

NIGERIAN LANDSCAPE CHARTER: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK DISCOURSE.

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ABSTRACT

Sustainability as a developmental paradigm to checkmate uncontrolled use of earth finite resources crept into global consciousness in the last quarter of twentieth century. It is now apparent that the 1992 wave of sustainability philosophy was insufficient to mitigate the global and local degradation of natural capital hence the need for a fresh wave of sustainability dictum that will catalytically empower the ineffective previous waves to overcome difficult developmental hurdles and infuse new values especially quality of life, bio-centric perceptions and local thinking on global scale. It fits in to landscape philosophical clarification that respects indigenous, regional and national aspirations ways of thinking in developmental process.

This paper explores a framework to actualise Nigerian landscape charter. An apparent expectation of national landscape charter is a friendly challenge of the current developmental statuesque that dismembered congruous landscapes into cultural, natural and historic unities under the management of numerous agencies and ministries without a harmonized agenda. The paper argues in favour of desktop study of the current policy objectives at federal level to fully comprehend in built participatory framework. The second step is primary data collection through series of workshops to understand geosopic perspectives of diverse cultural systems relative to contextual bioregion. The Paper submitted that comparative analysis and synthesis of current environmental statuesque and fresh findings from geopolitical workshops will evolve a unified national landscape philosophy. Included are desired urbanism; driving ideology for agriculture, protected area, mining, integrated coastal area management; and envisioned rural Nigeria dictum that cut across all bioregions. This will lead to national policy objectives for various areas of the landscape.

Key Words: Paradigm; Developmental Ideology; Landscape Philosophy; Landscape Charter

1. INTRODUCTION

The multiple global environmental crises plaguing humanity is traceable to a fragmentary developmental thought pattern. Smith, et al.(2011) referred to this dualistic thinking as Cartesian paradigm that separates human system from natural systems in its modus operandi. The duality posture never sees man as part of ecosystem structure and disrespect the relationship influence of food web in the holistic functioning of the bioregion. Cartesian paradigm is held accountable for “human alienation, ecological devastation, social injustice and spiritual impoverishment” – the very root of ongoing global environmental crises (Smith, et al., 2011). Sustainability as a developmental paradigm to checkmate greedy consumption of earth finite resources crept into global consciousness in 1987. This was followed by series of world meetings, conventions and protocols starting from 1992 Earth Summit to 2012 Green Economy. Raskin (2006) felt that the 1992 wave of sustainability philosophy was insufficient to mitigate the global and local degradation of earth’s natural capital hence the need for low carbon living energised by green economic framework.

Low carbon developmental framework revolves around four sectors in its basic form namely “renewable energy; green building and energy efficiency technology; energy-efficient infrastructure and transportation; and recycling and waste-to-energy” (Chapple, 2008). This demands a transition from existing wasteful technologies and developmental process to a cleaner developmental thought pattern. Transition programme demands deliberate investment in low carbon technologies that are renewable energy based, efficient exploitation and use of natural resources. The beneficial value of green economy for African nations is hinged on leapfrogging existing dirty and inefficient technologies responsible for pollution prone productive processes. Pressing questions from these developing nations are numerous. Who pays for the cost of replacing the new technologies and who owns these technologies? How will poor nations acquire much needed skills for low carbon technologies? How will the technologies be made compatible to the ways of life of local people? Chapple (2008) provides a feasible solution through effective policy intervention rooted in local economic strengths. It is in line UNEP/AU (2011) joint submission on green economy that “sustainability will remain elusive if we do not design ways to live within the means of one planet and if there is no hope for all for a better life on that one planet”. This provides ample opportunity for stakeholders to define policies that will mould natural and cultural landscape resources towards improved liveability using low carbon technologies. Such low carbon development is

greatly influenced by landscape philosophy with desired goal of localising planning, design and developmental framework. It is thinking along Raskin (2006) “great transitions” suggestion for a fresh wave of sustainability dictum that will catalytically empower the ineffective previous waves to overcome difficult developmental hurdles at all scales. Great Transitions are transformative scenarios in which new values especially quality of life, bio-centric perceptions and local thinking on global scale would influence development. It fits in the “concept of landscape” as an environmental philosophical clarification that respects indigenous, regional and national aspirations ways of thinking in developmental process. It is a paradigm shift from the overbearing central ‘top-bottom approach’ used in land and water resources management to people centred views in the productive management of both natural and cultural resources for the continuous multiple benefits on equitable basis. Nesting green economy on landscape philosophy demands understanding what landscape is to local people. This paper explores a framework to actualise landscape paradigm in Nigeria.

