

HIGH-DENSITY HOUSING POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN LARGE AFRICAN CITIES: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Abstract

Cities of Africa are growing rapidly in many spheres but the greatest manifestation is the growth of human settlements caused by increasing population due to migration. The settlement growth trajectory has taken various forms, for some, it is through outward sprawl from the city, while others have done so through densification of existing settlements or building new ones that are more compact and multi-story. This paper reviews housing policies and practices in largest African cities to establish how these two issues interrelate to housing densification within the urban context. This paper is based on a case-study approach and its aim was a general overview based on seven cities. It was carried out through a critical evaluation of urban development literature and other materials on African cities with a focus on demographics, political and socio-economic parameters as factors of policy and practise vis-a-vis their implication on the physical characteristics of settlements in cities. A number of significant features within these theme areas that have had great impact on densification patterns of settlements in contemporary time have been discussed: Rapid population growth and sustained demand for housing; political ideologies and governance; the embrace of the neoliberal economics; the rise in private sector participation in housing provision; land ownership systems and natural physical features have been shown to some of the major factors that determine the nature of housing density in settlements. The forecast on population and urbanization patterns in Africa, indicate that there will be increased demand for housing thus densification of settlements in the coming decades. Consequently, the focus of policy and practice should lay emphasis on ways that housing densification can be managed to create liveable cities.

Key words: High-density / densification, low and middle-income, settlements, housing policies, housing practices.