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SOCO-ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF EMERGENT NIGER DELTA UNIVERSITY'S 'BEANS-UP' SETTLEMENT

BY

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Abstract

Emergent settlements results from scarcity of houses, presence of virgin lands and borderlines outside the officialdom. The study examined the social and economic activities of Beans-Up settlement at the Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. One hundred questionnaires were administered to residents of the settlement, and eighty-six were retrieved correctly completed. The demographic variables were analyzed with cross-tabulation wile substantial variables were analyzed with the arithmetical mean on a four-point scale. The stored was anchored on the Human Ecology theory. The study found that majority of the residents was students. The main settlement houses were one-sitter, tenement, lodges and shanties. There exist high squatting and cohabitation among residents. The major business of the settlement is providing catering services and housing provision. The University and the settlement seem cooperatively in various ways without official documentation. The settlement has location and security advantage and largely affected by the university's academic activities. The student recommended the acquisition of the settlement and part of the university's staff housing estate. The spring-up of the settlement represent the enterprising nature of the people and the need for survival.

Keywords: NDU's Beans-Up Settlement

Introduction

University communities pull people from different localities and walks of life. There are those who throng such centres of learning for admission placement, for employment purposes, and/or to take the opportunity of increased population and market to provide one service or the other to the teeming population, thereby make a good living. Such migrants include different craftsmen and women, traders, commercial drivers, menial jobs providers, commercial sex workers, etc., and sometimes civil service workers who chose transfer to university towns to avail themselves of continuing education programmes. The motives for such movements and categories of migrants remain inexhaustible.

Many of the migrant population that relocates to such towns do not readily have opportunity for housing services; neither can many of these afford payment for decent accomodation where they exist. Apart from the fact that houses are often in short supply, many Universities are often sited at virgin areas, often away from the city centre, or in urban sprawls, but before long, such places would become urban centres resulting from large immigration or official recognition (Okolocha, 2019). These suburbs often lack well planned houses and so experience challenges of overcrowding in the few available spaces, spring up of unofficial settlements and erection of shanty houses and creation of illegal house extensions becomes eminent (Ingiabuna, 2020).

Niger Delta University was established in the year 2020 with lectures commencing in March 2022 at the then temporary site (Government Secondary school, Amassoma), now christened 'Gloryland campus'. Following this, a large number of staff, students and traders soon relocated to Amassoma, a hitherto riverine rural community. Soon food vendors, land speculators, and other traders and artisans moved in and around the campus. Also, due to the increasing construction works on campus, some vendors, mainly women started to cook and sell food to construction workers on sites and by extension to staff and students. Prominent amongst the food items sold was 'beans' which students not only patronize in their numbers but was believed to be sold cheaper at the campus construction sites.

With time, many of the building projects under construction were completed and occupied, and the authorities evacuated the traders from the campus. Determined to stay in business and within the vicinity of the institution, many traders were attracted to a virgin piece of land besides the institution's quarters, believed to be outside the land acquired by the school authorities. Thus, as it is usual with students, they not only patronize these food vendors in their new location, but nicknamed this emergent settlement as 'Beans-Up – literally meaning plates filled up with beans. Later, some individuals constructed concrete houses for rent to students, staff and other migrants in this emergent bean-up settlement.

Statement of the Problem

Amassoma, like other University towns is growing by leaps and bound, with ever increasing population and construction of both livable and other makeshift houses. With the large influx of people, there is high demand for residential accommodation as well as shops/sheds for small-scale business, and the town was already chocked up and could not accommodate the needs of livable houses and shops from the ever-increasing population. New suburbs such as Tantua-Ama, Ending-Pele, Beans-Up, Efeke-Ama, etc. emerged to accommodate the mass influx, in addition to the neighbouring Ogobiri community. With the increased accommodation challenge in Amassoma and the new layouts, as well as rise in criminal activities now becoming prominent, some residents found Beans-Up settlement as a safe haven, being located besides the campus and accessible only through the school where security patrols were regular. Thus, Beans-Up settlement now provide residential and business accommodation (livable homes, eateries, POS banking services, shops, etc.) to residents. The study thus, examined the socio-economic activities of Beans-Up settlement within the vicinity of Niger Delta University vis-à-vis its contributions to the society and the factor making for the soaring population of this settlement.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to examine the socio-economic activities of Beans-Up settlement located beside the Gloryland campus of Niger Delta University. The specific objectives are:

- To determine the demographic characteristics of the residents.
- Identify the main residential properties in Beans-Up settlement.
- To evaluate the rental values of properties in the settlement.
- To ascertain the socio-economic activities in Beans-Up settlement.
- To evaluate the relationship between Beans-up settlement and the Niger Delta University.
- To unearth the underlying reasons for people's movement into emergent settlement.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- What category of persons is resident in Beans-up emergent settlement?
- What types of houses exist in Beans-up settlement and the occupants?
- What rates are payable in the different properties available?
- Which are the prominent social and economic activities in Beans-up settlement?
- What relationships exist between the Niger Delta University and Beans-Up community?
- What are the espoused factors making living in Beans-up settlement attractive?

