Spatial Distribution of Crime and Deviance in Urban Nigeria: A Theoretical Exposition

Richard A. Aborisade (PhD) and Comfort O. Oyafunke-omoniyi (PhD)
Department of Sociology, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria

Abstract

Several earlier researches have demonstrated that crime has a regional or sectional distribution in Nigeria. This position is in accordance with global geographical studies and environmental criminology which affirms that crime is often concentrated in clusters, generally referred to as hotspots. This paper explores criminological theories and propositions to summarise and extend understanding of environmental sources of criminal behaviour in Nigeria. In doing this, the study attempted to complement the social psychological approaches that have been dominantly used in explaining crime in Nigeria. This is premised on the realisation that insecurity stands as one of the main impediments towards Nigeria achieving 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Drawing from the theoretical positions of the Chicago School on social ecology of crime, rational choice, and routine activity theories, the study emphasised the complex matrix between urbanisation, population density, poverty and transient neighbourhoods, as determinants of crime distribution in urban Nigeria. In the urban areas, housing problems have trailed the rapid rate of urbanisation in the country as the cities cannot cope with the increasing migration from rural areas leading to the growth of slums. The unfavourable conditions that urban dwellers are exposed to and the high level of inequality within cities are part of criminogenic conditions that enable crime and deviance to thrive in specific areas of urban centres in Nigeria. Redressing the political, social and economic problems posed by speedy urbanisation is one of the most pressing governance challenges confronting successive Nigerian governments. The study suggests the need for Nigerian cities to adopt the principles of sustainable urbanisation as a means of managing and guiding the process and consequences of urban development. If pragmatic efforts are made to effectively manage urbanisation, Nigerian cities will be both sustainable and able to provide human security and deep sense of belonging to all citizens.

Keywords: Crime, Deviance, Environmental criminology, Urbanisation, Urban Nigeria.

Introduction

Geographical studies and environmental criminology reveal that crime is often concentrated in clusters, which in the literatures are referred to as hotspots (Charron, 2016). Hotspot mapping techniques for crimes has continued to attract attention from researchers and public safety agencies (Aborisade, 2014; Fajemirokun, Adewale, Idowu, Oyewusi, & Maiyegun, 2016; Oyinloye, Olamiju, & Otoki, 2017). This has led to the widespread use of hotspot analysis for the identification and of crime (Balogun, Okeke, & Chukwueke, 2014). If crime hotspots are accurately identified, then the public will benefit through the creation of accurate threat visualisations, efficient allocation of police resources, and prediction of crime (Aborisade, 2014; Africa Research Institute, 2014). Most urban cities of the world are experiencing remarkable rapid growth that has resulted from industrialisation and advancement in technology (Charron, 2016). In almost all African countries, there has been the propensity towards the concentration of growing population in moderately large cities (Hove, Ngerure, & Muchemwa, 2013). Recently, there has been appreciable accelerated expansion being witnessed by many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Agyei-Mensah, Owusu, & Wrigley-Ansate, 2015; Fajemirokun et al., 2016). According to United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA, 2015), the rapid urbanisation has come to have adverse effects on security and safety in African cities. It went further to state that „chaotic expansion of urban spaces actually disables the capacity of national governments and local authorities to provide security and to supply basic social infrastructure – health, education, water, and sewage disposal facilities (p.16). The bid to surmount these challenges accounts for the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), by African countries and complementing the 2030 SDGs with Agenda 2063, which is a 50-year Transformative Agenda for the continent (African Union Commission, 2015). Specifically, the Aspiration 4 of the Agenda for Sustainable Development for Africa borders on Africa attaining a peaceful, stable and secure continent. Nigeria, just as it is obtainable in other developing nations, experienced rapid urban growth that completely outpaced the capacity of government to plan for it (Mabogunje, 2007). In the country, the occurrence of growth had happened so quickly that government officials were unable to possess relevant statistics required for development (Oyinloye et al., 2017). However, one of the major impediments to Nigeria attaining sustainable development agenda, within the set timelines of 2030 and 2063, is the problem of insecurity in the country (Aborisade & Adeayo, 2018). Within the last few years, the federal government has earmarked not less than N5 trillion for the defence of the territorial integrity and internal security of the nation (Achumba, Ighomerelho, & Akpan-Robaro, 2015). A number of state governments have also allocated huge sums of money for the maintenance of law and order (Adebakun, 2016). Despite the monumental sum of money that has been committed to bring about security, individual citizens and communities still pay levies and salaries to young men and women who are engaged as security personnel to guard their properties.

