

Original Paper

Characteristics, Challenges and Prospects of Informal Land Use Activities in Barkin Ladi Town, Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines the urban planning implications of informal sector activities in Barkin-Ladi Town, a post mining settlement in Plateau State, Nigeria. The objective of the paper is to examine the planning challenges posed by the informal sector activities and to make appropriate recommendations towards integrating and regulating such activities within the settlement. A total of 187 questionnaires were administered on three categories of informal sector activities in the area, while interviews were conducted with the staff of the Area Office of the Ministry of Lands, Survey and Town Planning and of the Works Department of the Barkin Ladi local government council, which is the planning authority. The research revealed that trading was the dominant informal activity being undertaken by 63% of the respondents, followed by cottage industries (14%) and tertiary services (23%). Planning challenges pose by informal activities included: change of use without planning approvals, encroachment on access roads, conflicting land uses, non-compliance with the relevant planning law on zoning. There were no spatial developmental plans or guidelines by the relevant planning authority to regulate the activities of informal sector activities. Environmental management challenges were lack of access to basic infrastructure, degradation of the urban environment, and insecurity of life and property. It is recommended that there is the need for planners to understand the valuable contributions of the informal activities to the local economy by integrating them in the spatial development frameworks through appropriate zoning, location, space management and regulatory policies. Basic infrastructure and services should be provided to enhance their productivity, while government and other stakeholders should improve access to loans, micro-finance, material resources and capacity building of informal participants.

Keywords

informal land use activities, economic development, planning and environmental challenges, integration

1. Introduction

The problem of physical disorder and its attendant issues of unsustainable urban growth and environmental inadequacies are a clear manifestation of the failure of planners to recognize and incorporate certain aspects of urban activities into the land use allocation process and also to device appropriate tools of administering or managing them. Urban planning problems caused by the informal sector activities have remained a serious headache to countries that are aliens to modern planning tools and techniques (Jelili & Adedibu, 2006). Adeyinka, et al. (2006) with reference to Nigeria have observed the lack of official recognition of urban informal activities in the management of urban spaces and provision of basic infrastructure and services with the consequence of them spilling into any available space and location thereby contributing significantly to the chaos and disorder that is found in such areas. This is a common characteristic of most African cities (Komollo, 2010).

The irony is that the informal economy in the developing countries employs millions of people and provides the basis for their survival and livelihoods. The UN-Habitat (2007), estimates that more than half of the urban workforce in such countries operate in the informal sector as street vendors, barbers, beauticians, shoe shiners, cobblers and in other services. Informal employment makes up 70-95% of total employment including agriculture (UN Habitat, 2016). With the rapid growth of African cities, it is expected that much of the growth in their economy will take place in the informal sector. The question as rightly asked by the UN Habitat is how this growth can take place and contribute positively to the economies of African cities and African urban poor when the sector is often seen in terms of disorder and illegality and mostly ignored and even demonized?

This paper examines the significant growth that has occurred in Barkin Ladi town, a medium size urban area in Plateau State, Nigeria physically, in population and in its economy. Very little effort had been made to coordinate spatial and economic growth leading to the upsurge of informal commercial activities in very haphazard manner and creating challenges to urban planners and the residents. The objective of this paper is to examine the urban planning implications of the growth and location of informal sector activities in this post-mining settlement and to make appropriate recommendations for regulating and integrating such into the urban system. The specific objectives of the paper are a) to identify and classify informal activities in the town; b) examine their characteristics in terms of location, space, infrastructural and operational needs, c) examine the challenges that they pose and the influence of planning control if any for integration such activities into the urban system.

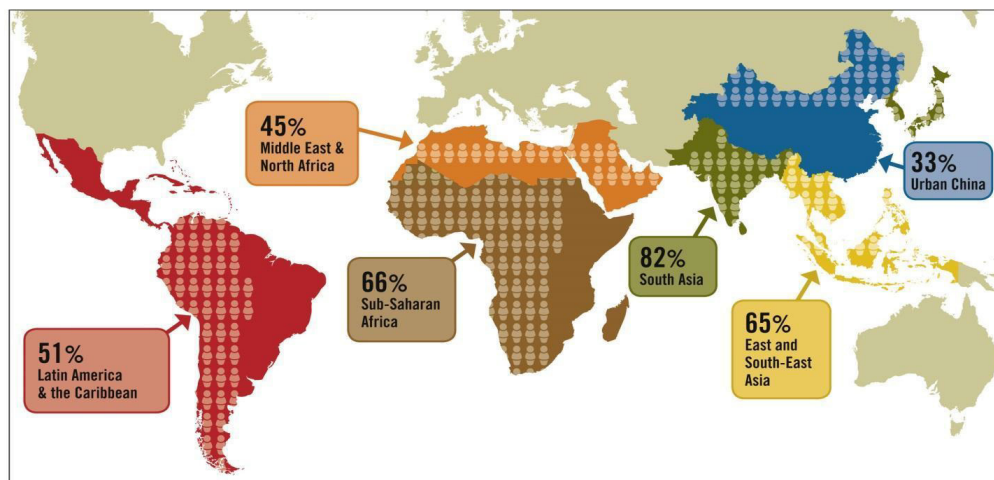
In this paper informal activities/sector and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are used interchangeably. This is for the simple reason that most SMEs fall within the informal sector of the economy and the literature often treat the concepts together. The UN-Habitat (2015) has described the

