

Imagining Enugu as classroom for theological education in SIST

A trans-disciplinary approach.

Jude C. Nnorom

Abstract

Enugu, the *coal city*, offers hermeneutical and pedagogical resources for re-imagining the theological curriculum of Spiritan International School of Theology (SIST) in Enugu. *Enugu* is the capital city of Enugu State, Nigeria. With a 2018 estimated population of over 1 million, *Enugu* is projected to grow to over 2 million by 2050! Like other African cities, the urbanisation of *Enugu* presents complex socio-economic and infrastructural challenges that will exacerbate urban vulnerabilities. Does the theological curriculum of SIST equip her students for *Enugu*'s exponential growth? Should SIST "urbanise" her theological curriculum? Can SIST articulate a response to the urbanisation of *Enugu*, using a trans-disciplinary curriculum that transcends disciplinary boundaries? This article proposes *Enugu* as a classroom for trans-disciplinary theological education and formation in SIST. It applied a qualitative research methodology of interviews, site visits, and documentary analysis, to propose ways of realising an urbanised theological curriculum at SIST.

Key words: Enugu, theological education, Spiritan International School of Theology, urban mission

1. Introduction

The notion of a city as classroom may seem an oxymoron! Conventionally, a classroom is a space where education is mediated through a teacher-student medium. The teacher educates, passing on knowledge, and the student 'banks' almost as a "passive recipient" (Freire, 1970:45). Classrooms mediate learning through pre-determined curricula that either ignore or draw minimally from other nuanced epistemic sources within their spatial milieu. Engaging cities like *Enugu* as a theology classroom requires what Franz Fanon described as "shifting the geography of reason" (Fanon, 1968:146). Intentionally paying attention to the "voices and thinking that come from unexpected spaces" (Gibson, 2011:6) because such shifts and intentions unravel the potentials of cities as spaces for "a new way of knowing [and] resources for liberating theological education" (De Beer, 2012:251-277). Here, liberation is the critical assessment of the context of *Enugu* city, and the curriculum of Spiritan International School of Theology (SIST) as a theological In-

stitute, located within this context. I argue that focussing on *Enugu* as a classroom, could assist SIST with its mission – *Evangelizare pauperibus* (Evangelisation of the poor) and reveal capacities and abilities for discerning the various incarnations of God in the city. These abilities will enable SIST's graduates to interrogate the troubling narrative that African cities are overcrowded, ethically neutral, anonymous and even amoral!

Yet, the challenge is not just the densification and gentrification of African cities but the quietude of theology, in the discourse about urban Africa's fractures and futures. Arguably, this silence does not acknowledge the challenges of urban Africa, her poor socio-economic, spatial and infrastructural state, and their effect on urban dwellers. SIST could disrupt this silence by initiating a theological conversation on *Enugu's* fractures and futures, by intentionally adopting a trans-disciplinary curriculum in which "different academic disciplines work jointly with practitioners to solve real-world problems" (Klein, 2001:4). Such a curriculum has the advantage of advancing a theological re-imagination and dialogical methodology, which some scholars termed "the *African Palaver* – a joint theological research project with a clear theme, purpose and objective" (Kasonga, 1988:198; Mulefo, 1996:139; Orobator, 2014:9). *Enugu* as classroom for an African urban theological palaver has the potential of unleashing Christian theological imaginaries and values using a pedagogy that draws from the ordinary and everyday experience of *Enugu's* *citadins* (Lefebvre, 1996:34). Those urban dwellers, especially the poor and marginalised who refuse to be excluded from *Enugu's* urban reality, and whose knowledge and expertise in feeling and reading the city, are often ignored in urban discourses. They offer SIST a lens for advancing a "theology as big as the city" (Bakke, 1997:30).

This article stems from the author's affiliation to SIST as an alumnus who benefitted from her theological training and formation, but who is also aware of the changing dynamics of contemporary mission. This article argues that *Enugu's* fractures and futures are intriguing contexts for developing new theological languages, tools and methods for missiological education at SIST. It is a contribution to the emerging field of African urban theology within the discipline of practical theology, and is part of the research project, *Urban Africa 2050: Imagining theological education/formation for flourishing African cities*. The article will begin by briefly exploring *Enugu* city, the context where SIST is birthed, introduce SIST, and finally recommend pathways for the re-imagination of SIST's theological curriculum using a trans-disciplinary methodology. In a self-critical manner, the author acknowledges that I am neither resident in *Enugu* city nor a faculty member of SIST. Nevertheless, I am an alumnus of SIST and a member of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit.

2. Enugu: The Coal City

Enugu is the capital of Enugu State. It is “located approximately at latitude 06° 30 N and longitude 07° 30 E in the Southern part of Nigeria.” (Iyi, 2014:44-51). *Enugu*, is named after Udi hill tops, and is translated from the Igbo words *Enu* (High) and *Ugwu* (Hill). Enugu State is one of the 36 states of the Nigerian federation and arguably one of the earliest urban centres in Igbo land and Nigeria. *Enugu* is called the “coal city” following the discovery and mining of coal in commercial quantities in 1909 (Iyi, 2014; Nwalusi et al., 2017; Emodi, 2018). The coal city served as the capital city of the former East Central State (1967-1976); the defunct Republic of Biafra (1968-1970); old Anambra state (1976-1991) and from 1996, as the capital of Enugu State.

