

The Regeneration of Lagos Lagoon Waterfronts for Recreation and Tourism

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1 ABSTRACT

Waterfront properties are major revenue earners in many parts of the world. Apart from high property values they command for the property owners, they provide revenue for the government and serve as a source of enjoyment, recreation and tourism when open to the public. Along the Lagos lagoon, this is currently not the case as the waterfront has degenerated into a slum with non-distinctive housing, mainly shanties at various points, wood preservation, markets and commercial fishing activities. Growing statistics show that waterfronts have huge potentials of financial gains. In the study area this potential lies hugely unexploited and grossly under-utilized thereby wasting the area's natural recreational resources. This research examines the situation along the Lagos lagoon; identify problems causing lack of development of the waterfront for recreation and tourism, and proffer solutions that will enable policy makers in government and the private sector to improve the area. The study identified the problems, causes and recommends urban renewal and landscape architectural interventions to engineer the desired change necessary to transform the area thus making it more amenable to higher property values, maximize the use of the land and encourage recreation / tourism to the existing waterfront. Among the problems identified, as they affect the waterfront, include: very high population density, lack of planning and infrastructure, especially functional water transport, properly designed relaxation and passive leisure areas, lack of security and non availability of on-site recreational/entertainment facilities. The outcome of the research will be of benefit to property owners in the area, architects, landscape architects, resort managers, tourists, visitors, industry practitioners, policy makers and other stakeholders in determining appropriate facilities in order to create very functionally attractive Lagos lagoon waterfronts for recreation and tourism.

1.1 Introduction

The Lagos lagoon is a very important natural resource of Lagos state, Nigeria. It is part of a network of lagoons - Lagos lagoon complex originally known as the Western Nigerian lagoons (Webb, 1958) which comprises several lagoons stretching from the Republic of Benin to Nigeria (Hill & Webb, 1958). Figure 1 shows the extent of the Lagos Lagoon system of which Lagos Lagoon is a part. The Lagos lagoon system comprises a net work of nine lagoons - Yewa, Ologe, Badagry, Iyagbe, Lagos, Kuramo, Epe, Lekki and Marhin. The Lagos lagoon is one of the biggest lagoons in Nigeria and it is the main focus of the study.

The area's water tourism potentials has not been properly harnessed. As a water body subject to tidal waves, it is directly linked to the Atlantic Ocean on the south and technically ends around the Palaver Islands on the east, while the lagoon continues to the Epe lagoon which eventually opens out to the ocean again, further along the Lagos coast.

The communities that make up the Lagos lagoon waterfront are varied and include: Makoko, University of Lagos, Ilaje, Oworonshoki, Ogudu, Bayekun, Agboyin, Moba, Ofin, Ikorodu, Ibeche, Aja, Lekki peninsula, Banana Island and Ikoyi. This is interspaced with uninhabited swampy mangrove vegetation. Also along some of the waterfront edging the Lagos lagoon are shanties built on the water using makeshift materials, as well as wood preservation and sawmill market particularly at the Makoko end that generally deface the waterfront and make it unattractive for water tourism. The famous Third Mainland bridge of Lagos also traverses this lagoon, making it even more important and a key landmark in the Lagos landscape.

Previous research, indicate that water tourism can be a major revenue source, particularly for developing economies like Nigeria (Falade, 1998). This calls for change in the way the existing fringes of the Lagos waterways is currently being used. With proper planning, the area along the Lagos lagoon edge can undergo a renewal that will position the lagoon for better development and subsequently for water tourism development.