Another impediment is the dwindling national resources that have further been depleted by massive and unhindered corrupt practices. As a result, developments in the country have been slow, inefficient and not connected with the commensurate economic growth and effective redistributive measures needed to alleviate poverty and midwife economic opportunities, required to improve living standards and quality of life of the people (Abass, 2012; Anochiwa & Enyoghasim, 2016). An important consequence of this is that the growth and expansion of cities in Nigeria has largely been unplanned, without the academic discipline of „environmental criminology gradually evolved. Environmental criminology is the study of crime as it relates to particular locations, and to the way individuals shape their activities by place-based factors. There have been some observations made on how planning decisions help in the shaping of both the characters and levels of crime occurrence (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1993). The fear of crime and the potential impact of crime on our neighbourhoods and cities, as a result „deserve the full attention of planners (De Frances & Titus, 1993:190). Brantingham &
Brantingham (1993) put forward the argument that there are four dimensions to any crime: the law, the offender, the target and the location; and environmental criminology is concerned predominantly with location. These ideas are underpinned by two related crime opportunity theories, and provide an alternative perspective from which to evaluate New Urbanist thinking.

First, Cornish & Clarke (1986), in their rational choice theory, asserted that most opportunistic offenders are rational in their decision-making and recognise, evaluate and respond to environmental cues. These have to do with the perceived reward, risk and effort that are involved in committing different types of crime. In addition, all rational offenders have routine activities within the built environment which are integral part of this decision-making process. Therefore, the central issue that the rational choice theorists attempted to address is about the decisions a motivated person takes to commit crime, what type of crime to commit, the area the crime will be committed, the selection of the target or victims for the criminal act, how to avoid detection and how offenders make decisions to go back to crime. This theory marks a departure from the traditional beliefs in criminology that view offenders as criminals, being propelled by "background" factors. The theory proposes that offenders are conscious decision-makers who weigh options and act with a purpose. Hence, if a male was born and bred in a poor environment, his crime rate is likely to increase because he will have no skills to earn a living. The high crime rate in the central business districts is also linked to the lack of social support, their factors, on their own, cannot propel an individual to become a criminal. This is evident as not all people that share these background factors take to crime.

Secondly, there is the argument that states the prerequisites necessary for the occurrence of crime as contained in the "routine activities" theory. Cohen and Felson (1979) opine that there must be a motivated offender, a suitable target and the absence of capable guardians for a crime to take place. Just as it is with majority factors. Offenders have routine daily activities (work/school, visiting friends, shopping and entertainment) during which they may discover or search for potential targets (e.g. Maguire, 1982). While the argument of the environmental criminologists is that criminal events involve not only a person that is willing to offend but also the opportunity that favours the motives. Felson advanced this position by stating that the ability to offend even when the opportunity is available is also very germane. Cohen and Felson (1979) asserted that the routine patterns of work, play, and leisure affect the convergence in time and place of the potential offenders, suitable targets, and absence of guardians. What this means is that the routine activities that we engage in on daily basis make us to become vulnerable to motivated offenders to take advantage of. The number of crime opportunities, urbanisation and crime commenced in the 20th century. According to Magubane (1968), pre-independent Nigeria had a very low urban population as well as urban population growth. As at 1921, only ten Nigerian settlements had urban status, and by 1931 only two cities, Lagos and Ibadan, had populations in excess of a hundred thousand people each. Post-independence Nigeria witnessed more rapid rate of urbanisation. Nigeria, since independence, has become an increasing concentration of new migrant socities. By the early 1960s, the cities of Lagos and Ibadan had populations in excess of half a million people each. (Magubane, 1981).