Literature Review

Urbanization and Urban Sprawl

Rural-urban, urban-urban, rural-rural migrations, etc. have makes people to move into new locations which has the consequence of altering not only the population of a settlement but also its structure, activities, lifestyles, etc. Urbanization is the shift in status of a settlement from rural to urban status resulting from migration, change in consumption pattern, lifestyle, production, etc. and/or official recognition that are hardly reversible (Allen, 2009; Peng et al, 2010). The most remarkable differences between the duo are perhaps that urban centres are seen to be denser, larger, impersonal, greater, growing faster, more sophisticated and largely homogeneous. Urbanization represents one of the most profound socio-economic, political, developmental and environmental challenges ever experienced by humanity since the 20th century till contemporary times and a near irreversible condition (Kessides, 2005).

The dramatic emergence of new towns or settlements owes a lot to perceived opportunities for better healthcare, wealth creation, better infrastructure, security, jobs, etc. The unending growth of these settlements has caused the spring up of slums, new estates in our suburbs, large and mega cities in different parts of the world, unemployment, crimes, new institutions, etc. (Momoh, Opaluwah & Abeera, 2018).

New settlements do not just emerge, they are often created. The UN Habitat (2008) on the state of African cities alerted serious cases of urban sprawl and the emergence of urban corridors in many cities whose existence reflect a reduction of population in rural communities through migration with the consequent effect of further reduction in scarce resource allocation and the emergence of substandard housing (Habitat II, Momoh, Opaluwah & Abeera, 2018).

Emergent Settlements

New settlements do not just emerge, they are often created. Urban settlements are often creations of the elite politicians who

temporarily allocate undeveloped land to the homeless citizens, and leave them to desperation without redeeming their promises to the people (Ingiabuna, 2017). While such communities remain part of the urban enclave, yet they remain disconnected from the formal city due to marginalization. This unhealthy status manifests in socio-economic and social segregation of the people, their security, and support (Matamanda, 2020).

Emergent urban settlements are often left over spaces which migrants or residents often find value in and improvise same to meet their daily life activities/needs with a view to make such places livable (Matamanda, 2020). On their part Mtapuri and Myeni (2020) asserted that lacking in support from authorities the poor are compelled out of desperation to improvise their homes using whatever available materials within reach and skills, yet end up residing in insecure places or communities that make them susceptible to different risks such as threats of demolished, attacked or victimization.

Shortage of livable and affordable spaces in urban centres accentuates the proliferation of emergent settlements to housing burgeoning large urban population of mainly the poor. Such settlements often begin with few makeshift houses at farmlands, green verges, the edges of cities where values of land are relatively low due to absence of facilities/services, industries, etc., and/or away from the city hub (Green & Handley, 2009). The settlements and occupants often experience severe disadvantages at whatever level and finding themselves between the 'lightness' and legality, safety, and threats of eviction, destruction, and death (Yaftachel, 2009).

Emergent settlements exemplifies sprawling urban development at the borders of urban councils though could sometimes benefit from some services of councils yet existing on the margins of formality and informality and at the mercy of the authorities (Lall, et al, 2017:64).

Theoretical Framework
Human Ecology Theory

Methodology

The descriptive research design was adopted as it suits the explorative nature of the study. The descriptive research design aided the study to identify appropriate and desired issues for inclusion in the Beans-up settlement study. Since the overriding objective of the study was to examine the socio-economic activities of the settlement, a purpose-designed questionnaire was utilized to illicit information from respondents in this area. The instrument was designed to capture (a) the socio-demographic variables of respondents, (b) the social and economic activities of the emergent settlement, and (c) the structure/layout of the settlement. Two student resident accompanied the researcher in the administration of questionnaires. The cross-tabulation statistical tool was deployed to determine the existence or not of relationship between variables, while the mean was used to determine the strength of variables relative to the weakness of others. In order to make decisions from results obtained, the mean responses were computed on a four-point scale, thus: 4+3+2+1 - 10/4 = 2.50. Means scores from 2.50 and above was accepted, while those below was rejected.