According to the Nigerian National Population commission (NPC), *Enugu* had a population of 722, 664 people in 2006. However, this figure is contested. Scholars, Dickson Nwalusi, Christopher Anierobi and their colleagues at the University of Nigeria Enugu campus (UNEC), who research *Enugu* urban, argue that this figure does not reflect the actual population of the coal city. They argue that *Enugu* continues to witness natural population growth and rural-urban migration. These and other factors contribute to its annual population growth of 2.85% (Nwalusi et al., 2017). In *Urban housing inequality and the proliferation of informal settlements among formal neighborhoods in Enugu, Nigeria*, Nwalusi and his colleagues further argued that “most of the residential areas in the City such as: Ogbete, GRA, Achara Layout, Uwani, Abakpa, etc., were planned and built according to the grid-iron pattern of colonial era” (Nwalusi et al., 2017). These residential areas were the focus of the National housing survey of the NPC, which did not capture the informal settlements in the city indicating that some population of the city were not counted (Nwalusi et al., 2017).

Yet, according to Edgar Pieterse, “The shanty city is by and large the real African city” (Pieterse, 2013:21). Census contestation does not affect the coal city only, but the entire Nigerian state. The former chairman of the NPC, Festus Odimegwu once argued that Nigeria has never conducted a credible census. Perhaps, because her revenue sharing formula correlates revenue allocation from oil, to the population density of her federating states (Fawehimni, 2018). Contested population data is not unique to Nigeria but also affects the African continent in general and her cities in particular. In *Rogue Urbanism*, Edgar Pieterse argues, “The African city remains an elusive mirage clouded by limited data and inadequate theoretical approaches that prevent researchers and urbanists from coming to terms with the immensely complex but also generative dynamism of the spatial alchemy that can only be sensed there” (Pieterse, 2013:33). Several factors are responsible for the limited data on the population of African cities, including circular migration, connecting

data to financial gains, under-funded statistical bodies, political interference etc. (Sandefur & Glassman, 2014). Such contestations and struggles should motivate theology to advance an African theological palaver, rather than remaining silent.

In 2009, by an act of the state legislature, Enugu State government established, *Enugu Capital Territory Development Authority* (ECTDA). This body was tasked to advance and supervise 'developmental' initiatives within the three Local government areas of the coal city, *Enugu East, Enugu North and Enugu South*. ECTDA has a mandate "to prepare an updated and comprehensive master plan for a New Enugu which will be modern, serene, business-friendly, with functional infrastructure and public services" (ECTDA, 2015). The existence of ECTDA offers SIST an opportunity to unpack the details of this proposed Master plan, incorporating insights from different disciplines and vulnerable urban dwellers. It is an invitation to SIST and other theological institutes in *Enugu* to theologise from their spatial location, by interrogating the urban vision of Enugu State government.

Migration into *Enugu* exposes different aspects of urban vulnerability, inadequate and precarious housing, unemployment and other social stresses. *Enugu* is estimated to have an annual growth rate of 2.85%, and recorded a population of 1, 006 593 in 2018, with estimates suggesting about 1, 402 075 in 2030 and 2, 435 754 in 2050, (UNDESA, 2018). The UNDESA 2018 report suggests that "some of the fastest growing urban agglomerations are cities with fewer than 1 million inhabitants," and the coal city falls into this category. Her urban population growth curiously unravels questions of infrastructural capacity to meet the demands of her growing population, food security, youth unemployment, spatial justice and ecological stress. *Enugu's* fractures and futures beckons on SIST, other theological institutes and churches in the city to engage the coal city's spaces of contestation and struggle.

3. SIST: Evangelizare Pauperibus (Evangelisation of the Poor)

Spiritan International School of Theology (SIST) Attakwu Enugu is located within the Akegbe-Ugwu autonomous community in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State. SIST is a missionary theological (missiological) institute that belongs to the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, also known as Spiritans in the West African region. SIST's motto is, *Evangelizare Pauperibus* (the evangelisation of the poor) which is also the mission of the Spiritans, a religious order in the Catholic Church founded in France in 1703 in response to urban vulnerabilities within an 18th century city of Paris. Spiritan theological education and formation are grounded in the formation programme of future priests within the Catholic tradition. SIST is one of the Spiritan theological institutes in Africa and was established in 1987. It was officially opened on the 10th December 1988 as a contextual missiological institute

that will “effectively address the contemporary demands of mission and yet take into account African realities” (SIST, 2013). SIST forms priests and religious laywomen and men to become vanguards of new mission possibilities, not held back by “a form of Christianity bound up in its doctrine and discipline” (Éla, 2001:5). Her theological and formation programme “aims principally to the priestly formation of Spiritan religious missionaries and other missionaries belonging to clerical institutes” (SIST, 2018). Through her theological programme, SIST seeks to engage the rapid changes in Africa, which presents challenges and opportunities for the incarnation of the Gospel message. Her theological curriculum seeks to discern what God is calling the church to do and become in these changing realities of Africa (SIST, 2018). SIST’s student body are not only from Nigeria but also other African countries, indicating the exciting potential for snowballing urban theological palaver in Africa.