2.0 PARADIGM AND DEVELOPMENTAL STRATEGIES IN NIGERIA?

Landscape is a spatial entity that develops from individual geomorphic conditions and historical usages for economic, social, recreational, transportation, military, religious and agricultural purposes. These usages create diverse environmental features which in turn were responsible for diverse human adaptations for survival in a bioregion. Dynamic developmental economic survival has in recent years become destructive stripping natural landscapes of their originality. This is driven by hostile land tenural systems, urbanisation, regional transportation model and extractive forest resources management policies (Lebeau, 2002). The immediate result is total loss of age long natural and cultural heritage sites. Further development demands national environmental framework that holistically addresses landscape issues especially assessment, restoration, preservation and development is a necessary sustainable management document.

2.1 Natural Landscapes

National historical records presented the prime position of forests and forest products as major means of balance of payment for over a century. FME (2006) revealed that 10% of the nation’s total area (96,043 square kilometres) was under reservation by 1960. Forest resources management throughout the twentieth century was hard wood species exploitation driven. The result of the haphazard timber logging managerial system is a massive

deforestation rate of 400,000 hectares per annum (FME, 2006). Recent report shows that less than 6% of the national land area is now under protection – a sharp decrease from 1960 standard (NTWG, 2009). The long term effect of these top-down exploitative forest policies includes declining biodiversity index, very low contribution of forestry sector to GDP and frequent destructive flooding driven by recent climate change phenomenon. NBSAP (2006) statistics show that 0.4% of the nation’s plant species are threatened and 8.5 % endangered. It corroborated FME (2006) worry of noticed timber trade reversal with the importation of wood products reaching US\$177 million in 1986. The recent National Forest Policy was also concerned with the scenario and strategized to increase the total area under sustainable forest management to 25% of the nation’s land area. Unfortunately the total package was not protection and restoration driven but centred on “aggressive establishment of plantations of economic trees of both exotic species, such as teak and indigenous species” (FME, 2006). Mention of community participation in the same document was hanging and stressed the development of ‘innovative approaches to forest management on both forest reserves and forest areas outside forest reserves meant to address the disincentives associated with a protectionist approach to forest management whereby Government is regarded as the major stakeholder on forests management”.

2.2 Cultural Landscapes

Other stated National Forestry Policy objectives were not crafted to accommodate the views of various communities that live in the different ecological zones. As noted by NESREA (2006), “people living in these ecological zones have evolved unique traditional strategies for the comprehension, living and exploiting” the landscapes without diminishing the inherent resources. Their knowledge of social, economic and religious values in relating with the structural members of the landscapes influence the traditional architecture, nature dependent settlement pattern, diets and dressing pattern. Developmental activities in these eco regions then demand deliberate accommodation of people’s cultural thinking to generate rural and urban identity compatible with the landscape. The necessity for regional distinctiveness is timely as cities in global south is threatened by the internationalisation of art and architecture of buildings, unified subdivision system and manmade structures. The starting block is identification and application of progressive indigenous environmental values through adequate community participation. They are necessary tools for cultural landscape transformation to improve liveability and create urban identity.

Between 1861 and 2010 Nigeria urban landscapes experienced triple waves of developmental principles namely Colonial Preparatory Period for the annexation of Nigeria as a geographic entity (1861 –1914); Nigeria as British Colony (1914-1960); Independent Nigeria (1960 – 2010). Colonial Preparatory Period halted local worldview urbanism that established ethnic nationalities diverse human settlements (Adejumo, 2012). It was a transitional period from globally condemned slave trade dominated landscapes to the quest for alternative profitable resources to meet economic development of home country. Colonial Preparatory Period test run the suitability of tropical urban landscape for commercial cash crop species especially Theobroma cacao – an important raw material in chocolate industry. Urban landscape policy for Nigeria as British Colony was based on “Dual City” concept which was a three dimensional implementation of British colonial ‘divide and rule’ philosophy. ‘Dual City’ urbanism was composed of European Reservation Areas (ERA) and native quarters (Immerwahr, 2007; UN Habitat, 2009). While ERA was planned on British Garden City model, the native areas maintain pre colonial organic urban landscape according to segregation principles.

