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The Urban Social Environment

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Section A

Defining and Describing the Social Environment
The Social Environment

- Human interactions

- Mediated through formal and informal associations or groupings of people

- The interacting and interrelating networks of associations
  - Constitute the building blocks of society
  - Help individual members find identity and meet their basic needs
  - Mediate between the individual and the society

- The question in this course:
  - What is unique about the urban social environment?
Components of the Social Environment

- Family (types and roles)
- Associations (formal and informal/networks)
- Neighborhoods (location, structure, members)
- Institutions (education, religion, economic, communication systems ...)
- Norms (stated and actually performed)

Photo by BASICS Nigeria, USAID
Components

- Common history
- Culture: beliefs, technology, organization, “local knowledge”
- Leadership and power structures
- Economic pursuits, resource availability, resource distribution

Photo by BASICS Nigeria, USAID
Social Change

- Urbanization is one of the major social changes sweeping the globe, especially in developing countries

- Urbanization brings fundamental changes in the ways people live

- Increasingly, cities are becoming the world’s starkest symbol of the maldistribution of resources, both physical and societal

- These inequalities have serious social and health impacts

- What is the nature of this urban social environment?
  - (World Resources: The Urban Environment, 1996-1997)
Social Factors

- Now there is increasing evidence of the role of social factors in influencing health, including ...
  - Alienation
  - High rates of unemployment
  - Ethnic tensions, and
  - Urban poverty
Social-Physical Interaction

- The effects of the urban social environment are by no means independent of physical conditions; they are interrelated.

- The political and economic structures within a city fundamentally determine the distribution of and access to the physical, biological, and social benefits that cities provide.
An Example of Ibadan, Nigeria

- Two kinds of cities
  - Pre-colonial (indigenous)
  - Colonial/post-colonial metropolis

- Ibadan: an indigenous city

- 1850-1950
  - From war camp to administrative hub
  - From 50,000 to 500,000 people

- Heterogeneous from the start, but now more so with indigenous and “foreign” areas

- Today, nearly 4 million inhabitants
Eastern Ibadan View—A Mix of Communities

- Inner Ibadan - Indigenous core
- Bodija - Middle class housing estate
- Agbowa - University staff; student housing
- Mokola - Lower middle class; civil servants
- Sabo - Community of “foreigners”

Visit [Ibadan on Google Maps](https://www.google.com/maps) to explore aerial views of the different neighborhoods.
Inner Core—Extended Family Compounds

- Mud houses
- Iron sheeting roofs
- Congested
- Indigenous population
- Family compounds (up to 700 members in extended families)
- Many work in agriculture
Bodija—Middle Class Housing Estate

- North of the core
- Developed beginning in 1940s and 1950s
- Grid layout with individual houses
- Landscaping, recreational areas, shopping areas
- Residents: higher-level civil servants, professors
- Social interaction: indoor socializing, professional networks, religious networks
Agbowo: University Staff, Student Housing

- Former cluster of farming hamlets
- Lower-quality housing
- 1-room or 2-room flats
- Lower middle class, university staff and students
- Residents do not feel strong community bonds
- Social interaction is primarily University-based
Sabo and Mokola: “Foreigners” in the City

- **Sabo**
  - Tightly clustered homes
  - Hausa community arrived generations ago to oversee cola nut trade
  - Strong community bonds

- **Mokola**
  - Planned grid layout
  - Lower middle class - tradespeople, clerical
  - Primarily renters
  - No strong community bonds
Section B

Focus on Social Groups: The Family and Voluntary Associations
The Good and the Bad

- Social support in urban areas can ...
  - Help kids stay in school
  - Or encourage them to join gangs

- Urbanization brings about changes in family roles

- It also leads to the creation of new social institutions and networks through which people try to meet their basic needs

- In the following sections we will examine:
  - The family
  - Social networks
  - Neighborhoods
Family Changes

- New norms and morals

- Pregnancy and childbirth outside marriage and the traditional family support system has become a common feature of urban Nigerian life

- With migration to urban areas, people are no longer under the influence of traditional sexual norms and morals

- Premarital sexual activity has become more pronounced

- In fact, a new norm has emerged—becoming pregnant prior to marriage to prove fertility
Street Trading—New Family Roles

- At tollgates and motorparks in Ibadan, one finds young children hawking food, water, and other commodities.