informal sector as private unincorporated enterprises whose size in terms of employment is below a certain threshold to be determined according to national conditions and or which are not registered under specific form of national legislation, such as the factory act, or commercial acts, tax or social security laws, professional groups regulatory laws or regulation established by national legislative bodies and whose employees are not registered. The defining characteristics of the informal sector are: lack of governmental regulation, lack of institutions that provide job security and benefits; small and micro scale, etc. It has been pointed, however, that formal and informal sectors are a continuum and therefore it becomes even more difficult to define and categorise informal and formal urban activities. The definition of SMEs varies from country to country and from one region to another (Onugu, 2003; Gibson & van de Vaart, 2008; SMEDAN & NBS, 2013; Yahaya et al., 2016). In Nigeria, SMEDAN (2013) has defined micro, small and medium enterprises based on employment and assets base. Micro enterprises employ less than 10 workers and have assets of less than N5 million (excluding land and buildings). Small enterprises employ 10 to 49 workers and have an asset base of between 5 to N50 million, while Medium enterprises employ 50 to 199 workers and with assets base of N50 to less than N500 million. The research has adopted a classification of informal activities based on three major types; trading, service or cottage industries which are basically unregulated.

2. Review of Relevant Literature

The UN-Habitat (2015) has observed that urbanization in developing countries is accompanied by growth in urban informal economies. The informal economy makes up a significant proportion of non-agricultural Gross Value Added (GVA). For example, 8-20% in transitional economies, 16-34% in Latin America, 17-34% in Middle East and North African region, 46% in India, and 46-62% in West Africa (see, UN-Habitat, 2015). In most developing countries informal employment accounts for more than half of non-agricultural employment. In low-income countries, informal employment makes up 70-95% of total employment (including agriculture), see Figure 1.

Informal Employment: Percent of Non-Agricultural Employment*



*Vaneek, Joanne, Martha Chen, Françoise Carré, James Heintz and Ralf Hussmanns. *Statistics on the Informal Economy: Definitions, Regional Estimates and Challenges*. WIEGO Working Paper (Statistics) No. 2. Cambridge, MA, USA: WIEGO, April 2014.

Figure 1. Informal Employment as Percentage of Non-Agricultural Employment

Source: UN-Habitat, (2015)

Kehinde et al. (2016) have acknowledged that governments at various levels in Nigeria (local, state and federal levels) have in one way or the other focused on the performance of small scale business enterprises for economic gains. While some state governments have formulated policies aimed at facilitating and empowering the growth, development and performance of small scale business enterprise, others have focused on assistance to such businesses enterprises to enable them grow through the advancement of soft loans and other fiscal incentives to enhance the socio-economic development of the states in areas such as: alleviating poverty, employment generation, enhance human development, and improve social welfare of the people (see, Business Day of 07 June 2016). Policies as regards the spatial location of informal activities are however non-existent. The integration of informal activities within the urban physical structure is rarely considered. Economic policies and physical land use policies at the micro and macro urban levels often work at cross-purpose.

Nigeria represents Africa's largest economy with a rebased GDP of 521 billion NGN in 2013 and an estimated population of 173 million (World Bank, 2013; quoted in Uchechi & Adeleke, 2015). The Nigerian economy is characterised by a large number of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) mainly in the informal sector (Adechukwu, 2003; Onugu, 2005; Uchechi et al 2015; Kehinde, Abiodun, Adegbiyi and Oladimeji, 2016)). Informal sector contribution to Nigeria's GDP is estimated by the United Nations at 57.9% (See, Daily Trust of June, 25th 2014). The Nigeria Vision 20:2020 Report (2009) clearly recognised the wide spread nature of SMEs in Nigeria and their multiplier effects on the rest of the economy, describing them as the "engine of economic progress". A survey of micro small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria in 2016 revealed that there were 37 million SMEs in 2013, employing some 59.7 million people, which represented 84% of the labour force (see, Business Day of

07 June 2016). SMEs accounted for 54% for jobs created, while the private and public sectors accounted for 37% and 9% respectively in 2013.

2.1 Informal Activities and Urban Land Management

Adeyinka et al. (2006) in their study of informal sector activities and urban land management in south western Nigeria have acknowledged that all human activities take place on land. Therefore, there is high demand for urban land and spaces to accommodate the ever growing need of the informal sector activities and other uses, such as housing, recreation, manufacturing, etc. Emmanuella (2011) in her study on the informal sector and the environment in Nigerian towns and cities concluded that people of low-income relied heavily on the informal sector for their survival. Since the formal sector lacked the capacity to absorb large number of labour force, the alternative sector known as the informal sector serves as the backup for the formal sector in employment generation (Onyemachi, 2011). Other Studies by Arosanyi, Olowosolu and Oyeyemi (2011) and Farinmade (2012), in Lagos established that there existed a relationship between employment in the informal sector and formal sector unemployment, illiteracy, environmental degradation and the rampant violation of planning regulations transportation infrastructure.

2.2 Government Policies on Small Business and Development in Nigeria

There was no coherent government policy for the development of small scale industries during the period of the first republic (1962-1966). Government intention then was to establish large scale industries. This led to the establishment of Industrial Development Centres (IDCs) in Owerri, and Zaria for the purpose of promoting small scale industrial development. The Second National Development Plan (1970-1974) encourages the establishment of small scale industries and the introduction of credit schemes to channel funds to businesses. The Third National Development Plan (1975-1980) brought in the awareness on role those SMEs as vehicles of economic development.

