Evolving Roles for Nigeria’s Urban Public Realm: A Tale of Two Cities

Abstract: As in much of Africa, public space in Nigeria has historically been dedicated to sustenance roles, aimed most basically at commerce, transit, informal housing and even refuse. This session examines the growing interest in a more aspiring role for public space and landscape, aimed at improving social and environmental health as they enhance livability.

Lagos, the Capital city, has evolved organically over centuries, with little planning, while Abuja was conceived as a fully planned city. It is suggested that neither model is wholly superior in terms of its impact on the quality of public realm livability.
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As in much of Africa, public space in Nigeria has historically been dedicated to sustenance roles, aimed most basically at commerce, transit, informal housing and even refuse. This session examines the growing interest in a more aspiring role for public space and landscape, aimed at improving social and environmental health.

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Learning Objectives:
1) Issues: Understand public realm issues in Nigeria—security, privatization, urban land pressures and political repression.
2) Collaboration: Learn how architects and landscape architects are working collaboratively in Nigeria to shape and expand the role of the public realm.
3) Role: See how two very different African cities are working to overcome quality of life deficiencies with improved public realm.
4) Innovation: Understand the challenges of integrating green technologies and landscape infrastructure which have little national precedent.

Comparing Lagos and Abuja

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Lagos, Nigeria</th>
<th>Abuja, Nigeria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Coastal Swamp, Lagoons, Islands and Mainland</td>
<td>Upland Savannah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>Hot and Humid</td>
<td>Tropical Wet and Dry, Less Rain than Lagos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size (Area)</td>
<td>Extremely Large</td>
<td>Larger than Lagos, but Undeveloped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>&gt; 20 Million</td>
<td>&gt; 2 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth Trend</td>
<td>One of World’s Fastest Growing Cities</td>
<td>One of World’s Fastest Growing Cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inception</td>
<td>15th Century Island Settlement</td>
<td>1991 Capital City Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Form</td>
<td>Indiscriminate</td>
<td>Landscape-Driven, Poly-Centric, Neighborhoods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Patterns</td>
<td>Evolutionary, Sprawling, Infill</td>
<td>Zoning Control, Open Space Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Characteristics</td>
<td>Overcrowded, Squalid</td>
<td>Low Density, Open Space Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Demographic</td>
<td>Young, Extremely Stratified, with 66% In Slums</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Living</td>
<td>One of Highest in the World</td>
<td>Abuja More Expensive than Lagos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of City</td>
<td>Port, Financial Center, ICT Center, Oil</td>
<td>National Capitol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Issues</td>
<td>Flooding, Water Quality, Waste Management</td>
<td>Deforestation, Mining Impacts, Waste Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Music, Movie Industry, Football (Soccer)</td>
<td>Arts, Museums, National Sports Facilities, Carnival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>High Crime</td>
<td>Lawlessness, Terrorism Threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Public Realm</td>
<td>Commerce, Transportation</td>
<td>Recreation, Parks, Gardens, Drainage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitality of Public Realm</td>
<td>Extremely Vital</td>
<td>Variable - Generally Inactive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case Studies

Eko Atlantic – Lagos, Nigeria

Context and Background
Public Realm Design: Goal Summary

- First use of green infrastructure to reduce flooding and improve water quality;
- First use of an integrated public realm dedicated to recreation and community engagement;
- First multi-block use of landscape as an integrated art form, uniting ground- and podium-level canvases (as future blocks materialize);
- Potential reduction in infrastructure life cycle cost, water and energy consumption.

Livability Strategies

Environmental Intent

Flood Control: Lower peak flood level to reduce flood risk.

Stormwater Quality: Clean all surface runoff prior to entering canals, harbor, or ocean.

Native Habitat: Restore native plant communities in urban setting.

Social Intent

Accessibility: Establish a public realm network that is accessible to all residents within a five-minute walk.

Diversity: Establish a public realm program that serves a full range of community groups.

Comfort: Design site architecture to deflect severe wind upward, accept welcome low-level ventilation, provide shade and rain cover, minimize ground-level heat build-up and provide dehumidification.

Economic Intent

Vitality: Enhance public realm quality and comfort so that users are inclined to linger, spend more time and money.

Life Cycle: Establish long-term viability of all site construction materials and systems.

Centers: Establish a hierarchy of mixed-use centers to focus public life and commercial activities, including neighborhood centers and district centers.
Aesthetic Intent

*Meaningful Forms:* Inspire site forms from local conditions such as native environments and culture.

*Landscape Art:* Develop the entire integrated landscape as a work of public land art.

