

# Towards making people-friendly places and enhancing quality of place in Lagos, Nigeria: Current Urban Development Responses

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## Abstract

*This paper is about experiencing the urban-related problems and perspectives of sub-Saharan Africa's largest metropolis, in terms of the mega-city's people-friendliness and quality of place. It is based on a descriptive analysis of housing, urban design and planning responses in Lagos, Nigeria. The research is an exploratory qualitative case-study on the challenges of urbanization and mega-city growth. Primary data were obtained through participant-observation and secondary data from published sources related to Lagos, Nigeria. The paper examined current responses at shaping the urban fabric in terms of the mega-city urban policies, plans, and programmes. These interventions were analysed from the perspectives of making people-friendly places and enhancing quality of place. Findings revealed that despite the potential of current urban responses and Institutional frameworks to radically transform Lagos into a viable urban scheme, the limited incorporation of people-friendly notions appear more like supplementary appendages, rather than as fundamental principles to guide sustainable urban development. The paper concluded that creating, developing and managing people-friendly places are central and critical to responding appropriately to the challenges of rapid urbanization confronting Lagos mega-city.*

**Keywords:** Lagos, mega-city, people-friendly, place, quality of place, urbanization\*

## Introduction

This paper is about experiencing the urban-related problems and perspectives of sub-Saharan Africa's largest metropolis, in terms of the mega-city's people-friendliness and quality of place. Rapid urbanization and the emergence of mega-cities are major global transformations, which constitute daunting challenges, particularly for many developing countries. These manifest in the forms of slums and squatter settlements, marginalized coastal communities, and severe urban housing and infrastructure deficiencies. Global urban population experienced a 15 fold increase from just over 200 million in 1900 to about 2.9 billion in 2000 (United Nations, 2002).

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The urban global tipping point was reached in 2008 when for the first time in history over half of the world's population (3.3 billion people) began to reside in urban areas. This was estimated to increase to 3.9 billion people by 2015; and 4.9 billion people by 2030, representing 60% of global population (UN-HABITAT, 2010a) (see Table 1). The twenty-first century has been aptly described as: the century of the cities and of urbanization (Hall and Pfeiffer, 2000) and "the urban century" (UN-HABITAT, 2008).

In essence, cities are the future habitat for the majority of citizens in the developing countries of the global South (Pieterse, 2004). The quality of life in these cities in the foreseeable future and beyond is a function of the current approaches and responses to urbanization and its related processes. Two key questions arise: Are the cities of today managed on the basis of sustainability and people-friendly principles? Are they evolving through conscious planning and urban design responses or left to haphazard and amoebic evolution?

Despite the renewed focus on the study of urban systems in recent times, urbanization remains a major developmental issue, presenting seemingly intractable challenges, especially in the developing countries. The urban exerts enormous pressures on social, economic, and environmental sustainability (Okwuashi et al, 2010). This paper therefore examined urban-related challenges and urban development responses in the light of the literature on people-friendly places and quality of place, and in the context of Lagos mega-city, Nigeria.

## **Literature Review**

This review drew from literature in disciplines which recognize the significance of place. In addition, relevant literature on the phenomenon of mega-cities, principles of people-friendly cities, and the concepts of place and quality of place, were reviewed as basis for a qualitative examination of current responses to the challenges of urban change in Lagos mega-city.

## **The Mega-city Phenomenon**

One of the distinctive features of contemporary global urban change is the phenomenon of mega-cities. About ten per cent of the world's urban population lives not just in towns and cities, but in 'mega-cities'. These are urban areas with a population of 10 million people or more (Massey et al, 1999; Kraas, 2007). The number of megacities in the world has increased markedly in the last few decades; most of these in developing countries. By the end of the twentieth century, the world's 20 most populous cities switched from a Euro-American focus to a developing World bias within only 20 years. Of the 27 'mega-cities' predicted for the year 2015, 18 were projected to be in Asia, 5 in Latin America, 2 in Africa, 2 in North America and none in Europe (UN-HABITAT, 2008). The 'club' of mega-cities presently includes: Tokyo (37.2 million), Delhi (23 million), Mexico City, New York, Shanghai, Sao Paolo, Mumbai/Bombay (each with about 20 million inhabitants), Dhaka, Kolkata, Karachi, Buenos Aires, Los Angeles, Rio de Janeiro, Manila, Moscow, Osaka-Kobe, Istanbul, Lagos, and Egypt (United Nations, 2012). More than any other manifestation of urban morphology, mega-cities are calling to question the issue of quality of place. It is therefore pertinent to better elucidate on place and its related concepts.

