoyin. Ramotu Emmanuel was very rich. So, they (she and her family) were living fine. She engaged in commerce, so she invited the Egun People to be bringing fish to sell in Makoko and her own children, Jafari, my own grandfather, Wahab, his junior brother Rahimi, who was the first Chief Imam of Makoko, his

sister Tarir, and the last born Yekini were just enjoying themselves. They may just enter a shop/stall and pick whatever they wanted out of the shop owner's wares and what they say then to them is: 'Leave them, they are enjoying their mother's wealth'. And that was how the name Olaiya stuck. And with time people forgot Akinsemoyin and they were signing Olaiya (R. Akinsemoyin, personal communication, June 28, 2012).

He further stressed that it was Ramotu Emmanuel who invited the Egun People to be bringing fish to Makoko from Ilubirin and she saw the stress they underwent, coming and going. So, she offered them some space where they could stay for a night or two whenever they bring their wares, and that was how they began to settle bit by bit along the fringes of the Lagoon. In Ramotu's Will, it was stated that the Egun People must be paying royalty and rent. The settlers were paying their dues until more Egun People came, followed by the Ilaje. Ramotu leased part of her land to some timber merchants and saw millers. Some foreign investors were also given land for their businesses and that is why you see the Sawmill around the water fronts, extending from there down to Ebute-Meta. With time, as the housing problems in Lagos was on the increase, most of the Egun People and the Ilaje, who had found Makoko habitable, started inviting their families and friends to come and build cheap make-shift houses on the Lagoon. After some time, about seventy years ago, the Egun and Ilaje started telling different stories of how they too are part and parcel of Makoko.

While probing on dominant ethnic groups and the pattern of settlement in Makoko Area of Lagos State, Chief Raymond Olaiya Akinsemoyin gave the following information:

The dominant ethnic groups and settlement pattern in Makoko would be informed by the area where you are looking at it from. When you are coming in from the waterfront, which is the Eastern part, you will find the Egun people all over the place; closely followed by the Ilaje people around Apollo Street, towards the South, inter-mingled with some Yorubas and Igbos. When you move hinterland, where you have you have dry land, predominantly, you see the Yorubas and small groups of Igbos and Middle-belts. When you go towards Sabo, you see the Yorubas. Makoko is a unique combination (R. Akinsemoyin, personal communication, June 28, 2012).

These assertions were clearly noted during the field assessment, as most of the respondents interviewed on the hinterland said they were from the Yoruba ethnic group, while those on the waterfronts were the Egun and Ilaje ethnic groups.

Among other issues, the Baale explained thus:

The Egun people in Makoko were initially residing in Ilubirin on the other side of the Lagoon in Ebute-Elesin on Lagos Island, where they were asked to evacuate when the Lagos State Government reclaimed the place and a large number of them migrated to Makoko to settle. Another group of Egun people were driven from Ijeh in Obalende, and they also found their way to Makoko. The Egun are migrant immigrants. In fact, majority of them are illegal immigrants from Benin Republic and Togo. Makoko settlement was founded about a hundred years ago. Makoko is a blighted community today because the government had neglected the place over the years (R. Akinsemoyin, personal communication, June 28, 2012).

## **2. CONCEPTUAL/THEORETICAL DISCOURSE ON SOCIAL CHOICE THEORY**

The theory of social choice was propounded by Bell (1956) and it is based on the socio-economic values of an affluent society. In an urban-industrial society where per capita income has risen considerably, with total decline of the burden of dependence associated with the extended family system and with the pressure of the population on food supply not determining population growth, it becomes a matter of choice how one uses his wealth and the energy and leisure available to him. The social choice made by each person in such a situation in terms of how he would live is appropriately called "lifestyle". Although it is not unusual to find characteristics of one in the others, there are three lifestyles clearly identifiable. These are familism, career or upward mobility pattern and the consumership lifestyle.

**i. Familism:** A high valuation in family living, marriage at a young age, a short childless time span after marriage, child centredness and such other characteristics are indicators of familism. More than this, however, are the norms of consumption, the closely interwoven sets of activities and possessions that are correlated with and which become symbolic of those who are representatives of the familism preference pattern.

**ii. Career of Upward Mobility:** This refers to the spending of time, money and energy on one's career.

The emphasis on career is accompanied by actual movement into social positions of greater prestige, property and power; but the important criterion from the point of view of social choice and style of life is that a person engages in career-relevant activities, at least, to the partial exclusion of alternative activities.

- iii. **Consumerism:** Those persons who eschew either career or family life and prefer having a very high standard of living in the present, exhibit consumerism choice pattern and also exhibit the style of life characteristic of it. These persons expend their energy, time and money on having a good time, "living it up", or "enjoying life as much as possible" and they do this in ways which are relatively unconnected with family or career goals (Bell, 1956).