The sample population consisted of all residents in Beans-Up settlement, estimated to be about 400 hundred. Our sample size was one hundred respondents and these were administered with questionnaires out of which 86 were retrieved s properly completed.

Setting

Data Analysis

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Sex Male	52	60.47
	Female	34	39.53
2.	Age 16-25 Years	33	38.37
	26-35 Years	25	29.07
	36-45 Years	18	20.93
	46 & more Years	10	11.63
3.	Marital Status Single	56	65.12
	Married	19	22.09
	Separated/Divorced	7	8.14
	Widowed	4	4.65
4.	Occupation Student	51	59.30
	Civil Servant	6	6.98
	Company workers	2	2.33
	Self-employed	19	22.09
	Unemployed	8	9.30
5.	Education No formal education	3	3.49
	Primary School	12	13.95
		22	25.58

	Secondary School Undergraduate Postgraduate	38 11	44.19 12.79

The socio-demographic variables of respondents include 52 (60.47%) male and 34 (39.53%) female, with those aged 16-25 years preponderant (33 or 38.37%), 26-35 years (25 or 29.07%), 36-45 years (18 or 20.93%), and those aged 46 years or more (10 or 11.63%). Respondents marital status indicated 56 (65.12%) single, 19 (22.09%) married, 7 (8.14%) as either divorced or separated, and 4 (4.65%) as widowed. The occupation status indicated a preponderant majority of 51 (59.30%) as students, followed by 19 (22.09%) as self-employed. Majority of the respondents had earned some level of formal education, except 3 (3.49%). It is therefore clear that the population of the settlement is mainly students, many of whom are male, and unmarried.

Table 2: Rental Values for Residential Homes and Shops

S/N	Variables	Freq.	Percentage
1.	Tenement houses	27	31.40
2.	Flats (1-seater)	31	36.05
3.	Lodges	18	20.93
4.	Bungalows	-	-
5.	Makeshift	10	11.62

The settlement consisted of 17 tenement houses, 15 blocks of buildings housing one-sitter apartments, 18 buildings as lodges, and over 30 makeshift/shanty houses, many of which serve as shops or bukkas

Table 3: **Annual Rental Values**

S/N	Variables	Annual Rate (1^{st} Payment)	Annual Rate (Subsequent Payment)
1.	Tenement houses	45,000	40,000
2.	Flats (1-seater)	125,000	120,000
3.	Lodges	85,000	80,000
4.	Bungalows	-	-
5.	Makeshift	18,000	18,000

The annual rental value of properties in the settlement varies. However, majority of the rent payable for tenements houses were N45,000 for the first year and N40,000 for subsequent year. For the one-sitter rooms, it ranges between N125,000 for the first year and N120,000 for subsequent year, while the lodges charge N85,000 for the first year and N80,000 for the subsequent years. It is only the makeshift (shanties) were the rate remains N18,000 for both the first and subsequent payments.

Table 4: Major Socio-Economic Activities of Beans-up Residents

S/N	Variables	Freq.	%
	Social Factors		
1.	High rate of squatting/cohabitation	77	89.53
2.		47	54.65
3.	Provision of accommodation for staff and students	73	84.88
4.	High student population/solidarity	82	95.35
5.	**Economic Factors**	53	61.63
6.	Large No. of Food Vendors	23	26.74
6.	Business Centre (POS/Computing Services)	15	17.44
7.	Dealers on Wears/Cosmetics	21	24.42
8.	Timber Dealers	13	15.12
	Farmers		
	Artisans		

Communities often become famous for certain social and/or economic factors and Bens-Up settlement is not different. The social factors in Beans-up settlement include the possibility of squatting and/or male-female cohabitation which is not permitted in the university hostels, and the presence of large number of university students who could also enjoy the school's academic and medicare facilities unrestrained. On the other hand, the place is inundated with large number of food vendors, staff and students of the University. Since the settlement is beside the uncompleted staff quarters which is less than 50 meters from students' hostels in the university, hostel resident easily access and patronizes its services. Also, exist are secretarial services providers and point of sales (POS) operators who provide mini-banking services to residents. Again, the settlement rejects no resident as such dealers on wears, timber products, artisans, farmers, etc. reside and operate their businesses unperturbed. This category of people is not recognized members of the university community and may not be housed for whatever reason within the confines of the university.