## Quality of Place

Solutions to urban problems are inextricably linked to the varied readings and interpretations of place and its constituent elements. The perception and experience of 'place' are essential dimensions of urban design and urban living. 'Place' has been conceptualized in terms of the triad of formal setting, activities and meanings, which constitute the three basic elements of the identity of places (Carmona et al., 2003; Relph, 1976). It is commonly used to signify a spatial entity that is experienced and perceived as meaningful by an individual or a group of people (Canter, 1997; Groat, 1995). Places may differ in territorial scale, ranging from rooms, home settings, and neighbourhoods to nations or even continents (Low and Altman, 1992).

'Place' differs from 'space' in that: places are not abstractions, but are directly experienced phenomena of the lived-world, full with meanings, real objects, and on-going activities. Individuals, groups or societies transform 'spaces' into 'places', by imbuing them with meaning. Place is more of a phenomenon that people experience than space (Relph, 1976). The dominant trend of urban design thinking is that designing place should not be reduced to "face lifts" or the use of formatted blueprints; rather places should be conceptualized within a broader scale of sustainability and people-friendliness (Carmona et al, 2003).

'Quality of place' refers to the unique set of characteristics that define a place, and can be conceptualized within a three-dimensional framework:

- 1) *What is there*: a proper setting combining the built and natural environments;
- 2) *Who is there*: the diversity of people, interacting and providing community;
- 3) *What is going on*: the vibrancy of urban life, culture, arts, music and outdoor activities?

A closely-related aspect of quality of place, which is gaining appreciable acceptance in urban discourse, is the notion of people-friendly places. A number of principles and conceptual frameworks have been proposed in the literature to explain and contextualize this concept.

## Principles of People-Friendly Places

Tibbalds (1992) in pioneering the concept of 'people-friendly places' offered an urban design framework, comprising the following ten principles: places matter most; learn the lessons of the past; encourage the mixing of uses and activities; design on a human scale; encourage pedestrian freedom; provide access for all; build legible environments; build lasting environments; control change; and contribute to the greater whole. Tibbalds' first principle—'places matter most'—has become a key theme of the urbanism paradigm. This principle in essence implies that the creation of places is more important than the design of the individual buildings of which they are composed. Carmona et al (2003) also define urban design as the process of making better places for people. This definition implies that urban design is for and about people, while emphasizing the value and significance of 'place.' In essence, urban design is not limited to the visual-artistic (Jarvis, 2007) and social-usage traditions, but is primarily concerned with the quality of the public realm – both physical and socio-cultural – and the making (and managing) of meaningful 'places' for people to enjoy and function in. This thinking has become a dominant concept in urban design.

Sternberg (2000) proposes that the primary role of urban design is to reassert the 'cohesiveness of the urban experience,' arguing for a conception of urban design as a process of restoring or giving qualities of coherence and continuity to individual, often inward-focused developments,

thus ensuring that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. This would inevitably enhance overall urban quality. Contemporary urban design is simultaneously concerned with the design of urban space as an aesthetic entity and as a behavioural setting. It focuses on the diversity and activity which help to create successful urban places, and in particular, on how well the physical milieu supports the functions and activities taking place there.

In contextual terms, people-friendly places could be defined by the quality of public spaces such as streets, squares and plazas; the symbiotic relationships of public, semi-public, and private spaces; quality of public and private transport modes, pedestrian and cycling pathways, street furniture, social activities and services offered in public spaces; and the connectivity and permeability of various sectors of the city, both from the physical and perceptual perspectives.

### **Frameworks for People-Friendly Places**

Complementary to Tibbald's (1992) framework, a number of attempts have been made to identify the desirable qualities of successful urban places and 'good' urban form. Even some 'official' definitions have embraced the concepts of making places, and of the public realm. In England, for example, planning policy guidance states that 'urban design' should be taken to mean: the relationship between different buildings; the relationship between buildings and the streets, squares, parks and other spaces which make up the public domain itself – the complex relationships between all the elements of built and unbuilt space (DoE Planning Policy Guidance Note 1, 1997). The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) provided a more rounded definition, identifying urban design as the 'art of making places for people.'