This theory asserts that the pattern of population movement will vary from one society to another in relation to the extent or degree to which most people in the society are committed to the various lifestyles. According to Bell (1956):

The move to the suburb expresses an attempt on the part of the movers to find a location in which to conduct family-life that is more suitable than that offered by central cities, i.e., that persons moving to the suburbs are principally those who have chosen familism as an important element of lifestyles as against career or consumerism...

Furthermore, there is also the aspect of ethnicity, which emphasizes the importance of group status and culture in determining the geographic location of a person in an urban area. Based on a study carried out in Honolulu, Sakumoto (1969) concludes that:

- (a) Spatial isolation by ethnicity is a factor in urban residential pattern. This ethnicity may be the result of social subordination in the form of discriminatory segregation or a condition of cultural dissimilarities;
- (b) Where an ethnic group is "new" and culturally distinct, social rank plays an important role in the patterning of residence. But where the ethnic group with passage of time and the operation of various assimilative processes strives to fulfil social status and mobility criteria, the urbanism-familism factor comes to play an increasingly influential role in determining place of residence.

Reshers (1962), also postulates a similar theory in his "principle of social desirability." This theory suggests that the choice of a residential place in an urban area depends on three principal factors: economic considerations, affinity with those with similar characteristics, and aversion for those with unlike characteristics.

This principle explains the conflict of interests that exist between urban elites and urban poor in Lagos metropolis. Usually, the urban poor choose to settle in places where they can easily survive and maintain close affinity with those from the same ethno-cultural affiliations with them. This is particularly true in the case of Makoko Area of Lagos State, Nigeria. They engage in closely interwoven sets of activities and possessions that are correlated with and which become symbolic of their ethnic affiliations (fishing, trading, petty businesses and other forms of informal activities).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional field survey was adopted in this study. This suggests that the independent and dependent variables were measured at the same point in time with a single questionnaire. In order to get a sample size that is representative of the study population (Bhattacharjee, 2012), 1000 copies of questionnaire were administered in Makoko area of Lagos State among the residents in 2017. Two research assistants worked with the researcher to administer the questionnaire. Out of the 1000 copies administered, 963 of them were properly filled and collated. This sampling technique allowed for the acquisition of in-depth information on the social dynamics of settlement pattern in Makoko area of Lagos State, Nigeria.

### 4. RESULTS

**Table 1: Percentage distribution of respondents by reason for living in Makoko**

Reason		Percentage (%)
	I just love Makoko	8.1
	Cheap house rent	25.8

	Good for fishing	13.6
	Lack of alternative	49.4
	Other	3.2
Total		100%
<i>n</i>		963

**Table 2: Percentage distribution of respondents by what they liked in Makoko**

What they liked in Makoko		Percentage (%)
	Cheap accommodation	63.0
	Cheap lifestyle	31.9
	Nearness to Lagoon	2.8
	Closeness to work	2.1
	Other	0.2
Total		100%
<i>n</i>		963

#### 4.1 Discussion of Findings

In Table 1, respondents were asked to state their reasons for choosing to live in Makoko and the result clearly shows that majority (88.8%) of the people living in Makoko live there mainly for socio-economic reasons as opposed to just loving the place and other reasons. What is deducible from this finding is that there is a wide gap in the provision of decent and affordable housing in Lagos State, a State with a population growth of about 7% per annum. Today, empirical evidence shows that Lagos State has the smallest land mass with the highest population in Nigeria.

Similarly, as shown in Table 2, the responses of an overwhelming 94.9% of respondents show that majority of Makoko dwellers prefer to stay there, primarily because of their limited means and capacity. This simply implies that urban poverty is a major socio-economic indicator in the neighbourhood. This also confirms the fact that majority of Makoko dwellers belong to the lowest rung of the societal ladder and if given better alternatives, they may be willing to relocate.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

Current global trends in urban development with the backing of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals stipulate and emphasize the importance of protecting the rights of indigenous people who live in indigenous slum communities. Today, global trends in urban development are expected to be based on the understanding of existing priorities and evolution of indigenous communities.

However, in Makoko area of Lagos State, where many of the residents are an integral part of the city, their right to live safely within the city is not recognized or protected. The lack of a comprehensive policy on the distribution and access to land has resulted in social and structural inequalities, resulting in poor living and environmental conditions in informal settlements.

The research findings show that Makoko residents are clearly very rational and have made calculated choices to live within the city in order to ensure their continued access to the limited socioeconomic opportunities available to them. The Lagos State government must come up with better pro-poor policies

that will guarantee security of tenure to the residents of Makoko as this may also encourage them to come up with several community development initiatives that will yield positive results (Ajayi, Soyinka-Airewele and Samuel, 2019).

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