

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOCAL GOVERNMENT HEADQUARTERS AND RURAL HINTERLAND SETTLEMENTS IN RIVERS SOUTH EAST SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines local the nature of the relationship between the local government headquarters and rural hinterland settlements in Rivers South East Senatorial District of Rivers state. The local government structure as operated in Nigeria is, no doubt, an explicit strategy of spatial closure or territorial organization of power. Their headquarters within this respect are growth points and service centres in the spread and diffusion of developmental influences to the grassroots. It thus, becomes necessary to examine the patterns, regularities and relationships that exists within this framework. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant variation in the level of interaction between its headquarters and the various rural hinterland settlements. The large administrative territory negates the attributes of any institution of grassroots participation. The study recommends a national re-organization of local government boundaries akin to a national system of central places. This should be within the framework of urban-rural regions defined in the context of contiguous zones of effective interaction between the centres and the rural hinterlands.

Key words: local government, rural hinterland settlements

INTRODUCTION

From 1960 when Nigeria got her independence, several attempts have been made to reorganize or reform the local government system in the country. One hallmark of such reforms preceding that of 1976 was that each region or state carried out the re-organization of its local government system in the way it deemed fit since local governments became a regional subject under the Nigerian constitution of 1951. In Rivers State for instance, apart from Port Harcourt which is the state headquarters other towns are in deplorable conditions in terms of development. According to Allagua and Tamuno (1989), Port Harcourt, the capital of Rivers State is responsible for over seventy percent (70%) of the total employment in the manufacturing industries. Apart from being the state capital, Port Harcourt has the second largest seaports in Nigeria, it has an international airport; also, the city is a major industrial as well as a commercial centre; it has three universities and it is the nerve centre of the oil gas and petrochemical industries in Nigeria. The fact that the urban centres which are mostly state capitals are steadily growing at the expense of peripheral towns which are mostly local government headquarters poses a serious problem due to influx of people into the city. This migration into the state capital according to Oyegun and Adeyemo (1999) has resulted in several problems among which, are shortage of housing facilities, high, rents, slums, high pressure on existing educational, health, water, power, and other infra-structural facilities, high crime rate and other social vices. Thus, unless we develop the rural areas, the urban centres themselves may experience both environmental and infrastructural decay as a result of heavy pressures from population movements. Moreover, grassroots development is imperative if we are to improve commodity production and diversify sources of foreign exchange. It is also an important means of assuring political and social stability not only within the local government but in the state and the country in general.

It should be realized that the main purpose of state creation which was to make for even proportion and balanced development for all could not completely solve the problem of spatial development in Nigeria. This is because, state creation led to the concentration of economic activities, social services and population in the urban core region which were mostly state capitals, while the urban centres which were mostly local government headquarters were relegated to the background. This situation has brought about the depopulation of the rural areas as their inhabitants migrate to the major cities in search of employment. One of the major implications of this neglect has been that of spontaneous, haphazard and ad hoc rural development schemes which have succeeded only in very few parts of the country, while other areas are being neglected. It was due to the problem of neglect of the rural areas and the lack of appropriate planning strategy for solving them that made the Obasanjo administration to adopt the local government reforms in Nigeria in 1976. This in effect was the right step in the right direction because the reform was mainly concerned with grassroots development. They represent the latest strategy in addressing the problems of the peripheral regions in the nations, geographic space. From the stipulations of the 1976 guidelines to local government reforms, and the necessary attributes of any institution of grassroots participation as recommended by Chapman (1953) and Olowu (1985), we can identify four distinct roles local government in Nigeria are expected to play. These are:

1. To initiate and direct the provision of services: This role is basically concerned with the issue of service efficiency and implies that the socio-economic and administrative services located at the local government headquarters should be such that it can effectively and efficiently be utilized by the rural settlements in the service area.
2. To activate the participation of people in the process of government. This contains a dual purpose of (a) Mobilizing the people politically on the basis of their natural communities and (b) beyond this democratic values, the active participation of people implies, the ability of the people themselves to appropriate for their benefit the socio-economic, administrative, political and other vital services and influences usually originating or located at the headquarter.
3. To enhance administrative efficiency.
4. Revenue mobilization and the generation of local resources for development.