Post Independence Nigeria environmental design works was based on ‘tropical architecture modernism’ principles (Immerwahr, 2007). It did not tamper with colonial era urban values but simply renamed ERA as Government Reservation Area (GRA). Adoption of ‘tropical modernism’ as an urban design style for post independent Nigerian settlements finally erode the role of culture in Nigerian human settlements. Twenty first century Nigerian urban landscape is a mosaic of organic inner core native areas framed by disjointed gridiron planned satellite neighbourhoods that fades into blighted and sprawling peri urban low income settlements where development is ahead of physical planning. This is not unconnected with limited national human settlement policy objectives that focused on encouraging “the development of balanced and environmentally friendly settlement structures through -- provision of guidelines for appropriate planning, design, construction, maintenance and rehabilitation of shelters, infrastructures and other facilities” (Federal Environmental Protection Agency , 1998). In the absence of home grown urban philosophy, post independent Nigerian settlements were built without cultural meaning. There is an urgent need for philosophical basis on which national, regional, state and city landscapes are planned, regenerated, protected and managed.

3. LANDSCAPE PHILOSOPHY

Landscape is the sum total of a place character composed of land cover, quality and essence. Landscapes evolved over a period of time as a result of natural and cultural processes. Natural processes refer to bio physical structure, geology and soil while cultural processes are the sum total human systems grafted on the environment. Structurally, a landscape is restricted to inherent visual properties and characteristics that define natural or manmade outdoor environment. It is much more than scenic views encompassing both visual and non visual features. This provides the room to accommodate functional, cultural, recreational, historic, ecological values and their sensorial attributes including smell, taste and feeling in the proper landscape definition. This scenario presents landscape as an interrelated three dimensional products. First is the physical dimension focusing on biophysical features. The perceptual dimension highlights views while the meaning dimension is about intrinsic values associated with specific place. These dimensions generate environmental products that exhibit either natural or cultural processes in a geo referenced spatial configuration. Landscape is therefore a complex four in one system. Included are geomorphological, ecological, economic and cultural systems. They collectively influence perceived values attached to the landscapes. . Perceived values vary with individuals and groups. The way local population regard their landscape, that is, the socio cultural worth and inherent values attached to it differ from tourists and visitors. Perceived values are entrenched in observed landscape character which is distinctive and recognisable pattern of elements in the environment that gives each locality its “sense of place”. As physical locations, ‘place’ becomes centre of felt values as people interact and become acquainted with the landscape (Tuan, 1977). ‘Place’ is therefore a cultural landscape constituted and perceived by the meanings people attribute to them. People establish different relationships and meanings to “places” depending on the inherent cultural, social, economic and religious values generated by the landscape. Assessment of ‘place’ landscape character becomes veritable tool for identifying and studying the features that constitute meaningful spatial configuration.

Conceptually landscape displays palimpsest of various realities on time scale. The vestiges of people’s earlier use of the landscape did not only remain on its surface but are also either recorded in the surviving documentary record or orally transmitted from one generation to the other in poems and in folktales. This is of particular importance for exploring the more intangible socio cultural and perceptual characteristics of a ‘place’ – and what they meant to

people over time. 'Place' may then have diverse meanings that need to be interpreted to understand value systems at any point in time. Such values should not be dismissed, but considered in future designs after 'place' is deconstructed. Pedroli & Adolfsson (2002), referring to Habermas philosophical classification, identified three landscapes conceptual layers namely true landscape, right landscape and real landscape. True landscape is perceived as object that can be described and quantified scientifically. True landscapes are influenced by the biophysical formation with distinctive cognitive properties. The geo spatial attributes accommodates landscape ecologists descriptive analysis and bioengineering recommendation towards a healthy ecosystem. Inter subjective right landscape is the domain of attributive values where public opinion is heard. Landscape on this layer is seen as destroyed, degraded, blighted, luxurious or beautiful. Description and submission is dictated by defined criteria by individual, groups and community depending on values under consideration. Decisions on right landscape layer are often political and submit to social constructions that determine desired future. The real landscape exhibits subjective personal values responsible for memorable attachment. Often real landscape forms the subtle background during environmental discourse. It is the landscape layer that generates memorable activities undertaken at distant past. Real landscapes influence decisions on conceptualised designs rooted in positive behaviour moulding. Landscape assessment on this platform shifts from the usual site suitability studies to the meaning people have of their environment. This presents two issues that must be resolved. First challenge rest on the fact that landscapes mean different things to different member of the community. Secondly different values are attached to particular landscape by the people. The pragmatic solution is adequate understanding of various values stakeholders have of the landscape and these should be situated within local, state and regional context. This is better achieved through participatory mechanism. Participatory landscape decision making is nesting landscape paradigm in democracy. As submitted by Fajardo (2012), citing Moore (2009), it is urging citizenry to have direct access to decision making process that defines valuable landscape. Community participation then open essential window to carry people along in the planning, restoration, protection of national landscapes (Fairclough, 2002).