Urban design concerns the connections between people and places, movement and urban form, nature and the built fabric, and the processes for ensuring successful villages, towns and cities (DETR/CABE, 2000:8). The guide identified seven objectives of urban design, each relating to the concept of place: character/identity; continuity and enclosure; quality of the public realm; ease of movement; legibility; adaptability; and diversity.

Congress for New Urbanism (CNU, 1999) advocated the restructuring of public policy and development practices to support the following four main principles:

- 1) Neighbourhoods should be diverse in use and population.
- 2) Communities should be designed for the pedestrian and transit, as well as for the car.
- 3) Cities and towns should be shaped by physically defined and universally accessible public spaces and community institutions.
- 4) Urban places should be framed by architecture and landscape design that celebrate local history, climate, ecology and building practice.

While these frameworks are sound in themselves, they should preferably not be taken as inflexible dogma; but rather, used with the flexibility derived from an acknowledgement of their biases and justifications. Urban designers therefore need to appreciate their contexts of operation and the processes by which places and development come about. The context in this case is Lagos, Nigeria, brief descriptions of which are presented in the next sections.

## Research Method and Context

To complement the literature review, this research adopted the method of an exploratory and experiential qualitative case-study, based on primary data obtained through participant-observation as well as secondary data sources on Lagos mega-city. Through a desktop study of data from the State Government and its relevant urban development and management agencies, it examined current institutional responses at shaping the urban fabric of Lagos in terms of the Mega-city Projects and other urban regeneration policies, plans, and programmes.

## The Study Context

The coastal city of Lagos, situated within 6°23'N and 6°41'N (lat.) and 2°42'E and 3°42E (long.), is Nigeria's most rapidly urbanising and populous conurbation. Its growth has been phenomenal, demographically and spatially: from a population of about 25,000 in 1866, it grew to 300,000 in 1950, 665,000 by 1963, and over ten million in 2010, attaining by UN definition, the status of a mega-city (Table 1).

**Table 1: Population of Lagos: 1866 – 2006**

Year	Area covered by the census (km <sup>2</sup> )	Total population
1866*	-	25,000
1901	-	40,000
1911	46.6	73,766
1921	52.3	99,690
1931	66.3	126,108
1952	69.9	272,000
1963	69.9	665,000
2006	3,345	9,113,605

Sources: Adapted from Abiodun (1997); \*Ayeni (1981); National Population Commission of Nigeria (web) (Lagos State Government contested the 2006 figure).

Although population figures are widely disputed, the UN projects a figure of 12.4 million by 2015. The 2006 census figure for the metropolitan area of Lagos was 7.9 million, which based on an annual growth rate of 6%, projects to 12.7 million in 2015. The state government however claims a figure of over 17 million (Lagos State, 2010).

## Analysis and Findings

The analysis of qualitative data in the present work formed part of an on-going study on housing and urbanization in Lagos. A constraint of this analysis was the limited depth of detail, resulting from the mega-city spatial scale of analysis. The scope excluded in-depth evaluations of specific urban renewal and regeneration interventions at district, neighbourhood, or block (street and building) levels, which would form the basis of future analysis and reports.

## Historical and Urban Analysis

The history of Lagos in the closing decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was marked by substantial deterioration in quality of life: proliferation of slums; environmental degradation; congested roads; flooding; disrupted sewerage network; and increasing crime rates (George, 2010). In terms of spatial expansion, from its original lagoon setting, the sprawling city has engulfed a vast expanse of peripheral areas including extensive slums. The vitality of Lagos's economy and its nodal position in the national

economy and transport networks explain its growth, despite the breakdown of many basic infrastructure services and the difficulties caused by this for both economic enterprises and individual residents (Abiodun, 1997).

Gandy (2005) identified two approaches to analysing the Lagos phenomenon. First is an eschatological evocation of urban apocalypse, which emphasizes the poverty, violence, disease, uncontrolled growth, lack of access to basic services, massive unemployment, and infrastructural collapse (Parker, 2006). The second approach describes the novelties of the city's morphology, conceiving the seemingly chaotic aspects of its growth as a series of self-regulatory systems (Koolhaas et al, 2001).