The Fourth National Development Plan (1981-1985) saw the expansion of Industrial Development Centres and their activities and the promotion of SMEs through enhance funding, provision of infrastructures and other incentives. The growth of the sector received a boost in the mid-80s following the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). (Oshinowo, 2007)

The current economic down turn in the country has negatively affected various sectors of the economy and compelled the Buhari government to formulate a comprehensive economic plan tagged **Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP)** 2017-2020 to bring the country back to path of growth. The key policy thrust of the plan is industrialization focusing on SMEs- with government collaborating closely with businesses to deepen their investment in agriculture, power, manufacturing, solid minerals, and service sector and support private sector to become the engine of national economic growth. Other key areas of intervention are: stabilize the macroeconomic environment, promote agriculture and food security, energy (power and petroleum product sufficiency).

2.3 The Study Area

The study area, Barkin-Ladi (also called Gwol) is located 9032'00"N and 8054'00"E, lies about 50 km

on the Jos-Mangu highway (see Figure 2). The town is situated on the Jos Plateau with an average height of 1,200 meters above sea level. The area is characterised of a large exposure of basement complex rocks and some volcanic rocks. The rocks contain large deposit of minerals such as tin (cassiterite) and columbite which have been mined on commercial scale since the beginning of the last century. Most of the mineral ores being alluvial deposits open cast (paddock) was the main method of exploitation of the ores (see Alexander, 1985). With the development of hydro electricity supply from Kura Falls in the 1920s, Barkin Ladi became a major area of mechanised tin mining on the Jos Plateau. The town became a thriving small town since becoming a local government headquarters (third-tier/level of government in Nigeria) in 1976. From 1976, the population has increased rapidly, from 22,720 (NPC, 1991) to 45,428 in 2006 and now estimated at 71,626 (2016), with a growth rate 4.7%.

With the collapse of tin mining activities from the mid-1970s and the withdrawal of foreign mining companies, the economy of the town was transformed from being dependant on the tin industry to agriculture (the mining ponds provided water for dry season farming), trading and commerce and service industries (Mendie, 2010; Dung-Gwom 2012). In the past three or four decades, therefore, the informal economy has been the major source of employment and driver of the local economy.