SIST’s curriculum is designed and draws from Catholic theological resources and guidelines. *Optatam Totius* (1965), the 2nd Vatican council’s decree on priestly training; *Pastores Dabo vobis*, (1992) John Paul 11 post-synodal exhortation; *Ratio fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (the gift of the priestly vocation) 2016; and a host of other ecclesiastical sources. As a theological institute, belonging to the Spiritans, SIST also enriches her curriculum with the *Guide for Spiritan formation*, which advances the integral religious and missionary formation of future Spiritan missionaries paying close attention to the poor and marginalised. These resources are motivational factors for articulating a theological response to urban spatiality and disparities in *Enugu*.

SIST’s present curriculum offers “a one year certificate in Theology, a two year diploma certificate in theology, which aims to bring theology to the non-expert, and a three year higher diploma in Theology” (SIST, 2018). SIST is affiliated to the University of Nigeria Nsukka, which awards successful candidates a Bachelor’s degree in Religion and Cultural studies. She is also affiliated to Duquesne University of the Holy Ghost, Pittsburgh Pennsylvania in the United States of America, from which qualified SIST graduates obtain a Master of Arts degree in Theology (Odozor, 2014:42). With her affiliation to these universities and commitment to the formation of missionaries, SIST’s theological curriculum is regularly evaluated. Degrees awarded to SIST graduates from both academic institutions ensure that the curriculum reflects both their academic values and is also enriched by SIST’s missiological character. In my interview with Fr. Bonaventure Ugwu the Director of SIST, he mentioned that SIST is pursuing accreditation with the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) to award its own bachelor and post graduate degrees, given its annual intake of students, academic curriculum, equipped library and qualified faculty.

4. Enugu as classroom for SIST

How can *Enugu* become a classroom for SIST? Should SIST's theological education and formation be mediated within the hustle and bustle of city life, or should the "lived vitalities" (Pieterse, 2013:23) of the inhabitants of *Enugu*, its informal settlements and slums become epistemic resources for an African theological palaver at SIST? A palaver that will transform and be transformed by the curriculum of SIST, drawing from the living context of the coal city's urban dwellers. This kind of palaver employs a pedagogical method that speaks to the core of theological inquiry as *Fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding). The lived vitalities of the urban dwellers of the coal city are indeed epistemic resources that could be theologised using what Jean-Marc Éla calls "another language of the Gospel" (Éla, 2001:5). A language that embodies the unique urban experience of *Enugu's citadins* and seeks to transform these experiences in the light of the Gospel imperatives of liberation and emancipation. In the Apostolic Exhortation, *the Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis proposed that liberation and emancipation of the human person indicates that priority should be given to "actions which generate new processes in society and engage other persons and groups who can develop them to the point where they bear fruit in significant historical events" (Pope Francis, 2013). A new theological language is needed to engage urbanising Africa. In order to integrate such a language into her theological curriculum, SIST will need to interact with ECTDA. Through posing appropriate context specific and incarnational questions to ECTDA and other stakeholders in the coal city, her theological curriculum will become transformative, equipping students with the necessary language and skills needed for liberation and emancipation. It will help them acquire urban theological language, tools and accessories that will both acknowledge local experiences, and empower urban dwellers to reclaim their agency and right to the coal city.

Positioning the coal city as a classroom for SIST, has the potential of unleashing ecumenical and theological collaboration between SIST, and other theological institutes in *Enugu*. The coal city hosts a number of Catholic and other denominations' theological and formation institutes. Surely, each denomination has its confessional focus, which informs their theological and formation curricula. However, there seems to be an absence of an ecumenical theological cluster of these institutions on the fractures and futures of the coal city. An ecumenical theological cluster has the potency of bringing each Christian denomination out from its theological and confessional isolation, to meet the other and to be exposed to novel theological methods. Here, I wish to draw from Bernard Lonergan's definition of a theological method as a "framework of creativity" (Lonergan, 1971:xii). This framework will amplify Christian ecumenical voices in the affairs and running of the coal city.

Without such a framework, these theological institutes will risk being accused of indifference and arrogance in the face of urban vulnerabilities in the coal city!

Such a framework will offer SIST the opportunity to interact with civil and faith-based organisations who are already tackling urban vulnerabilities in the coal city. Here, the experience of organisations such as the Catholic Institute for Development Justice and Peace, (CIDJAB) of the Catholic diocese of Enugu; the Development Education Centre (DEC), dealing with urban gender issues in the coal city; the Institute of Ecumenical Education Enugu (IEED) and other like-minded civil and faith-based organisations comes to mind. I envision an ecumenical theological cluster that involves both the exchange of lecturers and students, and the incorporation of pedagogical methodologies that immerse faculty and students into the stark realities and resilience of vulnerable urban dwellers in *Enugu*. Such a cluster will draw from the unacknowledged capacities and abilities of urban dwellers. Women and men, who despite societal limitations, doggedly navigate the socio economic, infrastructural and spatial exclusions experienced daily in the coal city.