An apparent expectation of national landscape charter is a friendly challenge of the current developmental statuesque that dismembered congruous landscapes into cultural, natural and historic unities under the management of numerous agencies and ministries without a harmonized agenda. The same landscape is “found in spatial and social planning, agriculture,

economics, coastal zone, tourism, transport, engineering, culture and environment” (Moore, 2012). It is expedient to know that landscape as a developmental thinking process is not framed to eliminate existing local environmental and heritage related policies (Moore, 2012). Rather it recognizes much needed policy objectives synergy for urban planning, heritage conservation, effective productive agricultural land management, protective forest resources, river basins, low impact mining and regional transportation corridors. It is then seen as an everyday living environment celebrating human interactions with rural, urban and natural destinations. The question is will today’s celebration provide desired opportunity for tomorrow without diminishing vital environmental features for the people? Secondly how can landscape misadventure of yesteryears be rectified bearing in mind today’s needs and wants of next generation? As an easily accessible heritage, everybody’s opinion matters. This is because landscape remains a major determinant of individual and community social well being. Such well being, demands direct participatory mechanism in decision making as against the top-bottom approaches that exclusively surrender the knowledge of environmental development to selected few. Bottom-up landscape philosophy approach is meant to inform environmental professionals about the wisdom local people have developed over time in living harmoniously with nature

Crafting holistic urban and regional landscape policies demand that environmental professionals assimilate the tenets of landscape urbanism. Landscape urbanism developed as a unification philosophy that respects the harmonious relationship of cultural and ecological processes in the efficient conceptualisation of sustainable human settlements. The fascination of landscape urbanism as planning and design paradigm for the re definition of urban and rural Nigeria is hinged on its ability to bring together diverse environmental professionals including architecture, landscape architecture, urban design and planning, engineering, forestry, agriculture and resource management to interpret community submissions as effective policies and developmental strategies for natural and cultural landscapes.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK TOWARDS NIGERIAN LANDSCAPE CHARTER

The singular goal of this discourse is how to evolve national landscape charter. Meaning identified in a particular landscape is influenced by individuals or community attached values. The values reflect individual perception of what landscape is to them. These values must be identified and properly understood to develop policies and strategic plans for the

sustainable planning and management of the landscapes. The proposed Nigerian landscape charter aims at evolving people oriented natural and cultural landscape planning policies and developmental strategists. It will be hinged on legal recognition of landscape as an important environmental paradigm. Cultural differences influenced by over 200 ethnic tribes with different religious inclinations reflect the diversity in national landscapes. Community participation in shaping national environment must then be seen as unanimous decision in the re-definition of the nation’s spatial planning policies. Three important overlapping steps are necessary to arrive at this value driven environmental spatial planning. The first step entails identifying values that reflect the perceptions that various ethnic groups have of their landscapes. The values must be properly understood and situated within the overall context of their bioregion. The second involves delineating valuable landscapes. The third is the actual development of necessary policy objectives and strategic methods towards distinct sustainable people oriented spatial urban and regional planning. Figure 4.1 summarizes the Conceptual Model towards achieving holistic national landscape charter.