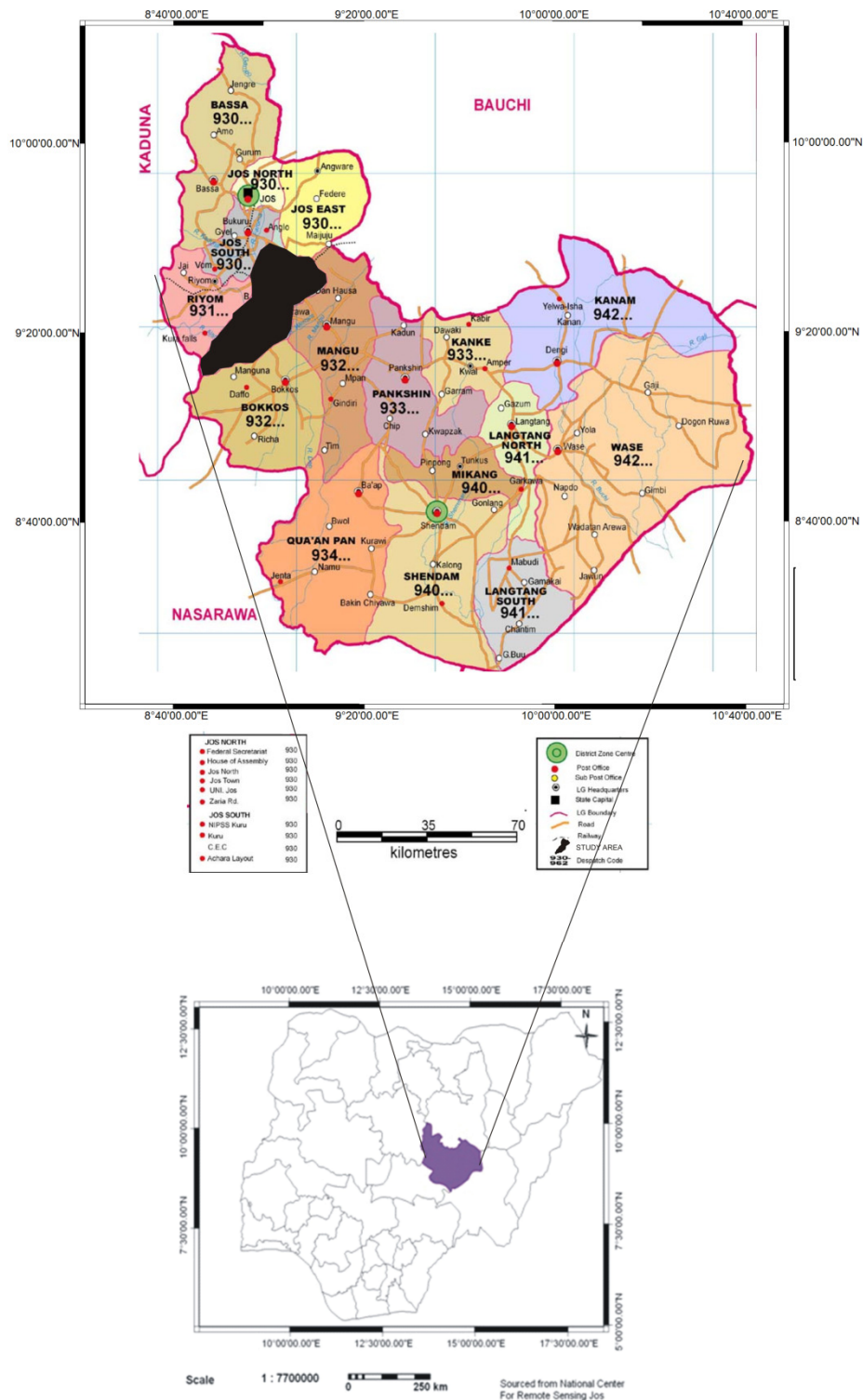


Figure 2. Map of Nigeria Showing Plateau State and Barkin Ladi LGA

3. Data Collections Methods

The data upon which the research results are described have come from both primary and secondary sources. A reconnaissance survey was conducted in 2016 which provided the basis for the classification

of informal commercial activities in the town, while sites where informal activities clustered in the town were mapped (see Table 1 and Figure 3). The primary data was collected through the administration of a questionnaire to 187 informal land use activities spread over the three major types (see Figures 4 to 6). Secondary data was sourced from published literature and desk top research.

Table 1. Sample Frame

Category	Frequency	Percentage	Sample size
Trading activities	1,184	63	118
Cottage industries	263	14	26
Tertiary services	431	23	43
Total	1,878	100	187 (10%)

Data collected was analysed using the Integrated Land and Water Information System (ILWIS) and Geographical Information System (GIS). Further analysis was done using descriptive statistics for the quantitative data and presented in tables, graphs and charts, while the qualitative data from the interviews were summarized and conclusions deduced.

3.1 Categories of Informal Sector Activities in the Study Area

For ease of analysis, informal land use activities were categorized into three groups: trading and commerce; cottage industries; and services. This categorization was adopted based on studies of (Adeyinka et al., 2006; Mayat & Ruth, 2010; Opeyemi, 2014). (see, Tables 3 and 4)

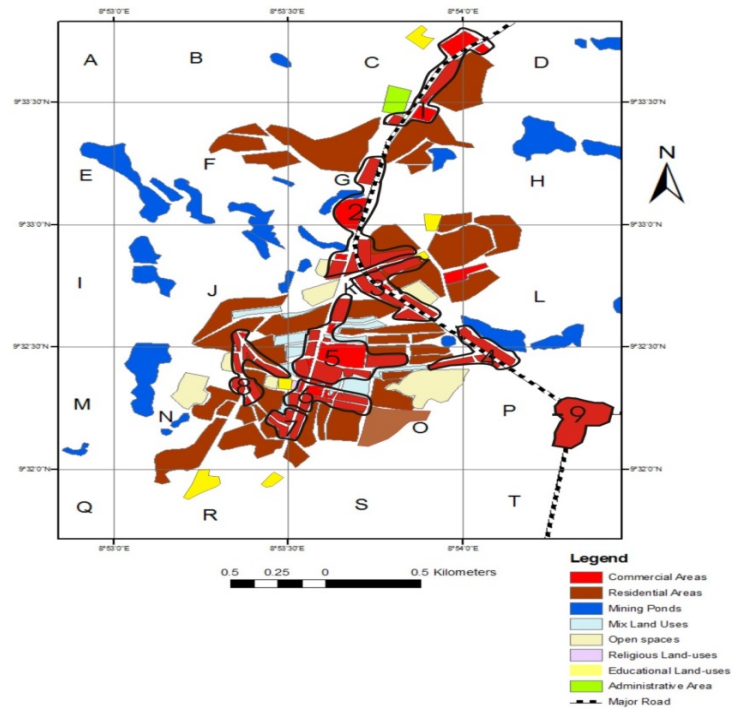


Figure 3. Spatial Distribution of Informal Land Use Cluster (A – I) in the Study Area

Key: A = low-cost (2.7%)

B = Police station junction (1.6%)

C = Survival/township stadium (15.6%)

D = NNPC Mega Station (4.3%)

E = B/Ladi Central Market (33.65%)

F = Rantya- Gwol (15.6%)

G = Rahwol- Yep (5.3%)

H = Township Stadium (5.3%)

I = Bokkos Junction (16.0%)