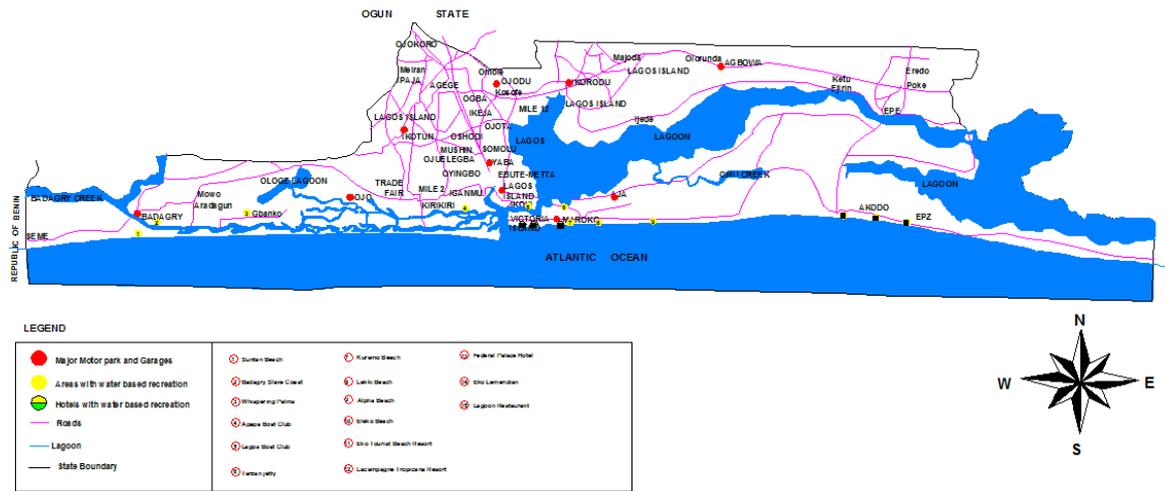


Figure 1: The Lagos Lagoon complex, spanning Republic of Benin on the West, Atlantic Ocean to the South and Ogun State on the North and East of Lagos State, Nigeria.

Background

The coastal town of Lagos, Nigeria was first inhabited before the 15th century AD and grew from a small fishing and farming settlement on an island until the advent of the Portugese in 1472 who gave the Island its present name of Lagos (George, 2009). Even by this time, the existence of the lagoon was acknowledged as “Gadoo” lake on the north side of the original settlement. By 1800, its population was estimated to be about 5,000 (Wilbur Smith & Associates, 1980). During the colonial period, Nigeria was a colony of Britain and Lagos was a major city, eventually becoming its capital until 1991 when the seat of power moved to Abuja. Lagos still remains a major city in Nigeria and the key centre for commercial and economic activities in Nigeria. Over this period, the city has undergone phenomenal growth.

According to George (2009), the city of Lagos grew at a rate of 3.3% per annum between 1901 and 1950, but its growth rate per annum between 1950 and 1963 had risen to 18.6%. By the 1963 census, a population of 1,136,154 was recorded for Metropolitan Lagos. Lagos continued to grow and by 1997 the city had a population of 11.85 million. Lagos metropolis is presently estimated by United Nations to have a population of 18 million. Metropolitan Lagos covers an area of about 1,183km², out of which 455km² is water body, wetland and mangrove swamps (George, 2009).

Before independence, the colonial government at that time adopted the Garden City approach in the planting of European Quarters, later GRA’s – Government Reserved Areas, with spacious, lush greenery. The GRA’s became standard features of many Nigerian cities. In Lagos, this gave credence to such places as Ikoyi and Ikeja GRA. This approach was unfortunately not carried through to the ‘African quarters’ like Ebute Metta. At post independence, it was only the former European Quarters or GRA’s that were planned. Perhaps due to increased migration, various areas comprising the metropolis virtually grew without a plan (Adejumo, 2003). Oduwaye (1998) attributes part of the problem of rapid urbanization to the rapid rate of migration from rural areas to urban areas, among other causes. All this growth and rapid urbanization was not without its problems.

The tremendous pressure brought on by unplanned urbanization has put pressure on land , resulting in urban sprawl and in largely unmet demand for basic urban services and infrastructure such as water, electricity, sanitation, access roads, public transport, effective drainage and waste disposal.

The inevitable result has been the rapid development of slums both on land and along the waterways, including the lagoons where the tidal waves are not so strong as to sweep away the temporary shanties that have been constructed by people who are desperate to live near the city centre but are unable to afford the cost of scarce accommodation. This rapid unplanned growth was characterized by over population of some areas and neglect of other urban areas.

Adejumo (2003) suggested that unplanned developmental activities have continued to alter the metropolitan fringes. The depressed national economy encouraged fringe communities to sell landed properties giving room for the growth of slums. He suggested land acquisition by the government which should extend to the fringes to acquire land as green belts serving as buffers that will contain the sprawl on one hand and delineate the urban edge on the other. This further explains the development of slums and shanties along the fringes of the Lagos lagoon.



Figure 2: Shanties, wood preservation and blighted conditions of the Makoko end of the Lagos lagoon

Various studies have been carried out that confirm the negative effects on the urban environment as a result of unplanned urbanization. Such Studies include Olokesusi (1994) on Lagos, Anozie (1994) on Imo and Fadamiro (2000) studies on Ondo States. The results emphasized that the rapid growth of urban centers in Nigeria generated management problems, such as encroachment of open spaces, inadequate solid waste management, water supply, housing and water pollution. Thus urbanization according to Osiyi (1989) has resulted in uncontrolled use and development of land, creating chaos and blighted conditions in cities. Fadamiro and Atolagbe (2006) attribute this to lack of pursuit of landscape planning, design, and management in promoting land use development in Nigeria.

Key among the problems of unplanned urbanization was that of urban housing. This was further compounded by a lack of firm land in the physical expansion of the city to accommodate several immigrants both local and foreign as Lagos gained more prominence as a Mega city, ranking 6th world mega city by 2000 based on population size.

