

The Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Future for Nigeria's Urban Environment: A Railway Strategy

I. A. Ademiluyi and O. A. Dina*

*Department of Geography and Regional Planning, Faculty of the Social Sciences, Olabisi
Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria
E-mail: <woleademiluyi2005@yahoo.com>, *<adeoludina@yahoo.com>*

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ABSTRACT The United Nations indicates that developing nations like Nigeria have their urban cities harboring about forty percent (40%) of their population. Future estimates for developing countries show that the figure will increase to fifty-three percent or more (53%) by the year 2020. This is a source of worry going by the problems and challenges presently faced in ensuring that urban areas of Nigeria become functional, livable, and aesthetically pleasing. Urbanization has been the primary reason commonly advanced by scholars for the present deplorable state of many cities in the country. While this article does not contest this view, it however suggests that urbanization itself may have been further driven over the years by the underdeveloped state of public transportation particularly rail transport. Although railways may have fueled the initial growth of urban areas in the colonial and early post colonial period due to its strategic place in the mobility of Nigerians at that period in time, its long period of neglect may be critical in explaining the over-urbanization and decay in major cities of Nigeria. Modern rail system as existing in many of the developed countries has not only become a tool for urban containment and regional balance, it remains crucial to attaining and maintaining a sustainable urban environment. This article concludes that any effort aimed at improving the face of Nigerian cities as the nation progresses to sustainable growth and meeting the millennium development goal in 2015 may in part depend on a successful revitalization and modernization of the rail system.