Table 5: University and Beans-up Settlement Relationship

S/N	Variables	Options						
		SA (4)	A (3)	SD (2)	D (1)	Total	Mean (X)	Decision
1.	Provides Accommodation to staff and students	33 132	21 63	18 36	14 14	248	2.88	Accepted
2.	University security network covers Beans-up settlement	15 60	19 57	37 74	15 15	206	2.40	Accepted
3.	Provides catering services to university community	41 84	22 66	13 26	10 10	276	3.21	Accepted
4.	University community is availed with SME operations of residents	16 64	20 60	23 46	27 27	199	3.31	Accepted
5.	Residents enjoy electricity power supply from University generators	06 24	09 27	47 94	24 24	169	1.97	Rejected
6.	Environmental sanitation programmes by university is extended to Bean-up settlement	07 28	21 63	34 68	24 24	183	2.13	Rejected
7.	Medicare provided by University is availed to Beans-up residents	13 52	14 42	44 88	15 15	197	2.29	Accepted

Table 5 analyses the relationship between the university and the Beans-up community. It shows that the settlement readily provides housing and catering services to staff and students. The university's security network covers the settlement as well. In addition staff and students are availed with the opportunity staff and students and other residents where the need arise. Thus, variables 1,2,3,4 and 7 were accepted while 5 and 6 were rejected as the University neither

Table 6: Factors making living in Beans-up settlement attractive

S/N	Variables	Options						
		SA (4)	A (3)	SD (2)	D (1)	Total	Mean (X)	Decision
1.	Location	25 100	21 63	19 38	21 21	222	2.58	Accepted
2.	Inadequate security network	13 52	14 42	30 60	29 29	183	2.13	Rejected
3.	Availability of Essential Services	18 72	26 78	21 42	21 21	213	2.48	Accepted
4.	Better structural design of buildings	09 76	13 51	39 58	25 21	206	2.40	Rejected
5.	Neighbourhood attributes	33 132	19 57	18 36	16 16	241	2.80	Accepted
6.	Largely affected by University's academic activities	23 92	14 42	30 60	19 19	213	2.48	Rejected
8.	Unregulated sales/activities	24 96	29 87	22 44	11 11	238	2.77	Accepted

The movement of people to any settlement or location is often influenced by certain factors present. In the case of the Beans-up settlement, the place has location and security advantage compared to neighbouring Amassoma and Ogobiri communities. Also, the property owners have succeeded in connecting the settlement to the national grid and the provision of borehole water supply. Residents also enjoy better interrelationships with one another through cooperative environmental and security services, sharing borehole water supply, and joint leadership between landlords and tenants, through association meetings where decisions are taken.

On the other hand, structural design of buildings is not controlled here hence many buildings are haphazardly constructed. Again, residents' survival is dependent on the University. Strikes and other turbulent times in the institution where students are sent home or school is closed down for a relatively long timer severely affect the fortunes of residents and property owners.

Discussion of Findings

Beans-Up is an emergent settlements arising from demand for housing by staff and students due to housing scarcity, and high student patronize of eateries provided by food vendors beside the Niger Delta University at Wilberforce Island in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Though accessible only from the University campus, it remains outside the authority of the school, and owned and operated by private land speculators and other small scale business men and women.

With a population estimated to be bout 500, it is predominantly populated by students, many of who paid school fees late so could not have a place in the university's official hostels, and some who find the hostel facilities not too comfortable. The houses are Beans-Up are mainly the one-sitter apartments (self-contain), tenement houses, lodges, and shanties, whose annual rental value ranges from N40-45 for tenement houses, N120-125,000 for one-sitter apartments, N80,000 for ages, and N18,000 for the temporary (makeshift) houses.

The social and economic activities of Beans-Up settlement are permissive squatting and cohabitation of residents and high communal values of joint leadership and sharing of facilities which breeds solidarity amongst the residents. The settlement's major activity is sale of processed food, secretarial and mini-banking services (POS). The study found that without entering into documentation, the university and the settlement had had a working relationship through the provision of housing and catering services to staff and students, provision of medicare and security services by the University. However, the university generated power system is not extended to the settlement as well as the sanitation programme.

The settlement remains attractive to the people because it is located just beside the University and covered by the University's security patrol. It is affected by the ups and downs of the university as rental houses remain unoccupied and food vendors stay out of business as soon as there was prolonged holiday due to strikes and other hostilities on campus or environment.

Recommendations

There is the urgent need for the University authorities to acquire the land and properties of the settlement and covert same to be part of its staff hosing estate as it is located within the completed staff housing estate of the institution. Alternatively, the school could extend its environmental sanitation programme and school powered electricity to the settlement where residents may be made to pay for. The settlement represents the enterprising nature of men and women who venture to provide catering services to students as well as provision of livable houses and shanties to other for rental purposes.

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