The problem of poor terrain assails most of Lagos as much of the land is barely 5 metres above sea level; there is therefore the added problem of poor drainage and insufficient firm land upon which to build and install the basic infrastructure necessary for city dwelling. With the government's inability to meet up with the housing demands, much of the urban poor found a solution in the construction of shanties along waterfronts, resulting in many slums defacing the water bodies and causing urban blight.

The Lagos lagoon is home to many of such settlements among which are in Makoko, Iwaya, Ilaje, Oworonshoki, Moba and Agboyin.

2 URBAN REGENERATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The idea of proposing changes in the area is to encourage urban regeneration that can help revitalize the area and generate efficient use of the existing water body – the lagoon for recreation, tourism and improved housing. Many examples exist where revitalization of rundown waterfronts led to increased benefits for the community and the city in general. One of such is the change in the London suburb Isle of Dogs that was transformed into the immensely successful Dockyards.

In addition to the positive effects of regeneration, the potentials of tourism as a major economic sector are well documented. Tourism is the world's largest industry and continues to grow. Data from the WTTC indicate that total gross expenditures for travel and tourism were \$3.2 trillion in 1993 or, approximately six percent of the global GNP. By 2005 the number of tourism related jobs is expected to exceed 350 million. In the 1990s more than 200 million people were directly or indirectly employed in the global tourism industry and 20,000 jobs are created for every 1 million dollars of revenue generated.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

In his study on the socio-economic impact of tourism, Hall (2003) discovered that tourism has become a significant source of foreign exchange revenue for many countries of the world. Economic gains will result for Lagos if the water tourism potentials of the study area can be accelerated and developed, especially as it is within easy reach of the city core and the economic nerve center of Lagos. When tourism is effective in an area, the local and adjoining community immediately benefit from it in terms of sales of local arts and crafts at higher costs, as well as generating work for the people in that vicinity.

This has been confirmed through previous studies which demonstrate that residents feel tourism helps the economy (Ritchie, 1988), that tourism increases the standard of living of host, and that tourism helps the host community and country earn foreign exchange (Ahmed & Krohn, 1992). Also, tourism helps generate employment (Ahmed & Krohn, 1992; Backman & Backman, 1997; Milman & Pizam, 1987), and increase revenue to local business (Backman & Backman, 1997; Sethna & Richmond, 1978) and shopping facilities (Backman & Backman, 1997). This spirals into the economy of the larger society.

Water tourism, which is a type of tourism has its roots in Britain and is equally a major source of income for various countries that have chosen to develop this type of tourism. Coastal tourism, from which water tourism evolved, was initially meant more for recovery from sickness and relief from the stuffy existence in the hinterland that drove the elite to seek a breath of sea breeze by the coasts of Britain. Gradually the towns became favourite holiday spots as industrialisation brought with it faster means of travel, more money which enables the middle-to-low income earners to afford trips to places where the elites had previously held sway.

A range of activities and uses of natural resources occur in waterfront tourism zones some of these include, recreation, fishing and residential living. The attraction of tourism to waterfront regions continues to flourish. This is partially due to the eternal appeal of sun, sea and sand; but also because the destinations offer beauty, aesthetic value, exotic appeal and diverse habitats.

Arising from the coastal tourism is the massive water tourism phenomenon that has evolved mostly in United States of America, The Caribbean islands and parts of Europe – notably Spain, Turkey, Portugal and Greece. This involves a lucrative industry centred on the concept of water enjoyment, involving different types of water features which bring the tourist into direct, more exciting interactions with water, more than ever before.

4 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is urgent need for deliberate landscape planning intervention with articulated urban design to check the degradation and halt the destruction of the natural landscape and encourage development of the Lagos lagoon waterfront in a manner that will be in consonance with sustainability. The role of landscape planning in the improvement and sustainability of the existing urban spaces is fundamental.

The study area is presently neglected, deteriorating and should be re-designed to function effectively with natural and artificial landscape elements, such as decorative circulation pavements, continuous walkways, cycle and pedestrian paths, parks, playgrounds, plaza and spaces for community gatherings.

The landscape design aspect may include the planting of trees and shrubs along existing streets, roads and new roads, housing estates, office blocks, business premises and improvement of reclaimed sites where the environment is rehabilitated and natural habitats restored. Socially and economically, the beautification programme is a very important value-adding process, where the improved environment becomes a more inviting living and working environment to locals, developers and investors alike.

Also from a landscape perspective, the following elements will be deployed in the regeneration of the area; tree planting, street lighting, streetscapes, street decoration, provision of public parks and gardens, creation of new roads, upgrade, maintenance and marking of old roads, signage upgrade, waterfront development / revitalization, provision of street furniture, provision of distinct transportation networks, median/boulevard planting provision of pocket parks, introduction of fountains and other water features statues, sculptures and monuments and provision of urban art.