The demographic growth of *Enugu* and its complexities also hold a great potential for fostering solidarity between vulnerable groups, civil society, faith-based organisations and theological Institutions. Solidarity is one of the principles of Catholic social teaching, described as “respect for every human person; the values and cultures of others; the legitimate autonomy and self-determination of others; to look beyond ourselves in order to understand and support the good of other” (Pope John Paul 11:1987). This principle offers SIST a paradigm for living out the Spiritan charism. It intentionally argues for an inclusive ownership of the coal city and advances an integral development of the urban population of Enugu. Solidarity with the *citadins* of *Enugu* will require ‘shifting [of] the geography of reason,’ which contextualises theological education using a transformative paradigm that draws from and speaks to the experience of urban dwellers.

5. Re-Imagining the curriculum of SIST

What will be the structure and content of a re-imagined theological curriculum in SIST? It will among other things merge perspectives from the social sciences, town and urban planning, (De Beer et al., 2017) to un-earth diverse epistemologies that have assisted urban dwellers to navigate the complex reality of living in an urbanising African city. SIST could develop and initiate a participatory process of bringing different disciplines and urban stakeholders together, to uncover with them alternative possibilities for a flourishing coal city. Thus far, this article has attempted to highlight the necessity of advancing an urban theological agenda in the curriculum of SIST as a response to the core mandate of SIST. Failure to advance such a nuanced curriculum in the face of urbanising African cities will be a refusal to

acknowledge the emerging reality of urbanisation in the coal city. My proposal for a re-imagined and trans-disciplinary theological curriculum in SIST is not a criticism of her present theological curriculum, or a denial of her past and present efforts at deconstructing the “truths about God from a post enlightenment Europe” (Ehusani, 1995:108). Rather, it is a theological re-awakening that acknowledges *Enugu*, the coal city as SIST’s context and an intriguing space for theological inquiry.

I propose a curricula structure and content that views *Enugu* as both the subject and object of theological palaver. As subject, by uncovering the hidden potentials of her urban dwellers and as an object on which the redemptive action of the Gospel is expressed. The coal city offers potential possibilities for constructing urban epistemologies while deconstructing existing post-colonial, post independent and post-civil war narratives, which derogates African cities and denies the agency of their dwellers. I propose a re-imagined curriculum that creates opportunities for different kinds of knowledge, from the arts and sciences for transforming the curriculum and the city, using different avenues to respond to God’s call in the urban space. A curriculum that advances a theology from below, which recognises the different incarnations of God in the city and acknowledges the agency of that unnamed “poor but wise man in the city, who saved the city by his wisdom but nobody remembered him” (Ecclesiastes 9:15).

In *The Teaching of Theology in Africa*, Joseph Galgalo argues that “theological reflection and its teaching has not always been the exclusive privilege of seminaries, theological institutions or universities, but is a task carried out by the faithful who share their faith experiences in whatever form is available to them” (Galgalo, 2004:5). The faithful and others could be effective theological interlocutors in the re-imagination of theological education and formation in SIST. SIST’s present theological curriculum like the curricula of other theological institutes “reveals a general scheme that adopts a division of subject areas modelled on the Western theological curriculum both in terms of structure and content, typically Biblical Studies, Theology and Philosophy, Ecclesiastical History, Religion and Missiology, Practical and pastoral studies and Ethics” (Galgalo, 2004:22). Many factors are responsible for this inherited curricula model. Demands for accreditation and affiliation to bigger theological faculties and universities, or in the case of Catholic theological institutes the “Catholic Ecclesiastical polity and policies toward relating the traditional dogma to local realities” (Galgalo, 2004:22). Other factors include inadequate institutional budgets, absence or scarcity of theological educators and, the fact that most theological educators were trained in western theology and its contextual framework. Despite these and other factors, this article argues that the onus is now on theological institutes in Africa to design curricula that will intentionally speak and respond to the reality of their urbanising continent. Curricula that

should aim to produce faith-based actors whose response to Africa's urbanisation is grounded in a theology brewed in the complexities of African cities.

Advocating for a re-imagined curriculum does not entail the proverbial saying of 'throwing away the baby with the bathwater.' No! It rather seeks to critically examine the current curriculum by creating spaces for incorporating social, architectural, economic and other disciplines that will further enhance the academic and ministerial quality of future ministers of the Word and Sacraments. I suppose such a re-imagined theological curriculum in SIST will be a political act because it will be a deliberate choice to recognise and impact the urban context of the coal city through a socio-theological transformation of the lives of her *citadins*.