An alternate perspective attempts to frame the experience of Lagos within a wider geo-political arena of economic instability, petro-capitalist development and regional internecine conflicts (Gandy, 2006). This historical perspective reveals how structural factors militated against any effective resolution to the city's infrastructure crisis, through a succession of urban evolutionary phases. The first phase – Colonial Lagos – was characterized by 'incomplete modernity' due to the inherited bifurcated systems of urban administration. The second phase – the Post-colonial metropolis – evidenced initial optimism, with subsequent descent into despair, as an already unstable urban system deteriorated under the combined pressures of political instability, accelerated rates of migration, and destabilising effects of oil wealth, exacerbated by the 1967-70 civil war. Lagos, which at independence was the leading industrial centre of Nigeria, from the mid-1970s onwards suffered from accelerating industrial decline.

The third phase saw a succession of military regimes, interspersed with the global recession of the early 1980s, leading by the late 1990s to a near-complete break-down in the public realm, pervasive political and economic crisis, and massive infrastructural collapse. The introduction of the structural adjustment programmes (SAP) intensified the spread of poverty, causing declining levels of public investment and many abandoned projects (Onibokun and Faniran, 1995). In summary, the colonial state apparatus and its postcolonial successors failed to establish a fully functional metropolis through investment in the built environment or the construction of integrated technological networks. Whilst facing dire challenges of poverty, violence, insecurity, unemployment, disease, and poor infrastructure, Lagos continued to grow exponentially (Gandy, 2005).

## **The Challenges**

Rapid urbanization in Lagos mega-city presents a range of challenges, which researchers have devoted attention to identifying and describing. According to Mabogunje (2008), the enduring by-products of rapid urbanization include: slums, overcrowding, poor sanitation, air and water pollution, clogged sewers, solid-waste contamination, staggering urban traffic, illegal conversion of land-use and unbridled physical development without appropriate legislation, regulation and enforcement. Inability to march the housing needs with available resources and inadequate physical infrastructure to accommodate the population explosion have impinged negatively on social infrastructure. Mass unemployment among the youths gives rise to insecurity and rising crime rate. Abosede (2008) highlights the major challenges to include: inadequate infrastructure; unmanageable sprawl; sustainability issues; unemployment, poverty, and urban violence; inadequate housing; inadequate funding; and social and economic exclusions. Okwuashi et al (2010) also identify and describe the following challenges: political power-play from its colonial origins to contemporary times; population growth and dynamics; socio-

economics; infrastructure deficiencies with regard to transportation, housing, electricity, water supply, and solid waste management.

In terms of environmental sustainability, the physical site of Lagos makes it vulnerable to the potential impact of climate change and rising sea-level, which was one of several reasons for its replacement as national capital by Abuja. Lagos is experiencing extreme weather events with increasing frequency, and the low lying nature increases risks from flooding, exacerbated by inadequate refuse and waste disposal systems. Flooding is partly a natural consequence of this topography and location, yet 70 per cent of the population lives in slums, located mainly in the marshy lagoon areas. Single-room households with shared cooking and sanitation facilities constitute more than half of the housing, 20 percent blocks of flats, and 20 percent detached houses. The tenure status of Lagos by the 2006 Census indicates that 75% of households lived in rented dwellings, 17.6% in owned houses, while others were free occupiers. Recent data indicate 80% of sampled households as renters, 15% owner-occupiers, while 5% neither owned nor rented the dwelling. Eighty percent of the households occupied between 1-2 rooms while 13% used an average of 3-4 rooms and 6% occupied more than 5 rooms (Lagos State, 2010).

The mega-city has huge infrastructure deficits: poor solid waste management and sanitation, inadequate provision of amenities, and vulnerability to flooding and storm damage. The 2006 census data indicate that only 26% of the residents of metropolitan Lagos had access to piped water. In terms of waste disposal methods, 53% of the Lagos households patronized public and private refuse collectors, 22% used public approved dump sites, 13% used unapproved dump sites, and 8% burnt their refuse (Lagos State, 2012). A new urban era demands new models to respond to cities. It is therefore important to examine the current responses to the urban challenges in Lagos.

### **The Institutional Responses**

The re-emergence of democratic structures and institutions since 1999 held great potentials for the resurgence of strategic planning, policy-making and their effective implementation. It is important to identify and examine the institutions responsible for urban development in Lagos and their roles, in order to analyse their major responses and practices.