A deep sense of belonging together is the locality principle. This concerns the question of distance and size of the local government. The more inclusive the local government, the more heterogeneous the sociological background of the people and the more difficult it is for the people to regard themselves as of the same community, at least, in Nigeria. This implies to a large extent that communities should not be too far with respect to difficult distance and accessibility from the headquarters. This study thus examines the relationship between Local Government Headquarters and rural hinterland settlements in Rivers South East senatorial district of Rivers State. The local government can thus be taken to mean an administrative framework and a specific policy of spatial closure designed to foster the allocation and spread of public goods to the rural regions of the country. They are territorial units which should ensure effective interaction between their centres, that is, the local government headquarters and the hinterland. (Nigeria, 1976; Gana, 1985; Olowu, 1985; Waizer and Stablein 1981).

Table 1 shows the summary statistics of Rivers State

LGAs	Senatorial district	No. Of words	Total population	Settlement
Eleme	Rivers East	10	218,200	78
Etche	Rivers East	19	295,200	254
Ikwere	Rivers East	13	222,875	105
Obio/Akpor	Rivers East	17	535,800	596
Okrika	Rivers East	12	295,325	110
Omumma	Rivers East	10	114,734	86
Port-Harcourt	Rivers East	20	618,456	563
Andoni	Rivers South East	11	248,532	206
Gokana	Rivers South East	17	261,570	145
Khana	Rivers South East	19	336,267	139
Ogu-Bolo	Rivers South East	12	87,300	80
Opobo/Nkoro	Rivers South East	11	173,228	74
Oyigbo	Rivers South East	10	140,243	173
Tai	Rivers South East	10	134,495	98
Abua-Odual	Rivers West	13	323,100	47
Ahoada-East	Rivers West	13	189,413	85
Ahoada-West	Rivers West	12	285,116	67
Akuku-Toru	Rivers West	17	178,328	171
Asari-Toru	Rivers West	13	251,595	186
Bonny	Rivers West	12	237,299	171
Degema	Rivers West	17	285,515	84
Emuoha	Rivers West	14	199,711	107
Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni	Rivers West	17	322,851	170
Total		319	5,955,153	3795

Source: Extract from (2010) Summary Statistics of Rivers State. www.rsiec.rs.com

Like other rural communities in Nigeria, the rural settlements in Rivers East senatorial district are characterized by backwardness in terms of infrastructural facilities such as education, health, roads and portable water. Poverty has become a way of life of the people due to economic stagnation, agricultural under development, unemployment, poor quality of life due to shortages of essential goods poor transportation/High cost of fuel, poor communication and insecurity and poor environmental quality. The establishment of local government headquarters is expected to be a catalyst In the development of the rural areas around it. The transformation of these handicaps at the base, is the key to any meaningful programme of development and social change. For the local government to be viable in respect of the accomplishment of its role, it has to ensure that the services it provides are within convenient distances and accessibility ranges. This paper examines the people’s reactions to distance from their settlement to their local government headquarters.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The concept of Local Government: The concept of Local has been seen from different view points as a consequence of the fact that various governments the world over have adopted different approaches to government and management at the grassroots. Orewa (1992) defined Local Government as “the lowest unit of administration to whose laws and regulations the communities who lived in a defined geographical area and with common social and political ties are subject”.

The definition provided by the Nigeria Federal Government under the 1976 National Local Government Reforms deserves to be included here for its relative standard and comprehensiveness. According to that definition as stated clearly by Ibodje (2007), Local Government is “Government at the Local level exercised through representative councils established by law to exercise specific functions within defined areas” (Federal Republic of Nigeria 1976).

For local governments to serve as veritable channel for development in the local communities, in the country, and for effectiveness, there was need to have fixed population, definite geographical area of jurisdiction based on viability, cultural, historical and political considerations (Kalu, et al, 2010). The 1976 reforms enumerated factors to be considered in creating future local governments. Such factors include:

- (a) That such local governments should be unified single-tier multipurpose;
- (b) That the title of the local governments should be local authorities and,
- (c) That the local government should have lower populations limit of 150,000 and an upper limit of 800,000.

SPATIAL INTERACTION

According to Fellmann, et, al (2005), spatial interaction means the movement of peoples, ideas, and commodities within and between areas. Such movements and exchanges are designed to achieve effective integration between different points of human activity. Movement of whatever nature satisfied some felt need or desire. It represents the attempt to smooth out the spatially differing availability of required resources, commodities, information, or opportunities. Thus, for any economic activity, there is generally a spatial disparity between the places at which it is supplied and the points of demand (Iloyd and Dicken, 1972). It follows therefore, that movement or spatial interaction must take place between producers and consumers in order to facilitate exchange. Such spatial interaction is essentially influenced by distance; while space constitutes the area to be used and organized for human activities, distance acts as a barrier to be overcome (Morril and Dormitzer, 1979). Thus, virtually all forms of spatial interaction display a distance–decay effect whereby the volume of movement falls off with increasing distance from the point of origin. This implies that the interactions between any of the urban centres and their rural hinterland areas, especially in the diffusion of urban influences from towns to hinterland, takes place effectively within unit areas or definable spatial settings.