*Stewardship:* Use art to tell stories about environmental processes, to educate the community and facilitate their role as environmental stewards.
Jigna Recreation Open Space – Abuja, Nigeria

Context and Background

Concept Master Plan: Goal Summary

- **Inclusiveness**: Establish a destination for all community (demographic) groups.
- **Environmental Health**: Restore and upgrade the ecological health of the site.
- **Scenic and Cultural Resources**: Define, protect and integrate cultural, archaeological and scenic resources.
- **Maximize Assets**: Define what has value and nurture its role in the development.

Livability Strategies

Jigna Recreation Open Space Proposed Site

The criteria below represent the primary logic for the proposed recreation area size and position:

- Position plays a role in original Abuja plan open space system.
- Position serves adjoining communities.
- Size allows for diverse and meaningful “natural” recreation experiences, per precedents and international standards.
- Sized to occupy and protect space between major ridges.
- Size protects scenic value within and across site.
- Size and position protects key watershed.
- Size serves city-wide access capacity.

Landscape Restoration Program

- Restored Forest/Woodland
- Restored Park and Shrub Savanna
- Protected and Restored Riverine Corridors
• Re-introduced Rain Forest
• Cultural or Archaeological Assets, Protected and Accessible
• Damaged Site Area, Reclaimed

Open Space Development Principles: Livability

• Emphasis on sound environmental practices and authentic ecological and vegetation communities;
• Passive physical program;
• Varied means of accessing the area via walking, hiking and bicycle trails of different lengths and degrees of difficulty;
• Educational and youth programs;
• Rigorous ongoing management and maintenance operations.
Comparing Lagos and Abuja Case Studies: Livability Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISSUE</th>
<th>PUBLIC REALM RESPONSE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate Open Space/Open Space Loss</td>
<td>Eko Atlantic - Lagos, Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of Biodiversity, Habitat</td>
<td>Additional Public Space Manufacture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declining Personal Health</td>
<td>Urban Habitat Creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flooding</td>
<td>Walkable Neighborhoods, Recreation Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Quality</td>
<td>Stormwater Capture, Storage, Infiltration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Landscape Filtration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Development</td>
<td>Semi-Public Realm, Patrolled</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to Art and Culture</td>
<td>Neighborhood and District Centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harsh Climate</td>
<td>Public Art, Land Art</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wind, Shade, Rain and Humidity Devices</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
PRESENTATION OUTLINE (To be abbreviated)

I. Introduction: African Development Trends Overview
   a. Demographics: Youth Bulge, Low Life Expectancy and Infant Mortality Rates, Poverty
      i. Urbanization: Access to Jobs
      ii. Housing: Affordability, Quality and Proximity to Jobs
      iii. Environmental Conditions: Lower Priority
   b. Conditions in Nigeria
      i. Political: Recent Transitions
      ii. Security: Crime, Gangs, Terrorism
      iii. Economics: Natural Resource Dependent; Slowly Diversifying
      iv. Environmental: Oil Spills, Desertification and Loss of Biodiversity

II. A Tale of Two Cities
   a. Lagos
      i. City Organization
      ii. Key Challenges: Social, Environmental, Transport, Security
      iii. Current Role of Planning and Design
      iv. Role and Attributes of Public Realm
      v. Lessons Learned
   b. Abuja
      i. Impetus for the City
      ii. Founding Plan
      iii. Current Conditions, the Plan at Risk
      iv. Current Role of Planning and Design
      v. Role and Attributes of Public Realm
      vi. Lessons Learned

III. Learning from Each City: Case Studies
   a. Lagos
      i. Eko Atlantic: Doing it Right, Doing it Better?
         1. Role of the Development in Flood Control and Storm Surge
         2. Sustainable Stormwater Management
3. Community Structure: Districts, Neighborhoods, Centers and Community
4. Community Program
5. Art and Culture
7. Role of Landscape in Addressing City Challenges

b. Abuja
   i. Jigna Recreation Open Space: Preserving the Capital Plan
      1. Role in Broader Open Space System
      2. Key Attributes: Environmental, Archaeological, Hydrological and Habitat
      4. Community Education and Program
      5. Stormwater Management

IV. Learning from Both Cities: A Synthesis
   a. Key Needs
      i. Defining the Needs
      ii. Search for Synergies
      iii. Leadership
   b. Key Players
      i. Role of Government
      ii. Academic Influences: Future Leaders
      iii. Paradigm Shifting: The Engineering Community
      iv. Western Precedents and Incremental Change
      v. Role of the Landscape Architect

V. Question and Answer/Discussion
Keywords
Public space, public realm, livability, green infrastructure, landscape infrastructure, water quality, native habitat, accessibility, life cycle, inclusiveness, scenic and cultural resources, environmental health, landscape restoration, ecological communities, sustainable stormwater management, privatized public spaces.

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