### **Institutional Framework for Urban Development**

The statutory agency whose activities are central to urban development in Lagos State is the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development (LSMPPUD). Allied ministries are those of: the Environment; Housing; and Works and Infrastructure. A detailed examination of LSMPPUD and brief perusal of the others follows:

According to Lagos State (2013a), the LSMPPUD has the vision of: "Lagos mega-city that is sustainable, organised, liveable, business and tourism friendly." The Ministry, through its formal, bureaucratic, administrative approach, is responsible for: rebuilding Lagos as a model city-state; pursuit of systematic physical planning for sustainable development; preparation of regional, master, model city plans, action and development plans for excised villages; granting of approval and monitoring of layouts and development schemes for government and private estates; evaluation, relocation and regularisation of urban based developments and activities (filling stations, banks, eateries, markets, institutions and informal sectors); development of reliable database for physical planning; and providing enhanced partnership for governance (inclusive governance).

Subsidiary agencies under supervision of LSMPPUD are the following:

- 1) Lagos State Physical Planning Permit Authority (LSPPPA) – grants development permits; prepares lower-level physical development plans; monitors compliance with operative development plans; and keeps record/gazettes planning permits.
- 2) Lagos State Urban Renewal Agency (LSURA) – monitors and identifies areas qualified for upgrading; advises the government on redevelopment, renewal, or regeneration programmes; holds, administers, and maintains government properties within areas designated as Urban Renewal Areas;
- 3) Lagos State Building Control Agency (LSBCA) – Building/Development control; issues certificates (construction-stage, completion, fitness-for-habitation); and removes illegal structures and distressed buildings;
- 4) Urban Furniture Regulatory Unit (UFRU) – registers owners and operators of masts, towers, parabolic antennae and similar structures; develops, maintains, and updates the database of all telecommunications and similar structures; ensures compliance with high quality infrastructural materials; and enforces appropriate physical planning laws.

The Government has adopted a proactive strategy through the preparation of Master and Model City Plans with a view to transforming the identified activity centres within Lagos Mega City Region into vibrant and organised urban areas. Eight of the proposed 35 plans for the Development Areas have been prepared, while others are at various stages of completion. Few notable people-friendly activities of LSMPPUD include: the development of e-planning process and archival system; synergizing with other Millennium Development Agencies (MDAs), creating public awareness, engaging stakeholders in the planning and development process, and rendering technical advisory services.

Ministry of the Environment has focused on the following: regeneration and greening of the environment through the transformation of hitherto abandoned open spaces to green areas; transformative design of notation axes and areas of urban flux; provision of recreational parks and gardens in Local Government Areas; landscaping and beautification projects; sanitization of major highways and streets from vegetal nuisances and overgrown weeds; sanitation and advocacy programmes; schools' environmental advocacy programme; annual tree planting programmes; waste management and collection; enforcement and compliance machinery; de-flooding programmes through the construction, dredging, maintenance, and rehabilitation of primary and secondary drainage channels; and waste water disposal. The ministry has organised street waste policing, and coordinated monthly Environmental Sanitation, House to House campaigns, Advocacy Campaigns for the Informal Sector and Public Toilet Operators, and Town hall meetings at local levels (Lagos State, 2013b).

The Ministry carries out its responsibilities through the following agencies: Lagos Waste Management Authority (LAWMA); Lagos State Signage and Advertisement Agency (LASAA); Lagos State parks and Gardens (LASPARK); Lagos State Environmental protection Agency (LASEPA); Lagos State Waste Water management Office (LSWMO); and Offices of Drainage and Environmental Services (ODES).

The Ministry of Housing (MoH) has the vision of a "Lagos mega City with adequate housing for its citizenry," and a mission "to ensure the provision of adequate and good quality housing in Lagos Mega City and facilitate easy access to home ownership" (Lagos State, 2013c). The Ministry's responsibilities include: Provision of affordable housing; supervision of the maintenance of



existing housing estates; provision of infrastructure in government housing estates; collaboration with the Private Sector in the provision of housing; promotion of skills development in housing; research into local building materials; facilitation of job creation and economic empowerment through the promotion of employment of local artisans; supervision of the Lagos Estate Agency Regulatory Authority; and consultancy services in housing matters to other Ministries, Departments and Agencies. The Ministry prepares layout plans preceding development of its housing estates.