- While hawking by children is an old institution, it has become more pronounced in recent times of economic hardship.

- It is a family survival mechanism that children become breadwinners.
Rural to Urban Movements

- Rural to urban movements from small towns to Lagos for business, holidays, and ceremonies

- Different sexual norms and risks encountered in the urban setting

Photo by William Brieger
Family Networks May Protect

- But people tend to visit and stay with extended family members and friends from their hometowns.

- Thus there may be more circumspect social and sexual networking that may protect people from HIV, violence, and other urban problems.

Photo by William Brieger
Various voluntary associations are created to aid the newcomer to integrate into urban life.

- These include religious societies, trade unions, recreation clubs.
- And, perhaps the most important, ethnic or hometown associations (Mabogunje, 1976).
Voluntary Association Functions

- Mayo (1969) identified three functions of West African urban voluntary associations:
  1. Substituting the function of the rural extended family
  2. Functioning as an agent of social control
  3. Assisting in the adaptation of rural migrants to urban life

Photo by William Brieger
More Functions: Serving Member Needs

- Most urban voluntary associations focus on the internal expressive needs of members by ...
  - Providing financial assistance
  - Settling disputes
  - Enhancing knowledge and skills
  - Making business contacts
  - Maintaining cultural norms and practices
Types of Association

Barnes (1975) identified five types of voluntary associations in metropolitan Lagos

- Religious groups (which were most prevalent)
- Primary or ethnic associations
- Work-related groups (including unions and market associations)
- Recreational groups (e.g., involving sports, hobbies)
- Esusu or revolving credit and savings associations
New Formal Social Networks—Churches

- Churches, especially the evangelical variety, become a social nexus of urban life in Nigeria, replacing the extended family and other rural institutions

- Churches look after the welfare of members and even promise wealth and riches
  - The “prosperity churches”

Photo by William Brieger

Photo by William Brieger
A major reason why urban voluntary associations exist is to help meet basic social needs of members that the urban public administration cannot address.

- Low-quality services, poor utilization of public services
- Private education and health grow
Informal—Parking Boys of Kenya

- Orphans, runaways
- Charge people to guard their cars
- Sniff glue

[BBC News Photo Essay about Parking Boys of Kenya](https://www.bbc.com)
Section C

Urban Neighborhoods
What is a neighborhood?

A geographical entity with some form of identity arising from a name, a history

Implications of a residential area, but may be mixed use
- There may be employment for some
- Most need to go out to find work, education

Both old and new
- Rapid urban growth: slums, inequality
- Traditional land rights no longer exist
Urban Anonymity

- As Rifkin (1987) pointed out:
  - Urban dwellers often share only a common location, they have little common interest or framework for joint action.
  - It is difficult to maintain community involvement because poor urban communities lack a common understanding and social infrastructure.
  - The urban poor often lack land titles, knowledge of government aid, contact with social welfare agencies, and, most important, confidence to overcome any or all of these barriers.
Basic Characteristics of Community

- **Interaction**
  - How often and with what number of neighbors do people visit and interact?

- **Identity**
  - How much do people feel they belong to a community and share a common destiny with others?

- **Linkages**
  - What connections exist with the outside to bring news and resources from the larger community back into the neighborhood?

## Types of Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focal problems</th>
<th>Offensive</th>
<th>Defensive</th>
<th>Hidden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environment, public services</td>
<td></td>
<td>Neighborhood disturbances, e.g., drugs</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility, availability</td>
<td>Immediately visible through cultural, media activities</td>
<td>Through informal contacts, e.g., neighborhood groups</td>
<td>Personal meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Collective action for change</td>
<td>Wait for a solution “from above”</td>
<td>Individual, case work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>Active middle-class minority</td>
<td>Conscientious working-class majority</td>
<td>Economically underprivileged minority</td>
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# Ibadan Residential Zones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social characteristics</th>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Integration</th>
<th>Linkage</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inner core</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Hidden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing estate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Offensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Defensive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Landlords and Tenants

- Transitional neighborhoods are characterized by landlords and tenants

- Landlord associations in an Ibadan neighborhood
  - Become an informal government
  - Meet regularly and address issues of community safety