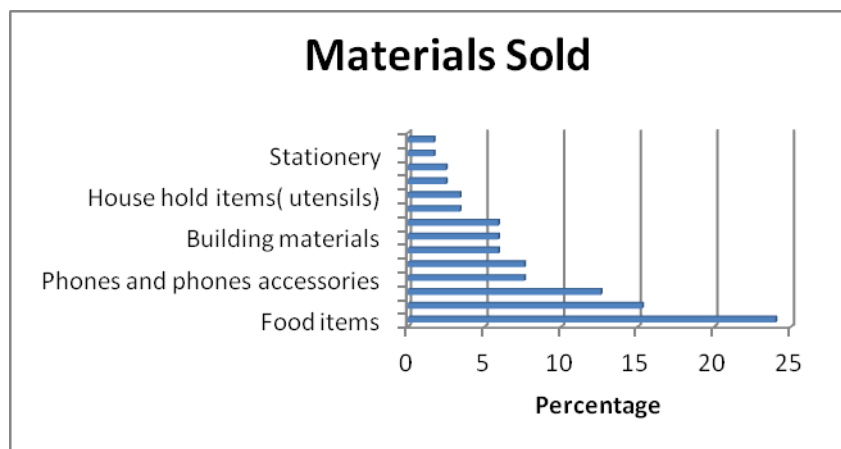


Figure 4. Trading Activities

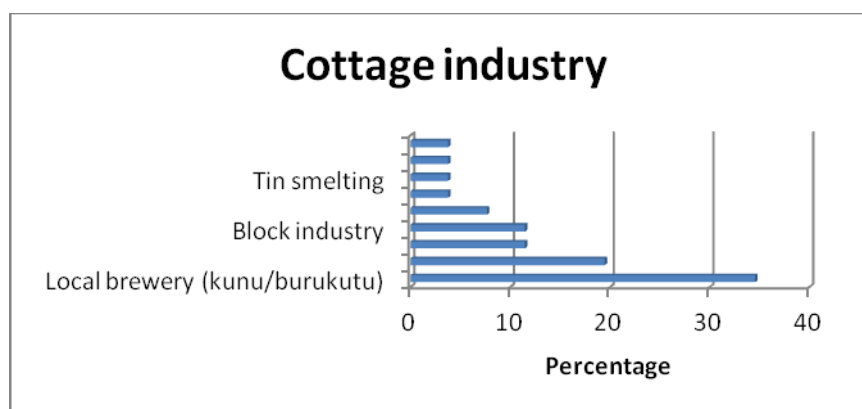


Figure 5. Cottage Industries

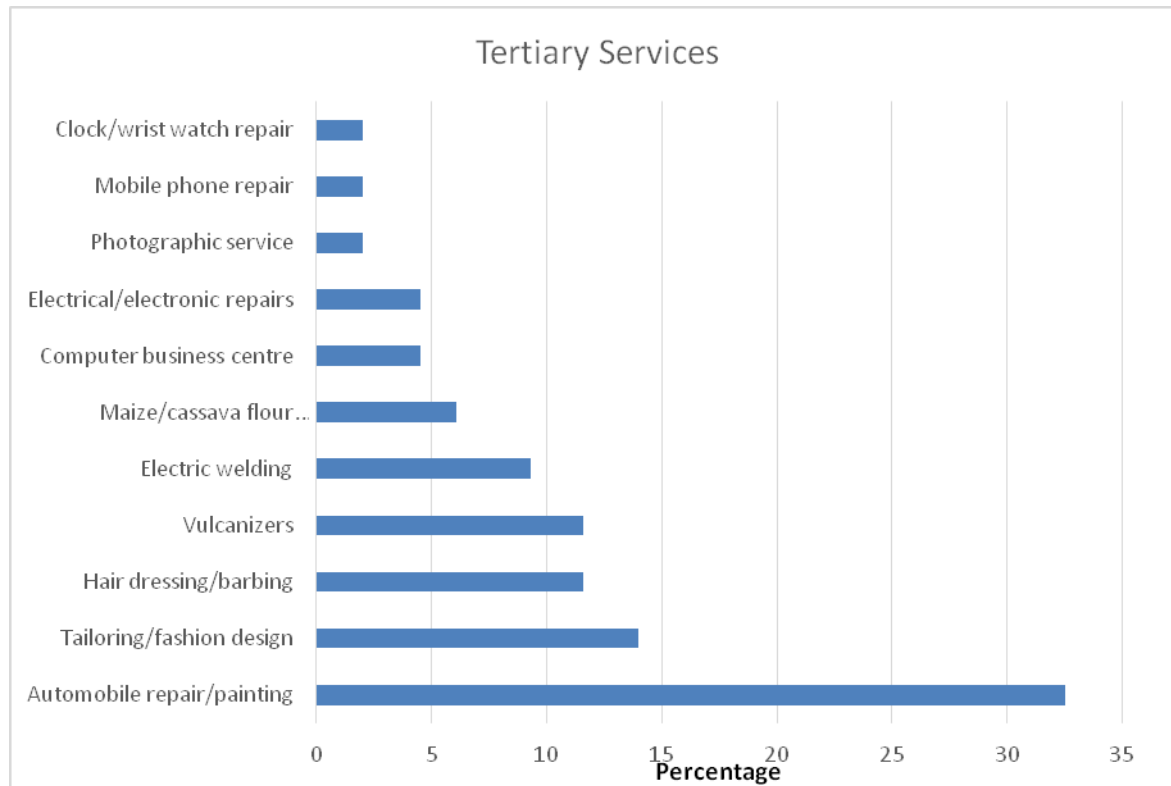


Figure 6. Service Activities

3. Results

3.1 Reasons for Choice of Business Location

From Table 2, 42% of operators of informal sector activities locate their businesses in areas where they are likely to make more sales (proximity to market). Those that locate close to access roads constitute 22% of the informal activities. 16% of the activities located closed to liked-uses for complementarity. Availability of space is another factor of location and was found to account for 12% for choice of location. Those that locate close to homes accounted for only 4.3% and chose this location so that they could pay less rent. From the foregoing, it could be inferred that locations with high potentials for making more sales were the points of attraction for the location of informal activities. The basic principle of retail is that retail follows people (customers) and so the propensity for its location near to high population areas, along major streets, road junctions, public offices and near to existing markets (see also, Komollo, 2010).