Development:- The concept of development has had varied interpretations by various scholars over the years. Anyika (2007) assessed development as a process which carries the implication of progress, growth, increase and enhancement of quality and quantity of life. He further observed that development carries the connotation of up-liftment and transformation of the environment or nature. Oluwole (2003) aptly defined development as the process by which men and women actively engage and initiate social change that helps to improve on the provision of basic needs. In specific terms, Okowa and Okowa (2009), conceived development in terms of three interrelated conditionality or core values. The first core development value has to do with the materials imperative of life sustenance. In this perspective, development has to do with the sustainable improvement of the ability of a given socio-economic system to provide the basic needs of its people.

These needs include good food, decent shelter, good health, productive education and a clean and sustainable environment. The second core development value is self-esteem while the third core development value is that of freedom from servitude. Fundamental to the above conceptualization of development is the fact that the ability of man to productively manipulate his environment physically, humanly and perhaps “spiritually” in such a manner

as to maximize the well being and welfare of his society or local government area constitutes spatial interaction.

The Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

- (a) Examine the index of spatial infrastructures between the Local Government Headquarters and its hinterland.
- (b) Investigate the trend of spatial interaction in the local government area.

HYPOTHESIS

H₀: The location of local government headquarters in Bori town has not brought any significant variation in the level of interaction between it and the settlements in the Khana Local Government Area.

H_i: There is a significant variation in the level of interaction between the town and its hinterland.

REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

In Nigeria today, considerable attention is being paid to regional development, including physical and environmental planning. The objective of this effort is fully described in the Third National Development plan, 1975 – 80 as the establishment of Nigeria “firmly as a just and egalitarian society”, by which is meant the reduction of “inequalities in interpersonal incomes and promoting balanced development among the various communities in the different geographical areas in the country” (Federal Nigeria, 1970). In other words, the problem is how to change the economic growth of the country at both National, state and local government levels.

Friedman (1973) argued that since development tends to have its origin in a relatively small number of centres of change located at the points of highest potential interaction, power should be logically located at such core centres of change in order to facilitate the prompt allocation of resources and innovations to both core and periphery. It is from such centres of growth, power, and influence that innovation and growth impulses are supposed to spread into peripheral regional economics which in this case are hinterland settlements.

The local government as operated in Nigeria is a policy aimed at initiating development to grassroots and peripheral regions and can be taken as a strategy for the territorial decentralization of power. The headquarters of a local government by virtue of being the rallying point is an area of concentration of social and economic benefits and the attraction of infrastructure. The principle involved is that basic social amenities and services of central order located in the headquarters should effectively meet the requirement of the rural areas for which they are supposed to serve (Okoye, 1984; Mawhood 1979). Moreover Aliyu (1979) stated that one of the stated aims of creating a standardized, autonomous, and viable local government is to “bring government closer to the people”. This can rightly be taken to mean that the seat or headquarters of a local government unit should be close the people to enhance effective interaction between the local government headquarters and the adjoining parts of the local government area.

From the above perspective, it can be said that the workings of the central place theory provides a useful understanding of the local government structures since the local government structures are created primarily to provide services of central order to the benefit of the rural areas for which their headquarters are located (Ajaegbu (1976). The theory represents the most articulated formation of the town as a focus for the economic activity for its surrounding rural areas. For every town (in some measure) acts as a focus for

the surrounding countryside and it is from this role that the general functions are derived (Carter, 1972; Ayeni, 1983).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study covers the South East Senatorial Districts of Rivers State.. However the concentration of the research work is on Khana Local Government Area, being the local government with the highest number of wards (19) and the highest population (336,267) in the Rivers East Senatorial District. Moreover the traditional headquarters of Gokana, Khana, Oyigbo and Tai Local Government Areas is located in Bori Town in the Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State. Out of the 19 wards in khana local government area, thirteen 13 wards were randomly selected for the research work.