- Tenants have little sense of identity
  - Feel they can be turned out anytime someone who will pay higher rent shows up
  - Believe they have no rights
Nairobi Slums—We Won’t Leave

“I am already used to the kind of life of Kibera. I can buy sukumawiki (kale) for five shillings ($0.07), which will satisfy my family ... (in) another place, it will force me to be buying sukumawiki for twenty shillings”

“I would never move from Kibera because the place you start life from is where you stay, even if it is a bad place”

“I don’t see anything bad with Kibera, and people in this area also live a united life”
Boredom, Sex, and AIDS

- An estimated 20 percent of the people between the ages of 15 and 49 in Nairobi’s Kibera slum are infected with HIV, although the actual number could be much higher.

- The area is extremely crowded, with as many as 1 million people living on just one square mile of land, and there are few activities for people to participate in besides sex.

Photo by William Brieger
Migrant Neighborhoods—Re-creating Home

- Hausa migrants in southern Nigerian cities provide an example of the degree to which ethnic association can go beyond small voluntary associations to the re-creation of a nearly complete Hausa society in the new setting (Cohen, 1969)

- A concern about maintaining trade monopolies and ethnic and religious customs resulted in a network of Hausa communities in the then Western Region of Nigeria
Hausa Neighborhoods (Sabo)

- This network held monopoly over major stages of trade, especially in kola nuts.

- A complex political and social structure evolved to fend off rivalry from local Yoruba traders.

- The Hausa of the Sabo community in Ibadan maintain cultural exclusiveness from the host Yoruba society.
Section D

Urban Governance
Urban Administration and the Poor

- In theory, urban administration should be designed to fill the gaps in services for transitory and poor urban communities.

- Ironically, while modern welfare services, such as education, health, sanitation, markets, art, and recreation emanate from urban centers (Mabogunje, 1977), basic weaknesses in African urban administration mean that the poorest areas in these cities are inadequately served (Mabogunje, 1976).
Discharging Duties

- Interestingly, one of the key reasons why municipal councils have not been able to discharge their duties effectively is due to the lack of ... 
  - Enlightened participation of all members of the community
  - Public-spirited leadership
Another problem of urban administrations is that the large number of poor and unemployed residents do not contribute to the tax base, and yet they make considerable demands on urban services.

- In some cases, national ministries take over provision of these services...
- But this results in fragmentation of responsibility, inefficiency, and a delay in long-term development (Mabogunje, 1976)
Revenue Problems

- In Nigeria, local councils or Local Government Areas (LGAs) depend on subvention from the federal government, and to some extent the states, for subventions that are required to cover their basic and recurrent expenses.

- Although LGAs are entitled to raise local revenue from taxes, rents, licenses, and rates, this usually amounts to less than 20% of their annual budgets (Ohwona, 1990).

- It is usually from local revenue that LGAs are able to provide services such as primary health care, refuse disposal, management and sanitation of markets, and provision of primary school education (Adeyemo, 1990).
Section E

Hometown Associations
Transneighborhood and Transregional

- People develop networks over wider geographical ranges based on ethnicity, work, and religion
- Hometown associations (HTAs) welcome people to the city
- These also channel resources back to the villages
Not Geographically Confined

- Communities in Nigeria are not confined territorially

- Hometown associations link descendants of a common historical settlement across regions and countries

- The association is based in the hometown where annual meetings address the needs of the community

- Branch or satellite associations can be found in most major urban areas in the country

- These branches provide mutual support for those living “abroad”
Loyalty to Home

- Some HTA member families have lived in the urban centers for two or three generations.
- Some come to the urban area mainly to earn money on which they will retire back home.
- Regardless of length of residence in the city, they all have a strong sense of loyalty to the hometown.
- They pay annual fees into the coffers of the HTA whether they live in the city or town.
- This raises the concern of the level of social and political commitment that members have to their urban area of residence.
• HTAs or “progressive unions” saw as a mission the need to bring “modern” ideas and services from the cities to their hometowns

• But in the urban areas they have also worked to bring these same “modern” functions to their members because of failure by urban administrations to provide for residents (discrimination?)
HTAs Provide Where Government Fails

- Infrastructure improvements
- Social and cultural welfare
- Public safety
- HTAs become “shadow states” at home and abroad

Photo by William Brieger