6. The Politics of Curriculum Design

How can SIST remain faithful to the vision of her founding fathers, and her institutional motto *Evangelizare pauperibus* (Evangelisation of the Poor)? How can *Enugu* become the canvas on which the brush strokes of an incarnational and contextual theology are unleashed? Perhaps, the key could be by intentionally, paying attention to the lived experiences, the *everyday urbanism* (Chase et al 2008; Pieterse 2013), of the dwellers of the informal settlements and slums of *Enugu*. The danger of not grounding her curriculum within the socio-spiritual, spatial and cultural matrix of *Enugu*, is the continuation of an 'imported' theological methodology "which may not satisfy the ultimate yearnings of post-colonial Africa, because the cultural matrix of one is different from the other." (Ehusani, 1995:108). Nigerian theologian, George Ehusani questions the politics of designing theological curricula in Africa. Does the curricula of African theological institutes still embody the spirituality and politics of post-enlightenment Europe whose missionaries brought the faith to Africa, arguably intertwined with the colonial project? Alternatively, can there be a shift towards a curriculum embedded in a spirituality that is truly Christian and truly African (Odozor, 2014: 3), and may I add 'truly urban' which reflects the socio-economic context of African urban dwellers?

Grounding her theological education, pedagogy and methodology within her spatial location will speak to the spirituality of SIST's curriculum. A task and process that understands that no theological curriculum is neutral, but is constantly evaluated in the face of emerging social realities, institutional focus areas, faculty's disciplinary backgrounds, and the ministerial needs of students. In *Reason for the Hope: The Future of Roman Catholic Theologates*, Katarina Schuth highlights the un-neutrality of theological curricula. She argues that some faculty of Catholic theological institutes "believe that the essential task of theological education is to prepare seminarians intellectually and not to train them in ministerial skills" (Schuth, 1989:174). Faculty disagreements about what forms the central focus of

a theological Institute's curriculum, Schuth argues stems from a fear of "an encroachment into the traditional curriculum, often reducing the number of courses taught in systematic or other areas of theology." Sadly, such disagreements fail to recognise that designing a curriculum is a political and spiritual exercise that embodies both the process and goal of education and formation. Such a design should take into account the experience of the learner and his/her context. The spirituality for the establishment of a theological Institute and the choice of the courses taught at the Institute influenced what Steve de Gruchy called the 'politics, preferences and praxis' of curriculum design. In *Theological Education and Social Development: Politics, Preferences and praxis in Curriculum Design*, Steve de Gruchy draws attention to the factors that affect the design of curricula within theological institutes in the African continent. According to de Gruchy, "Curriculum design is by its very nature a question of choice. In a sense, "While one can teach anything, one cannot teach everything - some things are included and other things are excluded." In this sense, de Gruchy argues, "Designing a curriculum is a political act, for the prejudices and passions of the designer of necessity shape what is taught and what is not" (De Gruchy, 2003:454).

Beverly Haddad argues that biblically, we learn that "God makes a political choice by siding with the poor" [and] "acknowledging the poor as prime interlocutors of our theology [is to] understand God and God's work in the world from their perspective." (Haddad, 2016:1-9). Intentionally, the curriculum of a theological Institute that advances the "God-talk" of theology should take into account the experience of the poor for as Jean-Marc Èla argues from the African perspective, it is in this "concrete practices and alternatives [that] the memory and resistance of our people have been articulated" (Èla, 2001:xvii).

De Gruchy further argues that designing a theological curriculum raises another question. Under which theological discipline should a particular course not envisaged previously be placed? Different theological disciplines, Systematics, Missiology, pastoral theology, social ethics, have their core disciplinary preferences, posing the question of where to place a module or course that was not envisaged in the curriculum design. Not only does the location of a new module or course within the already packed curriculum of an institute pose a challenge, its pedagogy also raise some questions. According to de Gruchy, there should be a "congruence between what we are teaching and the way we are teaching it" (De Gruchy, 2003:461). In effect, locating a module or course within an institutional curriculum will necessitate a paradigmatic shift that speaks to the theoretical assumptions of the curriculum. Integrating the context of *Enugu* urban in what is being taught and how it is taught in SIST will be a way of reconciling the politics, preferences and praxis in the design of SIST's theological curriculum. For, it will engage the lived vitalities of *Enugu's* ur-

ban poor, and issues of spatial justice using a trans-disciplinary pedagogical methodology that intentionally advances an alternative vision of *Enugu* as a flourishing coal city. Such a trans-disciplinary curriculum will further prepare SIST graduates for the ongoing urbanisation of Africa, enabling them to develop critical lenses for discerning the complexities of Africa's urban fractures and futures.

7. Trans-disciplinarity: An approach to the re-imagination of SIST's curriculum

Urban theologian Stephan de Beer and sociologist of religion Ignatius Swart argue, that to engage urban complexities, innovations and vulnerabilities, within the South African/African context, there is a need to acknowledge that “the urban reality cannot be sufficiently understood without an understanding of [accompanying] religious expressions” (De Beer & Swart, 2014). The presence of churches, theological institutes, and other forms of religious expressions in *Enugu* offer epistemological and trans-disciplinary resources for engaging the urbanisation of the coal city. It requires theologians to draw inspiration and employ research methods from non-theological disciplines, such as sociology, political science, city planning, architecture and others. The Vatican 11 decree on the church's missionary activity recommended this method. In *Ad Gentes*, the council fathers proposed that “for the sake of the missions, there should be fraternal and generous collaboration on the part of scientific institutes which specialise in missiology and in other arts and disciplines useful for the missions” (*Ad Gentes*: 34). Theoretically, such a method is trans-disciplinary. For, it informs a theological appreciation of the city as a place of refuge and a place to encounter God. It also creates the opportunity for city planners and governments to recognise and appreciate “the role of faith and religion in Urban Africa” (Rakodi, 2014:82-109).