Urban migration is caused by public stimulation of urban activities and neglect of the rural areas. The rapid urban growth rate of urban population in Nigeria was spurred by the oil boom prosperity of the 1970s and resultant massive development projects in the country, which catalysed a great influx of people into urban areas. According to Magubane (1968), the factors that were responsible for the urbanisation in Nigeria included the oil boom of the 1970s and early 1980s, government policies which resulted in the creation of new towns and local government areas, creation of a new federal capital, establishment of the Ministry of Housing and Construction, and federal government policies which channelled funds from universities and large scale government sponsored construction projects that included refineries, sea ports and steel companies. However, the increase in population in the urban areas has led to uneven development, as more resources have been channelled into urban centres and an excruciating little percentage goes to the rural areas (Aborisade, 2014). The failure of the government to adequately cater for the growing rate of population in these urban areas further aggravated social situation. Nigerian cities and towns have become large congestion areas. Environmental indicators show very poor performance in these areas. Nigers socioeconomic and environmental indicators show very poor performance across the board, with the resultant inequality greatly amounting to the high level of insecurity in the country.

Human Ecological Approach to Crime Distribution in Urban Nigeria

Shaw and McKay (1942) who examined the organisation of American cities such as Chicago, observed that most cities are arranged into distinct neighbourhoods or zones, each with its own distinctive subcultural values and lifestyles. It is the intention of this paper to reconstruct the approach to spatial distribution of crime in relation to urban areas in Nigeria. To start with, Stark (1987) identified five aspects of urban neighbourhoods which characterise the distribution of crime in Nigeria. These are channelled into the postulation of the Chicago School, however, the concepts permeated through their entire literature, starting with the classics of Park, Burgess, and McKenzie (1925) titled "The City. The concepts are equally prominent in the empirical studies of the Chicago School (Faris & Dunham, 1939; Shaw & McKay, 1942). As a matter of fact, most of these factors featured prominently in the works of 19th - century moral statisticians, such as the Englishmen Mayhew and Buchanan, who were credited with ecological sociology decades before any member of the Chicago school was born. These essential factors are: density, poverty, mixed use, transience, and dilapidation. In this paper, each of the five factors will be used in relation to spatial distribution of crime in Nigeria.

Population Density and Crime

As Stark (1987) pointed out, the greater the density of a neighbourhood, the more the association between deviant behaviour and social breakdown. The concentration of poverty and deviance to thrive in various urban areas in Nigeria (Aborisade, 2017). The failure of the government to adequately cater for the growing rate of population in these urban areas further aggravated social situation. Nigerian cities and towns have become large congestion areas. Environmental indicators show very poor performance in these areas. Nigers socioeconomic and environmental indicators show very poor performance across the board, with the resultant inequality greatly amounting to the high level of insecurity in the country. The concepts are equally prominent in the empirical studies of the Chicago School (Faris & Dunham, 1939; Shaw & McKay, 1942). As a matter of fact, most of these factors featured prominently in the works of 19th - century moral statisticians, such as the Englishmen Mayhew and Buchanan, who were credited with ecological sociology decades before any member of the Chicago school was born. These essential factors are: density, poverty, mixed use, transience, and dilapidation. In this paper, each of the five factors will be used in relation to spatial distribution of crime in Nigeria.

Population Density and Crime

As Stark (1987) pointed out, the greater the density of a neighbourhood, the more the association between deviant behaviour and social breakdown. The concentration of poverty and deviance to thrive in various urban areas in Nigeria (Aborisade, 2017). The failure of the government to adequately cater for the growing rate of population in these urban areas further aggravated social situation. Nigerian cities and towns have become large congestion areas. Environmental indicators show very poor performance in these areas. Nigers socioeconomic and environmental indicators show very poor performance across the board, with the resultant inequality greatly amounting to the high level of insecurity in the country. The concepts are equally prominent in the empirical studies of the Chicago School (Faris & Dunham, 1939; Shaw & McKay, 1942). As a matter of fact, most of these factors featured prominently in the works of 19th - century moral statisticians, such as the Englishmen Mayhew and Buchanan, who were credited with ecological sociology decades before any member of the Chicago school was born. These essential factors are: density, poverty, mixed use, transience, and dilapidation. In this paper, each of the five factors will be used in relation to spatial distribution of crime in Nigeria.