In a renewed focus at tackling the housing shortage particularly for the medium/low income group under its 'PATH' (Power, Agriculture, Transportation and Housing) agenda, the Ministry in 2012 embarked on the Lagos HOMS project – a mortgage based homeownership scheme designed to ease public access to housing. It is currently engaged in the direct construction of 242 blocks consisting of 2624 housing units in 13 locations in the State, with the innovative incorporation of green-building features to improve liveability of prospective occupants. The housing delivery is enhanced through a multi-agency arrangement with the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development (PPUD), Lagos State Development and Property Corporation (LSDPC) and New Towns development Authority (NTDA). There are plans to engage the services of facility managers in post-occupancy management, in order to maintain the liveability of the housing estates.

The mandate of the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure (MWI) is: to develop and facilitate qualitative infrastructure to support the State's growing population as well as serve as the critical development driver of the State's vision of being Africa's model megacity and global economic and financial hub (Lagos State 2013d). Included among the key strategies of the MWI are: improved user-friendly road designs and walkways; and public buildings that have features that are friendly to the physically challenged. The strategic projects which are progressing simultaneously are: the construction of roads and bridges, pedestrian bridges, bus rapid transport (BRT) systems, light rail transport (LRT) sub-stations, jetties, street lighting, and public buildings/facilities such as reconstruction of markets, educational buildings, and police offices. Besides the activities of the four related Ministries, the Lagos Mega-City Project (LMCP) appears to be the pivot of urban development responses in Lagos. The following sub-section examined this project in the context of the Lagos mega-city region:

### **The Lagos Mega-City Region and Project**

The Lagos Mega-City Region (LMCR) covers an area of 153,540 hectares with continuously expanding built-up areas including parts of neighbouring Ogun State (FRN, 2006). Although the mega-city occupies only 37 per cent of the land area of Lagos State, it accommodates nearly 90 per cent of the population. Inadequacy of decent housing has resulted in the Lagos state section of the LMCR recording 42 slum areas in 1985 and over 100 in 2006. The effect of these emerging slum areas has put the peripheral corridors of land under intense pressure of physical growth, with meagre indicators of real infrastructural development.

The idea of the Lagos Megacity Project (LMCP) derived from the chaotic nature of urban growth in Lagos, in the absence of effective institutions, infrastructure and proactive planning to guide the hyper-growth (FRN, 2006). The initial Federal Government's intervention came with the inauguration of the *Presidential Committee for the Redevelopment of Lagos Mega-City Region* in 2005 and *Lagos Mega-City Region Development Authority*. The State government has since then engaged in a passionate drive to attract foreign investors to participate in the LMCP, stressing on

the vast prospects for development in transportation, roads, waste management, water provision, power, tourism, properties, and the establishment of bus assembly plants.

Essentially the project involves providing infrastructure, mass housing and tourism, as well as developing the adjoining town of Badagry and linking it to the rest of the state with a modern transportation system. The proposed LMCP involves: Beautification and landscaping projects; construction of new roads and a light rail road system; water routes to facilitate marine transportation; construction of a fourth mainland bridge; delivery of 10,000 housing units in the Lekki Peninsula; reconstruction and expansion of the Lagos-Badagry expressway into a trans-regional, eight-lane conduit with a light rail, to link Nigeria and neighbouring nations; a proposed ring road to link all the 28 activity centres in the state; construction of a water-way and the proposed Eco Atlantic City on the Badagry water front.

#### Summary of findings

The qualitative examination of current responses to the urban challenges in Lagos indicates the following key findings:

- 1) The existence of visionary leadership and well-articulated visions and missions for the urban future at the various levels of governance in the State
- 2) The establishment of a focused and strong Institutional framework, which is however characterized by a multiplicity of formal, hierachical, and bureaucratic agencies.
- 3) The responses however portray disciplinary biases toward conventional modernistic urban planning and civil engineering principles; with negligible urban design input.
- 4) The incorporation of few people-friendly ideas, more as supplementary appendages, than as fundamental principles to guide urban development.

It however appears quite early in the stages of existence of the present leadership structure, institutions, and agencies, as to permit a thorough and highly objective evaluation of their performances in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, impact and service-delivery outcomes. Aspects of these findings worthy of note are discussed more elaborately in the next section.