The term *trans-disciplinarity* is credited to the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget. In a 1972 seminar in France, he suggested a “higher stage succeeding interdisciplinary relationships...which would not only cover interactions or reciprocities between specialised research projects, but would place these relationships within a total system without any firm boundaries between disciplines” (Piaget: 1972: 138). In the same year in the United States, Jack Lee Mahan, produced a doctoral dissertation in which he argued that; “trans disciplinary inquiry would be characterised by a common orientation to transcend disciplinary boundaries and an attempt to bring continuity to inquiry and knowledge... to the betterment of man and society” (Mahan, 1970:194-195).

Trans-disciplinarity transcends the exclusive boundaries and epistemic frameworks of academic disciplines, by engaging the different complexities and features of realities. It is “a new way of thinking about, and engaging in inquiry” (Montouri,

2008: ix) or to reassess the previous disciplinary separation of subject and object (Nicolesco, 2015; Bernstein, 2015). Trans-disciplinarity challenges the traditional division and isolation of disciplines, each working in silos. It encourages scholars to employ methodologies from other disciplines, in their production and advancement of knowledge. According to Judith Thompson Klein, trans-disciplinary research is a problem solving method. It is “free of reductionist assumptions about the way things are related, how systems operate, and the expectation that science delivers a single ‘best’ solution or final answers” (Klein, 2015: 14).

However, some scholars have highlighted methodological challenges with trans-disciplinary research. In *Methodological challenges of transdisciplinary research*, Christian Pohl and Gertrude Hirsch Hadorn argue that a major issue with this method is the challenge of “interrelating a broad range of factors, social, legal, natural, technical etc” and actors who perceive social problems differently into a complementary team for achieving a desired goal (Pohl & Hadorn, 2008:111-121). They argue that the complexities of factors and actors and their mutations over time might affect the desired result. Nevertheless, the advantages of trans-disciplinary research are enormous. It broadens disciplinary boundaries and beckons on town and city planners to reflect deeply on the effect of spatial planning on vulnerable urban dwellers and the ecology of the city.

A trans-disciplinary curriculum in SIST will transcend the traditional boundaries of theological methodology and engagement. It will unpack the power dynamics between subjects and objects of research by its conceptual liberation of allowing the innovations and vulnerabilities of the urbanising city of *Enugu* to inform its pedagogy. The alternative will be to maintain the status quo! Which, arguably, is the non-acknowledgement of the exponential growth of the urban population of *Enugu* and, a failure to offer urban theological skills to future faith-based actors in Nigeria and the continent. Arguably, this could make SIST and by extension other African theological institutes yield to the risk of becoming a-contextual, “Impotent and irresponsible” (De Beer, 2012). A trans-disciplinary theological curriculum in SIST has the advantage of reading the complexities of *Enugu* with a new lens. Asking fundamental questions about city planning and budgeting, spatial justice, security of land tenure and unemployment, precarious housing and social infrastructure among others. It will also amplify the critical theological voices of novelists, mural artists, actors and actresses, traditional rulers, womanists, feminists, people living with physical and mental disabilities whose epistemic agency in re-inventing the cities of Africa has unfortunately not been part of African urban debates. A trans-disciplinary curriculum will harness the socio-spiritual capital of faith and ecclesial configurations through a partnership that unveils their prophetic agency in advancing *Enugu* as the flourishing coal city.

8. Proposals for re-imagining the curriculum of SIST

1. *Encountering the complexity of Enugu*: In *Social analysis – Linking faith and Faith and Justice*, Joseph Holland and Peter Henriot proposed a methodology that could assist in encountering the complexities of *Enugu* and other African cities. The Pastoral cycle of insertion, analysis, reflection and action provides a pragmatic tool for a theological methodology that exposes students to the diversity, richness and messiness of *Enugu*. It encourages urban immersion, helping students to discern the various aspects of God's incarnation in the city. The Pastoral cycle contextualises Paulo Freire's "problem posing education" (Freire, 1970:57), where students will pose pertinent questions from their immersive experience about spatial injustice and urban vulnerabilities in the coal city. SIST could deepen her course on Social Ethics, to include an encounter with the coal city, by incorporating Catholic Social Teaching and urban spatial planning using the pastoral cycle. Students could experience urban immersion through field trips and collaborate with students of urban planning from UNEC on creating alternative housing imaginaries for the coal city.
2. *Theology from Below*: A trans-disciplinary theological curriculum will take on board the experience of the seminarians and students at SIST. Its presumption is that the experience of the students provides the space for them to raise fundamental theological questions about city governance, spatial justice and social infrastructure in the city. These questions will enable them to interact with those affected by these issues, inducing a theological reflection and action from below. Theologian, Steve de Gruchy argues that one of the tasks of a theological curriculum is to balance the experience of students (some of whom are from informal settlements and slums) with expert theological knowledge (De Gruchy, 2003:451-466). He argues for a theological education and formation that promotes dialogue (Freire, 1970:63) between the lived experience of its students, and the assumptions of theology.
3. *Consultation on Urban Ministry*: SIST hosts the *Brottier center for Research and Documentation* founded by the pioneer Director of the Institute, Fr. Elochukwu E. Uzukwu. A research centre that aims to advance research on a variety of issues that affects not only the Christian community but also the wider society. Through this centre, SIST hosts a biennial symposium on contextual issues affecting Nigeria and Africa and publishes the *African Journal of Contextual Theology*, while serving as the "birthplace and secretariat of the *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*" (SIST, 2018). A consultation on urban ministry is an opportunity to operationalise the Brottier centre. The centre could help to map theological institutes and churches in *Enugu* by exploring their incarnational and theological footprints in the coal city. How do they envision *Enugu* mov-