Population Density and Crime

As Stark (1987) pointed out, the greater the density of a neighbourhood, the more the association between deviant behaviour and social breakdown. The concentration of poverty and deviance to thrive in various urban areas in Nigeria (Aborisade, 2017). The failure of the government to adequately cater for the growing rate of population in these urban areas further aggravated social situation. Nigerian cities and towns have become large congestion areas. Environmental indicators show very poor performance in these areas. Nigers socioeconomic and environmental indicators show very poor performance across the board, with the resultant inequality greatly amounting to the high level of insecurity in the country. The concepts are equally prominent in the empirical studies of the Chicago School (Faris & Dunham, 1939; Shaw & McKay, 1942). As a matter of fact, most of these factors featured prominently in the works of 19th - century moral statisticians, such as the Englishmen Mayhew and Buchanan, who were credited with ecological sociology decades before any member of the Chicago school was born. These essential factors are: density, poverty, mixed use, transience, and dilapidation. In this paper, each of the five factors will be used in relation to spatial distribution of crime in Nigeria.
Poverty, Population Density and Growth of Crime

There is tendency for poor, dense neighbourhoods to be mis-use areas. The mis-used has to do with parts of the urban areas where homes, apartments and shops, even light industries are mixed together. This is very evident in Lagos and other urban cities in Nigeria where commercial activities are very prevalent within the residential areas. Considering the fact that most of the properties within such areas are in close proximity to one another, it is likely that the area is known to the landlord, which leaves the tenants with relative freedom to use the apartments they rented for secondary purposes.

In Nigeria, most property owners in the urban areas will welcome the mixed-use of their apartments because of the prospects of increased land values. It is commonplace for urban houses to be built with shops surrounding a residential building in lieu of a fence in most major cities in Nigeria (Marenin and Resig, 1995). In many instances, a residential flat will also serve as a "business-centre" for sales and services. This can be further observed in the nature of a number of business complimentary cards offered by business people that live in such neighbourhood, as the cards normally carry both business and residential addresses of the business owners, which suggest that the residences of such business persons also serve as business places. Furthermore, the poorest and most densely populated areas in Nigeria, especially in Lagos, are often adjacent to the commercial sections of the cities, forming what the Chicago school refers to as the "zone of transition" (Shaw and McKay, 1942). This mixed-use scenario increases familiarity with easy access to places that offer opportunity for deviance.

Research has pointed out that kids that engage in deviance and shoplifting often find it more comfortable to do it within their neighbourhood, at least in their first attempts (Charron, 2016). This tendency is further strengthened, if they live in a mixed-use neighbourhood where their targets have access to such business places. On the other hand, kids that live in suburbs that may want to take to shoplifting will have to travel far to reach a store. The long distance between their neighbourhood and the store is a factor that may generate fear in the minds of the kids in their bid to shoplift. Meanwhile, Stark (1987) remarked that mixed-use neighbourhood offers increased opportunity for congruent youth to engage in shoplifting.

High Transience Rate in Dense Neighbourhood as a Factor of Deviance

It is common knowledge that there is high transience rate within the dense, poor, mixed-use neighbourhoods as against the suburbs. McKenzie (1926:145) corroborated this position as he wrote that "Slums are the most mobile sections of a city. Their inhabitants come and go in continuous succession. On the other hand, empirical research have also pointed out that transience weakens extra-familial attachments (Stark, 1987). This, of course, is self-evident as the greater the amount of transience the more difficult it will be for families or individuals to form and retain attachments. This is especially the case in places like Isale-Eko and Ajegunle in Lagos, where there are very high turnover of population (Kolosho and Adeyinka, 2006). This is mainly as a result of the dilapidated rates of houses in these areas which makes it of paramount interest for residents to transit from the areas immediately they are able to afford accommodation in less stigmatized areas. Furthermore, studies have indicated that transience also weakens voluntary organisation. As a result, decreasing both formal and informal sources of social control (Kaufman and Adair, 2006; Henson, 2009; Teasdale and Silver, 2009). Cook, Buehler and Henson (2009) submitted that membership of voluntary organisations such as Church/Mosque, neighbourhood associations and other civic attachments which suffers where transience rate is very high. Consequently, neighbourhoods that are deficient in such voluntary organisations will also be less able to exert effective social control within the neighbourhood. As a result, its level of community surveillance will tend to reduce. This will be due to the fact that the areas will continue to welcome newcomers which will make it difficult for the residents to know when someone does not live in a permanent fashion. According to a resident in Ajegunle, „sometimes, an occupant of a room/apartment may not be able to tell the exact number of other occupants of the same apartment (Ordway and Ogundele, 2006:231). This is due to indiscriminate conversion of rented apartments into makeshift, hotel accommodation by some tenants that will be hoping to further sub-let their rented space for monetary incentives. In a more stable neighbourhood, however, it will be very easy to notice strangers as permanent residents are relatively able to recognise one another.