Key in the landscape planning is the use of plants and structural landscape materials which include: groundcovers and flowers, tangible and intangible enrichment items and artificial state of the spaces under study which will be well organised for the best effect.

The regeneration strategy needs to take into cognizance the adjoining land uses in order to effectively accommodate the various activities which are identified as important in the area and compatible with a regenerated lagoon front. Such uses include residential, recreational, commercial, tourism and conservation projects.

If properly harnessed, tourism can be a major asset to the nation in general, and to the host community in particular. Nigeria needs to tap into this source of income especially Lagos as it is a city that is richly endowed with water in its various forms. Water-based tourist destinations in Lagos are grossly underdeveloped. The architectural potentials and usage of water as a natural recreational resource can be better harnessed in developing effective tourism potentials of Lagos.

The Lagos lagoon is an example of such natural resource which can be redeveloped to harness its potential for water tourism and recreation. This can be done through the urban regeneration of the area and by the redevelopment of the communities and land uses that currently inhabit the water's edges.

Lagos does not have much recreational space. In 1976, 467 hectares urban land was identified as recreation areas in the city (Wilbur Smith Associates 1980). A bulk of these 467 hectares of recreational space fall within the private commercial group. The inadequacy of public recreation open spaces in Lagos indicates that little attention has been given by successive governments to this urban sector. The few public spaces cover a total area of 104 hectares. This was 2% of the 1976 496 hectares identified for leisure and recreation. The ratio was one hectare per 40,000 of the state population where as international average is one hectare per 600 of the population. This show a major need in the city and this need can be amply met in the redesign of the lagoon waterfront.

The urgent need for urban open space and recreational areas is highlighted in the 1997 Messers Arbitrage Consulting Group Study on socio-economic problems of Lagos State including the state of recreation and recreational facilities. This study of Oshodi/Isolo Local Government revealed the lack of public recreational facilities forcing the residents especially children and adolescents to convert any available space including un-built residential plots, streets and school sports ground for active leisure activities. This is a regular sight on any major street in Lagos, particularly in the slums and high density areas.

According to Adejumo (2003), the few playgrounds bequeathed to Lagos by the colonialists have long been changed into other uses. Ikoyi Park which was the premier public park in Nigeria inherited from the colonialists, by the early eighties had been subdivided into residential plots now called Park View Estate. The same fate befell the remains of Kuramo Waters youth campground at Victoria Island and Race Course. Biney zoo - a private initiative and Love Garden Pleasure Park at the Lagos Island have all ceased to exist.

This underscores the need to create adequate recreational spaces that will not only replace them, but also function as star attractions for tourists visiting the metropolis while affording Lagosians a place for leisure and recreation beside the water.

For meaningful results, a holistic sustainable approach should be employed. Considering the various existing land uses in the study area, it is suggested that the area be redeveloped to have waterfront recreational facilities, urban parks, conserved wetlands for tourism, clearly identified fishing and sustainable water transportation and redesigned residential areas both on the water and at the shores. This will require proper coordination between the host communities, architects, landscape architects and town planners in order to articulate a scheme that is holistic in approach – encompassing urban design Landscape planning and mass housing.

Just as unplanned urbanisation brings degradation, so also does unplanned, wrongful, uncontrolled tourism can be detrimental to the community. Thus more effective tourism planning and management strategies may be necessary in order to ensure sustainable and successful tourism development.

There is a delicate balance between the environment and the tourism industry, which depend on each another for survival. The challenge calls for sustainable tourism strategies which control the way the natural resources are managed in tourism destinations as well as managing the impact visitors inflict on the destination's environment and nature. Consequently the redevelopment and urban renewal efforts will need to take a sustainable approach that ensures the continuity and viability of the new scheme.

In the development of an effective water tourism strategy for the Lagos lagoon, it is important to note that tourism is an interdisciplinary field and involves a number of different industries and natural settings.

Planning is essential to stimulate tourism development and its sustainability. Without tourism planning, many unintended consequences may develop, causing tourist and resident dissatisfaction. These include damage to the natural environment, adverse impacts upon the cultural environment, and a decrease in potential economic benefits. The negative experience of many unplanned tourist destinations and the success of local and regional planned destinations demonstrate that tourism development should be based on a planning process that includes a solid assessment of the resources at the destination and their attractiveness potential.

5 CONCLUSION

The urban regeneration process is usually a thorough process if it is to be successful. The paper has reviewed the contributions of various disciplines – landscape architecture, urban design and town planning in arriving at a new plan that can encourage water tourism in an area that is currently deteriorating and has developed into a blight on the Lagos landscape – the Lagos lagoon. The paper therefore recommends the total adherence to the suggested policies for the effective management and sustenance of the urban environment through landscape planning and urban renewal provisions.

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