Table 2. Reasons for Choice of Particular Location

	Number of Response	%
Complimentary activities	30	
	16	
Availability of space	22	
	11.8	
Proximity to market	78	
	42	
Proximity to road	42	
	22.2	
Proximity to home	8	
	4.3	
Low rent	7	
	3.7	
Total	187	
	(100)	

3.2 Structures Used for Informal Sector Activities

Various structures were used for informal sector operations in Barkin-Ladi. On street display of goods was 30% (see plate 1). Those that used structures built with cement blocks constituted 21.5%, while those that sale their wares in open spaces were are 19.3% (see Plate 1). Those that had kiosks were 11.2% while those that used metal containers and wooden structures made up 9.0% percent respectively (see Plate 2). Some informal sector activities were also carried out on the verandas of residential buildings, on the street (street trading and tended to be mobile in nature). Information in Table 3 shows the different type of structures that housed informal activities. Over 90% of Cottage industries needed a built structure, either of cement blocks, metal or wood as against 40% for tertiary services and 28% for trading and commercial activities respectively.

Table 3. Types of Structures Used in Formal Sector Activities

Type of structure	Category							
	Trading and commercial activity		Cottage industry		Tertiary services		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Street pavement	45	33.1	0	0	11	25.5	56	30
Kiosk	19	16.1	2	7.8	0	0	21	11.2

Metal container	10	8.5	4	15.4	3	6.9	17	9.0
Structures made of cement blocks	14	11.9	16	61.4	10	23.4	40	21.5
Structures made of wood	9	7.6	4	15.4	4	9.4	17	9.0
Open spaces	21	17.8	0	0	15	34.8	36	19.3
Total	118	(100)	26	(100)	43	(23)	187	100

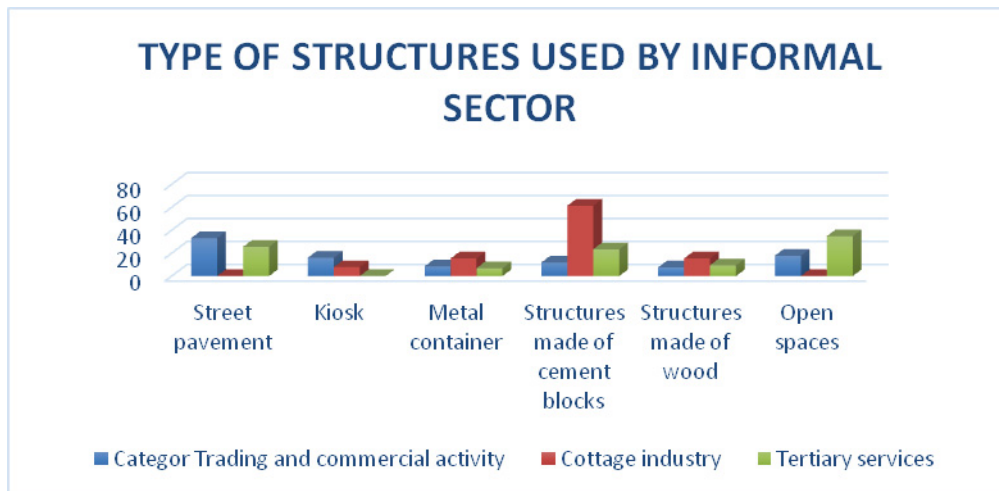


Figure 7. Types of Structures/Premises Used by Informal Activities



Plate 1. On Street Display of Goods along Abattoir Road, Barkin-Ladi Town



Plate 2. Wooden Stalls used in Central Market, Barkin-Ladi Town 2016

3.3 Ownership of Space

Conflicting land uses developed as a result of the tendency of sharing space among informal sector participants. About 71.1% or 133 of the participants conduct their activities on public/private land/properties, which is regarded as “illegal encroachment”. Those that operate in rented spaces were 20.3 percent (38), while 8.5% (16) owned the space/property. Conflicting land uses developed as a result of illegal encroachments, conversions and non-approval from the planning authorities. Interviews with urban planners in the Area Office of the Ministry of Lands, Survey and Town Planning and the Works Department of the local government council revealed that there were no policies on informal activities. The only policy being that applicants were issued with temporary use permits to erect kiosk/shades for their activities. Such kiosk and shades must not be of permanent building materials as they could be dismantled within a 24 hours’ notice. Informal sector activities are often forcibly evicted in breach of such notices on the claim of maintaining order and cleanliness. The problem is simply transferred elsewhere as such activities relocate to new areas within the town. This creates uncertainty and lack of security for informal activities.

There were no records of such temporary permits in the two organisations, which could indicate the sleeve that goes on. The provision of spaces to informal sector activities as a deliberate and effective measure of achieving planning control and mitigate the environmental problems associated with them was non-existent.