High Rates of Neighbourhood Deviance as a Factor of Social Stigma

High rates of neighbourhood deviance are a social stigma for residents as, apart from dilapidation, neighbours that are affected by this stigma stigmatise the moral standing of all residents (Anochiwa & Enyoghasim, 2016). For example, the inhabitants of Mushin area, which is highly known for crime and deviant incidences, are mostly perceived as deviants. It is not uncommon for people to immediately presume someone s character to be that of a deviant simply because the person is a resident of a stigmatised neighbourhood. It will equally be difficult for a lady that resides in an area like Ayilara area of Surlere in Lagos to own up to such residency, as the area is known to accommodate lots of commercial sex workers that stroll the streets on a daily basis. Consequently, it becomes difficult for the residents to know when someone does not live in a permanent fashion. As a result, its level of community surveillance will tend to reduce. This will be due to the fact that the areas will continue to welcome newcomers which will make it difficult for the residents to know when someone does not live in a permanent fashion. According to a resident in Ajegunle, „sometimes, an occupant of a room/apartment may not be able to tell the exact number of other occupants of the same apartment (Ordway and Ogundele, 2006:231). This is due to indiscriminate conversion of rented apartments into makeshift, hotel accommodation by some tenants that will be hoping to further sub-let their rented space for monetary incentives. In a more stable neighbourhood, however, it will be very easy to notice strangers as permanent residents are relatively able to recognise one another.

High Rates of Neighbourhood Deviance as a Factor of Social Stigma

High rates of neighbourhood deviance are a social stigma for residents as, apart from dilapidation, neighbours that are affected by this stigma stigmatise the moral standing of all residents (Anochiwa & Enyoghasim, 2016). For example, the inhabitants of Mushin area, which is highly known for crime and deviant incidences, are mostly perceived as deviants. It is not uncommon for people to immediately presume someone s character to be that of a deviant simply because the person is a resident of a stigmatised neighbourhood. It will equally be difficult for a lady that resides in an area like Ayilara area of Surlere in Lagos to own up to such residency, as the area is known to accommodate lots of commercial sex workers that stroll the streets on a daily basis. Consequently, it becomes difficult for the residents to know when someone does not live in a permanent fashion. As a result, its level of community surveillance will tend to reduce. This will be due to the fact that the areas will continue to welcome newcomers which will make it difficult for the residents to know when someone does not live in a permanent fashion. According to a resident in Ajegunle, „sometimes, an occupant of a room/apartment may not be able to tell the exact number of other occupants of the same apartment (Ordway and Ogundele, 2006:231). This is due to indiscriminate conversion of rented apartments into makeshift, hotel accommodation by some tenants that will be hoping to further sub-let their rented space for monetary incentives. In a more stable neighbourhood, however, it will be very easy to notice strangers as permanent residents are relatively able to recognise one another.
asserted that living in areas that are stigmatised causes a reduction in a sense of community, trust in others, and a feeling of self-worth. This means that those that live in slums that have been stigmatised as a „crime or deviance zone“ will perceive themselves as having less to risk by being detected in illegal acts and hence more likely to engage in criminal behaviour. This is in conformity with the postulations of the labelling theorists that emphasised the role of society reactions as being integral to the creation of crime and deviance (Lilly, Cullen, and Ball, 2007). For instance, why would someone that lives in Mushin be afraid to fight in public? In some cases, when the residents of such areas are involved in scuffles with someone that resides elsewhere, they are quick to make reference to their neighbourhood as a way of instilling fear and a sense of self-protection. This is often based on the assumption that the mere mention of „eni omo Mushin!“ – I am from Mushin! – will make the person they are fighting with to realise that (s)he is engaged in a fight with a dangerous person, hence, (s)he develops some sense of fear.