Basically, primary data was used and collected through field survey. However, secondary data were also used. The research identified three thousand households in the thirteen headquarters of wards of the thirteen sample wards. A sampling frame for the list of identified households were numerically arranged and using the table of random numbers, the ward sample size of 30 households per ward was selected making it a total of 390 households across the Local Government Area. The ward headquarters were preferred as sample sites because they are centrally located and more representative of the other villages in the hinterland. The level of interaction between the local government headquarter (Bori Town) and its hinterland was determined through information on the movement of people to the town. The particular variable considered was the frequency of visit by individuals in the wards to the centre (Local government headquarters). The total frequency of interaction levels of the various settlements was derived by allotting 4 points for respondents grouped under the most frequent visits, 3 points for more frequent visits, 2 points for less frequent visit and I point for the least frequent visits. With the choice of 30 respondents from each of the settlements, the maximum possible level of interaction for any settlement is given as 120 (i.e 4 x 30) while the least possible for any settlement is 30 (i.e 1 x 30). The hypothesis states that: The location of local government headquarters in Bori Town has not brought any significant variation in the level of interaction between it and the settlements in the Khana local government area. To determine if differences exist among locations, the one way ANOVA technique was used.

Table 2 shows the frequency of interaction between the local government headquarters (Bori Town) and the wards in the Khana local government area. The model that has been employed to gauge this frequency of interaction is the gravity model. The gravity model is a mathematical prediction of the interaction between two bodies (places) as a function of their size and of the distance separating them. Based on Newton’s law, the model states that attraction (interaction) is proportional to the product of the masses (population sizes) of two bodies (places) and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them. (Fellmann et. al, 2005).

Table 2: Frequency of interaction between Bori Town and its hinterland settlements

Frequency of interaction (wards)		Frequency				E Total frequency of interaction
		A Most	B More	C Less	D Least	
A.	Bori Town	120	0	0	0	120
B.	Nyorgo – Lueku	0	12	24	14	50
C.	Teka - Sogho	0	9	32	11	52
D.	Kaani	92	15	0	2	109
E.	Bionu-Bagha	0	12	22	15	49

F.	Beeri	16	66	8	0	90
G	Kwawa	12	42	22	2	78
H.	Wiiyaakara	72	27	6	0	105
I.	Kono-Boue	20	51	4	6	81
J.	Gwara	8	36	32	0	76
K.	Kalaoko	12	15	18	13	58
L.	Kaani-Babbe	24	27	22	4	77
M	Baen	32	45	14	0	91
N.	Kpaa	0	6	16	20	42

Table 3: ANOVA table

Source of variation	Sample of squares	Df	Variance	F-ratio
Between sample	5307.61	3	1769.2	4.65
Within sample	15,218.29	40	380.46	

With 3 and 40 degrees of freedom on the students F- distribution table, we have 2.84 at 0.05 probability level which means that the null hypothesis of the study is rejected. This is because, the F – calculated of 4.65 is greater than our table value of 2.84. It therefore means that the alternative hypothesis which states that there is a significant variation in the level of interaction between Bori Town and its hinterland rural communities becomes the explanation.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

One of the aims of creating a standardized, autonomous, and viable local government is “to bring government closer to the people”. This is to enhance effective interaction between the local government headquarters and the adjoining parts of the local government area Aliyu (1979). Table I reveals that khana local government area is the largest in the South East senatorial restrict of Rivers State in terms of number of wards (19) population (336,267) and land area of approximately 859 square kilometers. The khana local government area is too large to make its impact felt in most of the settlements it is meant to serve in terms of promoting effective interaction between the headquarters and its hinterland. It can also rightly be said that its large size does not encourage meaningful identify and participation. It is also noticed that the large size of the local government area poses a serious constraint on the ability of the local government administration to discharge its services effectively to the entire local government area. Since the structure is defective, the functional and fiscal performance is bound to the defective.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The concern of this paper has been to find a strategy for improved rural livelihood in the Rivers South East Senatorial District. Grassroots development is an important means of securing political and social stability not only within the Local Government Senatorial Districts in Rivers State but the country in general. From the findings of the study the following recommendations are made:

Policies of spatial closure should be set up for the main purpose of uniting the town and countryside by means of effective interaction between the local government headquarters and its hinterland. The creation of four new local government areas out of the present Khana local government area. These should be based on the former four administrative set up of Bori Urban, Bobbe, Ken-khana and Nyor-khana districts with headquarters at Bori Town, Babbe, Baen and Taabaa respectively.

A national re-organization of local government boundaries akin to a national system of central places is recommended. This should be within the frame of urban-rural regions

defined in the context of a contiguous zones of effective interaction between the centers and the rural hinterlands. The various boundaries of these regions should not be arbitrary or based mainly on population and cultural affinity. Instead, they should be objective and scientific based on interaction analysis and the propensity for services located at their centers to spread to their hinterlands in respect of an effective usage by the settlements within the hinterlands.

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