3.4 Environmental Effects of Informal Sector Activities

The informal sector activities in the study area cause some urban environmental problems which are shown in Table 4. Most prominent effect was solid waste generation, it accounted for 15.5 percent of the responses (see, also Plate 2). There was indiscriminate disposal of solid waste into drainages, open spaces and abandoned mining ponds, thereby polluting the environment. Ahmed (1998) Mwau (2009) and Emmanuella (2011); and Ademola and Ayankora (2012) have observed that informal sector

participants have low educational attainment hence, their knowledge about environmental quality is rather low. Therefore, their waste disposal methods were very crude. This leads to poor sanitation, public health hazard and poor urban environment (see, also Opeyemi, 2014).

Encroachment on access road accounted for 14.5% of the environmental effects. The encroachment of activities on road shoulders, public walkways has not only reduced road capacities but also cause traffic congestions and increased the risks of traffic accidents.

Traffic congestion as a result of on-street trading and parking is the third most popular environmental effect with 13.5%. On-street parking often resulted in traffic congestion, most especially where vehicles are parked on both sides of the streets. Haphazard erection of structures housing informal sector activities accounted for 12.5 percent. Most of these structures were located indiscriminately and without planning permits creating squalors, loss of aesthetics and conflicts with adjoining land uses. Mixed use of buildings and illegal change of use of buildings was another problem identified and accounted for 10.6%. Illegal change of use promotes incompatibility, disaster risk and degradation of the environment. Encroachment on public land was 9.1 percent. This was as a result of the desire to locate businesses near public offices and areas that attract high populations for increased sales. The Township Stadium area, Water Board premises, Primary Health Care clinic have been “invaded” and defaced by the presence of the informal activities. Unsanitary environment accounted for 7.8 percent of the response. Most participants do not clean their business premises regularly. Sanitation is not considered a routine but as adhoc exercise only done on monthly sanitation days.

Unfriendly environmental practices (e.g. indiscriminate dumping of refuse on the roads, drains and unauthorized locations, defecating in the open field) are common in most Nigerian urban centres. Unsanitary living conditions characterized by filthy environment, unclean ambient air, stinky and garbage filled streets and sub-standard structures continue to dominate the urban landscape in the study area. The concentration of more people in urban areas of the country has brought more pressure on the land space for informal sector activities. This affects the carrying capacity of the environment as each additional person increases the demand on the infrastructure and natural system and as result creating ecological imbalance which comes with adverse environmental consequences such as hazards, disaster and diseases outbreaks.

Adedeji and Eziyi (2010) observed that the psychological re-orientation of the people toward proper environmental management practices is central in developing environmental consciousness in individuals. To this end, environmental education such as public enlightenment campaigns in the mass and print media, churches, mosques, and community-based organizations is highly needed to reduce the environmental effects poised by the informal sector.

Table 4. Environmental Effects of Informal Sector Activities in Barkin-Ladi Town

Effects	Number of Response	Percentage
Waste generation	120	15.5
Encroachment on access road	113	14.5
Traffic congestion	105	13.5
Haphazard erection of structures	98	12.5
Mix land uses	83	10.6
Encroachment on public lands	71	9.1
Unsanitary environment	61	7.8
Blocked drainages	52	6.7
Erosion	30	3.8
Noise pollution	28	3.6
Air pollution	19	2.4
Total	780	100

Note. Total number of response outnumbered the sample size because respondents were allowed to pick more than one option.

**Plate 3. Waste Generated from Transportation Activities (Informal Garages)**

3.5 Priority Needs of Respondents

The priority needs of participants in the informal sector revealed that 16.4% of the respondents indicated they needed appropriate sites for their business; 15.2% wanted security of life and property, while 12.6% needed access to credit to enable them expand their businesses. 10.8% said they needed market infrastructures, such as lock-up shops, stalls, warehouses, parking spaces, drainages etc. to enable their businesses thrive better. Others indicated the security of tenure (11.9%). 9.4% wanted disposal bins and 8.5% needed rest rooms (toilet facilities) with 4.7 % wanting more firm control on

the proliferation and location of informal activities by the government. It is inferred that most participants would prefer to operate their businesses in appropriate locations that are organised, well secured, have available facilities and with a little government interference. Results are shown on Table 5. The issue of security of live and property was significant because the Jos crisis had spilled into the country side and Barkin Ladi had witnessed communal strife and violence which had displaced many people and businesses. The town has remained quite mixed ethnically in spite of the crisis and enjoyed relative peace in the last two years.

Table 5. Priority Needs of Informal Sector Participants

S/no	Priority needs	Number of response	%
1	Appropriate site for business location	180	16.4
2	Electricity and water	115	10.5
3	Rest rooms	93	8.5
4	Waste disposal bins	103	9.4
5	Access to credit	138	12.6
6	Government support and policies	52	4.7
7	Security of tenure	130	11.9
8	Security of life and properties	167	15.2
9	Market infrastructures	118	10.8
	Total	1096	(100)

Note. Total number of response outnumbered the sample size because respondents are allowed to indicate more than one option.

4. Discussion: Challenges Posed by Informal Sector Activities

In 1981, Barkin Ladi was designated an urban area under the 1978 Land Use Act, and the implication is that the management of the town was to be under the state government rather than the local government. Attempts were made by the state government through the Ministry of Land, Survey and Town Planning in the 1980s to prepare master plans for the major settlements in the state, including Barkin Ladi. The draft master plans that were prepared were of poor quality and were never approved by the state government talk less of their implementation. The Barkin Ladi Local Government Council created since 1976 had not initiated any meaningful physical development of the town besides earmarking the main market, tarring a few township roads and laying out a few areas for residential purpose. Under the 1999 constitution, town planning is the residual responsibility of the state governments (though the 1992 Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law made provisions for planning functions for the three tiers of government). The local governments by the 1999 Nigerian Constitution has functions for

establishment and management of markets, collection and disposal of waste; management of motor parks and so on. The officials pointed out that due to poor funding and lack of qualified human resource, the Ministry of Lands, Survey and Town Planning and the local government's works department had not been able to do much in terms of urban planning and management and the regulation of informal activities.