Consequently, it is safe to say that the stigmatised neighbourhood will tend to be highly populated by the socially deprived or others that have limited capacity to cope (Hove, Enyoghasim, and others, 2016). This is not a reference to the poor or even those into crime or delinquency but people that are seen as losers that are going to be forced out of their comfort zones. This is often based on the assumption that the mere mention of „eni omo Mushin!“ – I am from Mushin! – will make urban dwellers to be living in precarious areas (Ordway & Ogundele, 2016; Oyinloye et al, 2017), costs of crime, which are equally presumed to be high and the fear of crime are interwoven within this ecosystem. Therefore, the growing level of insecurity in Nigeria urban centres has serious implications to the country’s ability to rank among African countries that are able to achieve 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Sustainability has been predominantly perceived as an economic or environmental issue (Du Plessis, 1999; Coutens, 2002), which fails to consider the issue of crime and fear of crime to any meaningful extent while others have discussed the subject minimally (Goodchild, 1998). Although there are no available or reliable financial evidence and effectiveness, understanding quality of life issues, enhancing understanding of the ecology of the environment and appreciating the need for government strategies, partnerships, best practice and environmental and social responsibility.

Conclusion
Global discourse on how peace and security in the context of the SDGs can be framed has concentrated on the identification of crime hotspots to aid strategies to protect the environment and people. However, the practice in the security and justice sectors across Nigeria indicates that the challenges posed to Sustainable Development Goals from the perspective of peace and security will require a framework that takes into account governance, rule of law, policing and human rights compliance in security and justice sector institutions. Based on the discussions in this paper, adverse effects of rapid urbanisation on security and safety in Nigeria that can become a drain on local and national resources at the expense of development and people’s wellbeing. This will further jeopardise the country’s chances of meeting

resources and government presence have been very logistically difficult. The high number of slums and transient neighbourhoods. This has largely projected the level of environmental inequality within cities with the slums left with high consciousness of social exclusion. In such areas, the mere existence of slums and transient neighbourhoods is partly responsible for the growth of crime rates in these areas, and also makes the areas to serve as breeding grounds for delinquents and by extension, career criminals. Successive governments have either failed or completely ignored providing the slums with adequate security, leaving such areas to fashion their own security mechanisms. The consequence of such apathy to securing these areas is huge and enduring that has been growing concern over Nigeria’s ability and readiness to deliver the goals of sustainable development, having failed in her attempts to meet the earlier millennium development goals (Oladje & Folorunso, 2017).

Redressing the political, social and economic problems posed by speedy urbanisation is one of the most pressing governance challenges confronting successive Nigerian governments. There have been quite a number of aborted measures that have been attempted by a number of political parties, but the urbanisation problems of crime and the fear of crime within the country. This position is supported by the argument of (Du Plessis, 1999: 33) that “no city can call itself sustainable until the urban citizens have a genuine fear for their personal safety and the safety of their livelihood.” Therefore, the growing level of insecurity in Nigeria urban centres has serious implications to the country’s ability to rank among African countries that are able to achieve 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Policy Gaps and Challenges
Consequently, the deviant-intent or criminally-minded individuals scrambles to acquire residency in such areas.