ing towards 2050? The proposed consultation on urban ministry should bring together, city planners, ECTDA, government officials, faith-based organisations, theological institutes and civil society actors in *Enugu* in a theological palaver, to discuss, discern and advance imaginaries for a flourishing coal city.

9. Conclusion

In this article, I set out on an imaginative tour of envisioning Enugu as classroom for theological education and formation in SIST. This was neither an attempt to discredit the past nor the present theological curriculum of SIST, but an invitation “to affirm what has been effective and to discard what is outdated or has been proved irrelevant” (Njoroge, 2001:83-104). Most importantly, it is an invitation to be more intentional and deliberate about how SIST does its theological work within the coal city as its socio-theological context. SIST’s location in the coal city is not by accident, for the geography of the place is important – incarnationally and otherwise. Above all, it raises the question about how theology and geography learn from and shape each other within Africa’s urbanising centres.

I am glad that this article and my participation in the *Urban Africa* research project is engendering a conversation between SIST and a member of the department of urban and regional planning at UNEC *Enugu*. Their conversation will hopefully broaden the vision of positioning *Enugu*, the coal city as a theological classroom for SIST.

References:

- Bakke, R. 1997. *A theology as big as the city*. Intervarsity Press, Illinois.
- Bernstein, J.H. 2015. Transdisciplinary: A review of its origins, development and current issues. *Journal of Research Practice* 11(1).
- Catholic Institute for Justice Development and Peace. 2017. Available from: <http://www.cijdap.org/> (Accessed 15 February 2020)
- Chase, J., Crawford, M., & Kaliski, J. 2008, *Everyday urbanism*. Expanded edn; Monacelli Press, New York.
- Congregation of the Holy Spirit. 2013. *Guide for Spiritan formation*. Tipografica S. Pio X, Roma.
- De Beer, S.F. 2012. Urban South Africa: An opportunity for liberating Theological education. *Missionalia* 40(3), 251-277.
- De Beer, S., & Swart, I. 2014. Towards a fusion of horizons: Thematic contours for an urban public theological praxis-agenda in South Africa. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 70(3), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i3.2812>
- De Beer, S.F., & Van Niekerk, A.S. 2017. Transforming curricula into the next century: Doing theology collaboratively with local communities, in *Theology at the University of Pretoria - 100 years: (1917-2017) Past, present and future*. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, suppl. 2, 38(4), a1683. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v38i4.1683>.

- Development Education Center, n.d. Available from: <http://decnigeria.com/> (Accessed 15 February 2020).
- Ehusani, G. 1995. Theology at the service of the people. *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology* 7(1-2), Violence and State security, 98-122.
- Ela, J.M. 2001. *My faith as an African*. Acton Publishers, Nairobi, Kenya.
- Emodi, E.E. 2018., Assessment of urbanization as it affects biodiversity in Enugu, Nigeria. *Journal of Ecology and Environmental Sciences*, 6(2), 10 pages, Viewed 10 April, 2019, from <http://www.rroij.com/open-access/assessment-of-urbanization-as-it-affects-biodiversity-in-enugu-nigeria.php?aid=86905..>
- Enugu Capital Territory Development Authority. 2015. ECTDA mandate. Available <http://ectda.com/> (Accessed 12 April 2019).
- Fawehinmi, F. 2018. The story of how Nigeria's census became weaponized. *Quartz Africa*. Available from: <https://qz.com/africa/1221472/the-story-of-how-nigerias-census-figures-became-weaponized/> (Accessed 10 April 2019).
- Freire, P. 1970. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, 30th anniversary edn. Continuum, New York.
- Galgalo, J. 2004. The Teaching of Theology in Africa: Some reflections on sources, Methods and Curriculum. In LeMarquand, G., Galgalo, G., (eds.), *Theological Education in Contemporary Africa*, pp. 5-27, Zapf Chancery, Eldoret.
- Gibson, N. 2011. *Fanonian Practices in South Africa*, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Press, Scottsville.
- Hadad, B. 2016. Curriculum design in theology and development: Human agency and the prophetic role of the church. *HTS Theologiese studies/theological studies* 72(4), a3432. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i4.3432>.
- Iyi, E.A. 2014. A review of Enugu (Enugu State, Nigeria) urban growth and development. *Quest* 1(3), 44-51.
- John Paul II. 1987. Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. Available from: http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jpienc30121987/sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html (Accessed 15 February 2020).
- Kasonga, W.K. 1988. Toward revisioning Christian education in Africa: A reinterpretation of hope and imagination in light of African understanding of Muoyo. PhD thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary.
- Klein, J.T. 2001. The discourse on Transdisciplinarity: An expanding global field. In Thompson Klein, J., Grossenbacher-Mansuy, W., Häberli, R., Bill, A., Scholz, R.W., Welti, M., (eds.), *Transdisciplinarity: Joint problem solving among Science, technology, and society: An effective way of managing complexity*, pp. 35-45, Birkhauser, Berlin.
- Lefebvre, H. 1996. *Writing on cities*. Blackwell publishers, Oxford.
- Loneragan, B. 1971. *Method in theology*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
- Mahan, J.L. 1970. *Toward transdisciplinary inquiry in the humane sciences*. PhD thesis, United States International University. UMI No. 702145. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Montuori, A. 2008. Foreword: Transdisciplinarity. In Nicolescu, B., (ed.), *Transdisciplinarity: theory and practice* (pp. ix-xvii). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.