As the town has grown over the last 20 to 30 years, there had been high demand for space and land for residential development, commercial activities and other uses. With the failure of public control and management, the private market had become the main provider of land to prospective developers and the driver of the local economy. Haphazard location of informal activities, petty trading, cottage industries and services has become the order of the day. Economic activities and land uses lack adequate management and therefore as this study has shown lead to many challenges and problems, which if not addressed will in the future lead to more complex environmental problems and public health hazards. A town lacking basic infrastructure and services cannot attract outside investments and stimulate local economic opportunities.

Informal activities have suffered a double tragedy; unable to benefit from positive physical planning strategies and direction; and not being able to gain support from economic and fiscal policies like those of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the African Development Bank (ADB) that promote and offer loans and technical assistance to SMEs. The Federal Government of Nigeria in 2012 approved the sum of N200 billion for the operation of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises Credit Guarantee Scheme (SMEDAN, 2013). Such grants/loans have not reached the informal operators in the study area. A chaotic economic system cannot support sustained development that leads to healthy economic growth, enhanced welfare of the poor urban residents and the attainment of the New Urban Agenda.

5. Conclusion

The study has provided insight into the nature and characteristics of informal activities, and the physical planning implications of informal sector activities in Barkin-Ladi town. The capacity of the informal sector economy to provide employment to the teeming urban population cannot be underscored. However, the sector poses considerable challenge to urban planners not only in Nigeria but also in other developing countries of the world on how to integrate them into the urban system where the level of application of physical planning principle and practice to manage and regulate informal sector activities has been very low. The environmental and public health challenges that they pose have been left unaddressed by planners and other stakeholders. There is need for urban planners to understand the needs and dynamics of the informal sector as the driver of local economic development and work assiduously with all relevant players in the economy to integrate them in the spatial planning framework to promote economic development and growth that is sensitive to environmental quality and health of the urban residents. This will help to ensure economic development while promoting environmental health and social harmony in urban centres.

6. Recommendations

To address the challenges and problems that informal land use activities pose in Bakin Ladi town, the following recommendations are made:

- a. The planning system and urban planners should understand and promote the informal sector to enhance and boost local economic development by providing suitable sites and locations serviced with basic infrastructure that are accessible and safe for them to thrive (see also, Pietrus 2014).
- b. An urban master plan should be prepared by the local government, with technical and financial assistance of the state government to provide a framework for the growth and development of Barkin Ladi town. The plan should propose clusters for the location of informal sector activities integrated and blended with other land uses; residential, institutional, etc; and make broad design suggestions that enhance the built fabric of the town.
- c. To stimulate small and medium enterprises (smes), the local and state government should address their needs in term of access to financial resources, loans, infrastructure; power, water, safety, waste collection and disposal, sanitary facilities and security. Government should facilitate access to financial resources and loans from the Africa Development Bank (ADB), the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), commercial banks and other micro-financing sources at affordable rates to leverage the informal sector activities.
- d. Less cumbersome forms of registration of informal activities should be embarked upon; with affordable rates/levies/taxation to enable them survive in the current climate of economic recession in the country.
- e. There is need to rationalise the locations of informal activities. Those exposed to higher levels of danger, hazards and risks should be relocated to safer and more secure sites. This applies to activities along busy major roads.
- f. Enforcement of minimum environmental standards, public health and sanitation guidelines, business operation hours, etc. should be negotiated and agreed with informal operators so that they are acceptable and adhered to.
- g. In line with recommendation 6 above; relevant planning authorities and other stakeholders should adopt the UN-Habitat approach in regulating and integrating informal land use activities in the urban centre, which has to do with the following: (see, UN-Habitat 2006, 2007 and 2016).
- i. **Demolition:** Demolition is extremely costly when the informal constructions represent solid investments and are a vital part of the economy. Informality is seen as a response to inefficiency of a state responsibility related to good land administration and urban management or to economic development and provision of job opportunities. Demolition should be the last resort.
- ii. **Ignoring the problem:** Ignoring the problem, is not often a sustainable and wise option to be considered, since informal development simply keep growing. Doing nothing is considered a poor solution since the rate of urban growth is high particularly in developing countries.

iii. Comprehensive spatial planning: comprehensive detailed planning to regenerate the areas affected by informal developments and impose controls on development

iv. Legalization. Clarifies ownership rights on land and solves the land tenure problems. Violations of planning regulations, or enforcement of new planning regulations, are left to be dealt with at a later stage. Legalizing property rights, with simple zoning criteria for rejection, the provision of registration and providing basic infrastructure as a following stage.

h. The State Urban and Regional Planning Board be establish at the State level and the Local Planning Authorities in all the 17 Local Governments (LPAs) of the state as recommended by the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law of 1992 for effective planning of urban centres, especially the local government headquarters which are growing fast in population due to rapid urbanization and urban expansion (see, NURP LAW, 1992).

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