## Discussions

### Visionary Leadership and Governance

Governance in Lagos is presently guided by a committed and visionary democratic leadership driven by a dominant vision of transforming Lagos State into a model Mega-city in Africa. A notable merit is the existence and consistency of articulate policies and statutory objectives and functions for integrated urban development as a whole and the various inter-dependent sectors such as capacity-building, communication, environment, employment-generation, finance, housing, infrastructure, land management, legal and regulatory frameworks, research and development, social services, and transportation.

### Institutional Framework

A strong, formal institutional framework is evolving to guide and sustain Urban Development in Lagos, which has the potential to radically transform the rapidly expanding mega-city into a viable and sustainable urban scheme. This is a commendable far-cry from past scenarios. The

tendency is however toward a multiplicity of formal, high-structured, hierarchical, and bureaucratic agencies, characterized by a vertically-accentuated, top-down approach. This is intrinsically embedded with many constraints to prompt decision-making and implementation of development proposals, as well as conflicts of roles and interests, and consequently, may not enhance effectiveness and equity. Another limitation is the minimal opportunity for people-participation in the urban decisions that affect them.

### **Limited Input of People-Friendly Principles, Policies and Practices**

Despite the visionary leadership and governance, and formidable institutional frameworks, what appears to be visibly missing is the place of people-friendly urban design principles at the levels of policy and practice. This may be a reflection of its present low status of urban design as a discipline and profession in Nigeria. The Lagos mega-city development could benefit from the strategic incorporation of age-friendly, eco-friendly, gender-sensitive, and pedestrian-friendly concepts. A people-friendly city gives attention to people in general and vulnerable people-groups in particular, with the aim of promoting human interaction in qualitative public spaces.

### **Disciplinary and Professional Biases**

While there is evidence of a wide range of high-level expertise and professionalism in the system, it appears to portray disciplinary biases toward conventional modernistic urban planning and civil engineering principles; with negligible urban design input. This is reflected in the dominant approach of blueprint planning using the instruments of the Master plan and Comprehensive land-use zoning. This approach views the relationship between planning, housing and urban development largely in its physical context, and solutions to related problems were similarly more physical – zoning, density controls, building regulations, and planning standards. It is increasingly recognised that the complex problems of housing, planning and urban development cannot be examined, and solutions cannot be found, in purely physical terms, without reference to economic, social, and psychological considerations.

### **Conclusions**

This paper examined urban-related problems and responses in Lagos, Nigeria, in terms of the mega-city phenomenon, people-friendliness, and quality of place. It reviewed the literature on mega-cities, quality of place, and principles and frameworks for people-friendly cities. These provided the basis for a qualitative examination of the case-study in terms of prevailing urban challenges, institutional frameworks and responses to shaping the urban fabric. The study revealed that current urban interventions in Lagos though guided by a visionary leadership and a formidable institutional framework evidenced limited incorporation of people-friendly principles which appeared more like appendages, than fundamental principles for urban development. The findings also reinforced the need for greater community inclusion and people participation in planning and managing the megacity. This implies intensifying bottom-up, proactive and participatory approaches to urban design and development, with a view to maximizing the diversity and human scale of Lagos megacity.

The obvious limitation of the current research however, both in methodological and interpretative terms, was the mega-city scale of analysis. Further researches would be required at the spatial scales of city districts and neighbourhoods that would incorporate quantitative approaches, and more objective analysis and robust results.

Lagos mega-city had until recently lacked the infrastructural facilities, institutional and legal frameworks commensurate with the attendant challenges. Ironically, it remains the economic and financial hub of Nigeria. The expectation is: to transform this rapidly expanding mega-city into a people-friendly and sustainable urban scheme – without inflicting further injury on its social, cultural and ecological dimensions. The plans for the Lagos Mega-City Region (LMCR) may meet such goals, if guided by the appropriate people-friendly and sustainability principles.

The creation, development, and management of harmonious, sustainable, and people-friendly built environments are therefore critical to responding appropriately to the challenges of rapid urbanization confronting cities in developing countries, such as Lagos. With astute, coordinated, and committed foresight and leadership, complemented by people-friendly design and planning approaches, it is expected that these challenges are surmountable.

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