- Mulemfo, M.M. 1996. Palaver as a dimension of communal solidarity in Zaire: A missiologi- cal study on transgression and reconciliation. *Missionalia*, 24:2.
- National population Commission. 2006. Official gazette for the national population and housing Survey, Abuja, Nigeria.
- Nicolescu, B. 2002. Manifesto of transdisciplinarity. State University of New York Press, Albany.
- Njoroge, J.N. 2004. Ecumenism and theological education in Africa. In Grant Le Marquand & Joseph Galgalo (eds.), *Theological education in contemporary Africa*, pp. 83-104, Zapf Chancery, Eldoret, Kenya.
- Nwalusi, D.M., Anierobi, C.M., Efobi, K.O., Nwokolo, C.N., Eze, H.C., & Nwosu, K.I. 2017. *Urban housing inequality and the proliferation of informal settlements among formal neighborhoods in Enugu Nigeria*, pp. 1-25, (Unpublished).
- Odozor, P. 2014. *Morality truly Christian truly African: Foundational; methodological and theological considerations*. Notre Dame, Indiana.
- Orobator, A.E. 2014. Introduction: Doing theology as a collaborative effort. In Orobator, A.E., (ed), *Theological reimagination: Conversations on Church, religion and so- ciety in Africa*, pp. 9-25, Paulines, Publications, Nairobi.
- Piaget, J. 1972. The epistemology of interdisciplinary relationships in Centre for Educa- tional Research and Innovation (CERI). In *Interdisciplinarity: Problems of teaching and research in universities* (pp. 127-139). Paris, France: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- Pieterse, E. 2013. Grasping the unknowable: Coming to grips with African urbanisms. In Pieterse, E. & Simone, A., (eds.), pp. 19-35, *Rogue Urbanism*, Jacana Media Auckland Park, South Africa.
- Pohl, C., & Hadorn, G.H. 2008. Methodological challenges of transdisciplinary research. *Natures Sciences Sociétés*, 2(16).
- Pope Francis. 2013. *The joy of the Gospel*. Available from: http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html. (Accessed 15 February 2020).
- Pope John Paul II. 1987. *On social concern*. Available from: http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html. (Accessed 18 February 2020).
- Rakodi, C. 2014. Religion and social life in African cities. In Parnell, S. & Pieterse, E. (eds.), *Africa's urban Revolution*, pp. 82-109, Zed Books, London.
- Sandefur, J., & Glassman, A. 2014. The political economy of bad data: Evidence from African survey & administrative statistics. Center for Global Development.
- Schuth, K. 1989. *Reason for the hope: The future of Roman Catholic* Theologates. Michael Glazier, Wilmington, Del.
- Spiritan International School of Theology. 2013. *25 years celebration*. Unpublished. Avail- able from: www.sistenugu.com. (Accessed 19 February 2019).
- Spiritan International School of Theology. 2018. *Vision and mission statement*. Available from: www.sistenugu.com. (Accessed 19 February 2019).
- Spiritan International School of Theology. 2018. *Program of Studies*. Unpublished. Avail- able from: www.sistenugu.com. (Accessed 19 February 2019).

- Ugwu, B.I. 2013. *SIST History*. In *SIST Silver Jubilee celebration*. Unpublished. Available from: www.sistenugu.com. (Accessed 19 February 2019).
- UNDESA. 2018. Revision of world urbanization prospects. Available from: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/publications/2018-revision-of-world-urbanization-prospects.html> (Accessed 12 February 2019).
- Vatican Council 11. 1965. *Ad Gentes*. Available from: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html (Accessed 10 February 2020).
- Wheeler, G.B., Miller, L.S., & Schuth, K. 2005. Signs of the times: Present and future Theological Faculty. *Auburn Studies*, 10(5).