Environmental Sustainability Implications of the Study
In Nigeria, the achievement of environmental sustainability will be hereculmless unless effective mechanisms are put in place in the urban areas. The challenges of crime and the fear of crime within the country. This position is supported by the argument of Du Plessis (1999; 33) that “no city can call itself sustainable until the urban citizens have a genuine fear for their personal safety and the safety of their livelihood.” Therefore, the growing level of insecurity in Nigeria urban centres has serious implications to the country’s ability to rank among African countries that are able to achieve 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Sustainability has been predominantly perceived as an economic or environmental issue (Du Plessis, 1999; Coutens, 2002), which fails to consider the issue of crime and fear of crime to any meaningful extent while others have discussed the subject minimally (Goodchild, 1998). Although there are no available or reliable financial costs of crime in Nigeria, it is perceived by major stakeholders to be high (Achumba et al., 2013; Adebanke, 2016; Oladeji & Folunrunso, 2017). This, together with personal, emotional and psychological costs of crime, which are equally presumed to be high (Ordway & Ogundele, 2016; Oyinloye et al, 2017), makes urban dwellers to be living in precarious situations. In addition, these costs include huge sum of money allocated as security votes by states and federal government. The environmental sustainability of major cities like Lagos, Port-Harcourt, Abuja has been tested considerably, with monumental losses incurred to the environment and the state. Urban design could be potentially implicated in some of these areas as residents sometimes alter city plans and aesthetic values out of the fear of crime.

A city is an ecosystem and within the city, crime and the fear of crime are interwoven within this ecosystem (Wirth, 1938). The study of both „ecology of crime and environmental criminology, as presented in this paper, are worthy of consideration as a central component of urban sustainability. Industrialisation and urbanisation processes in Nigeria gave way to a range of new threats to public health and well-being. The spread of contagion, the expansion of cities, across the country led to the problems of overcrowding, poverty, conflict, pollution, crime, disease and anomie with urban areas becoming containers of problems as well as places of vitality excitement and „joie de vivre“. This condition is further aggravated by persistent rural-urban migration which is largely caused by continuous neglect of the rural areas. Indeed, a prerequisite for a sustainable urban environment is that it should not pose a threat to current or future users. Therefore, attempts made towards „Ecologically Sustainable Design (ESD) and the perspective of peace and security will require a framework that takes into account governance, rule of law, policing and human rights compliance in security and justice sector institutions. Based on the discussions in this paper, adverse effects of rapid urbanisation on security and safety in Nigeria that can become a drain on local and national resources at the expense of development and people’s wellbeing. This will further jeopardise the country’s chances of meeting
the Sustainable Development Goals. The prevalence of urban poverty and deprivation sharply contrasted with relative wealth, and has created a potentially volatile situation, which after being left unattended to has culminated into insecurity, political upheaval and crime in varying parts of the country. The spatial distribution of crime in urban Nigeria is indeed a reflection of the high level of socioeconomic inequality that pervades the country and the inability of the government to effectively address the disparity. People migrate to urban centres with the hope of securing better future for themselves and their families. It is, therefore, the obligation of the government to create policies that permit them to accomplish this goal. Indeed, urbanisation offers economic and political opportunities for national development. With a suitable political milieu, the economic potential of urbanisation is capable of providing a foundation for national growth and prosperity that will create vibrant and affluent cities in Nigeria. It is evident that urban governance is an important factor that can effectively reduce the rate of crime and deviant behaviour in specific areas within major cities across the country.

In view of the literatures, the dimension of crime cannot be ignored in the development and management of urban areas. Notably, the response rates of successive governments to extant literatures that have identified crime hotspots in urban areas have been rather lukewarm. Allocation of police personnel and security instruments have not been seen to be strategically executed, in order to give preference to high crime-prone areas within urban centres in the country. Without mincing words, there are indications that Nigerian cities need to adopt the principles of sustainable urbanisation as a means of managing and guiding the process and consequences of urban development. The Nigerian government should pay more attention to improving the provision of urban infrastructure for poor households, especially, in those areas where the stock of urban infrastructure is deficient. Furthermore, city authorities need to be strengthened by providing them with the necessary powers, resources and capacity to undertake a wide range of statutory functions. Finally, Nigerian government can assimilate tactics from developed countries in its quest to transform the urbanisation that is being experienced in the country from an unbridled phenomenon to the centrepiece in development initiatives today. Accordingly, if pragmatic efforts are made to effectively manage urbanisation, Nigerian cities will be both sustainable and able to provide human security and deep sense of belonging to all citizens.

References