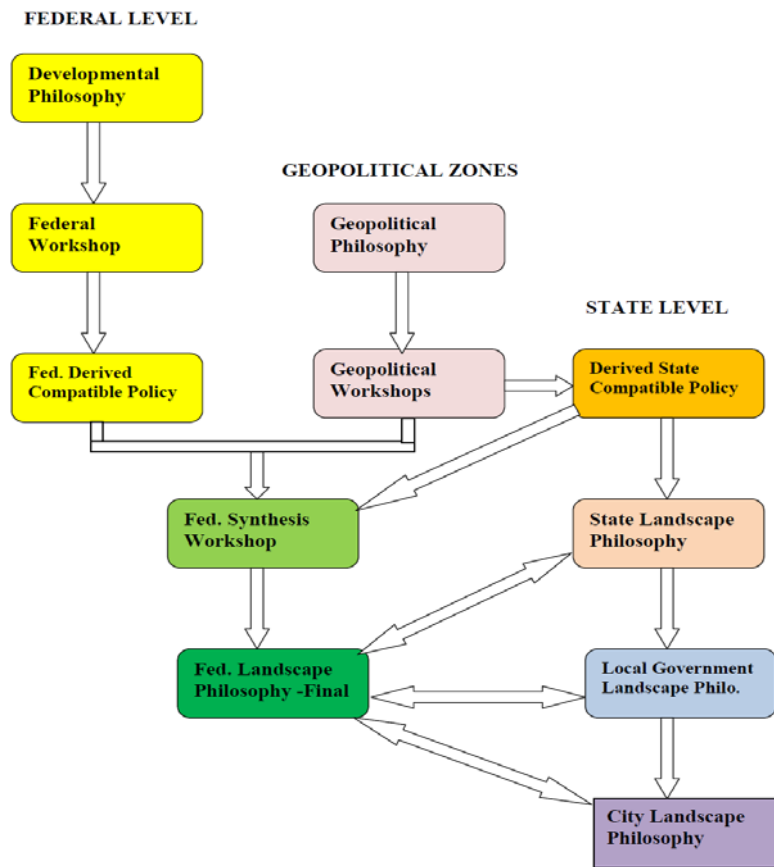


Figure 4.1: Procedural Framework towards Nigeria Landscape Charter

4.1 Landscape Values through Desktop Study

Proposed national landscape charter should be conscious of the geosopic perspectives of the people in the definition of policy objectives that will shape productive land use, restoration, protection and management of the landscape. Synopsis of preliminary desktop works identified Nigeria as a geographical entity with many landscapes created by the interface of diverse human systems (culture) and defined bioregional ecosystems. The following seven bioregional belts are identified namely Sahel Savanna (Marginal Savanna); Sudan Savanna (Short Grass Savanna); Guinea Savanna (Woodland and tall grass Savanna); Low land rainforest Bioregion; Fresh Water Swamps; Mangrove Bioregion; and Tropical Montana Belt (Figure 4.2). Each of these ecological regions have diverse biotopes created by topographic, geological, soil, hydrologic formations; volume and intensity of annual rainfall; and human activities. The deep relationship between human system and the landscape is rooted in nature base religious system. It is responsible for the formation of diverse local cultures that dictates unique identity of the numerous tribes. Therefore Nigeria is a pallet of many landscapes resulting from seven bioregional belts influenced by over 200 ethnic groups.

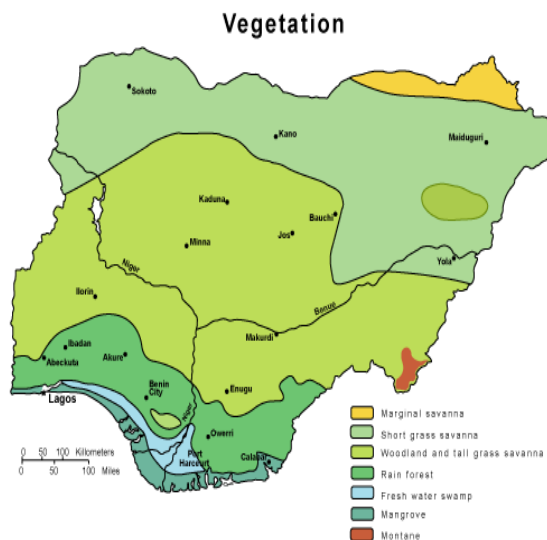


Figure 4.2: National Bioregional Belt

Consideration of over 200 tribal landscape views will be a huge task. The conceptual model then opted for linguistic similarities and arrived at twelve broad groups (Figure 4.3). Further reduction to a manageable level use linguistic similarities as a grouping factor along the unofficial geopolitical regionalism (Figure 4.4). The various ethnic groups are now grouped in 6 geopolitical regions namely South West, South - South, South East, North Central, North

West and North East. Superimposing 6 geopolitical zones on seven bio regions generates distinct manageable landscapes and their varieties for consideration. Ecological philosophic and environmental ethics secondary data of each geopolitical formation obtainable from books, conferences, symposia, workshops and oral sources are relevant in the illumination of various landscapes.



Figure 4.3: National Linguistic Grouping



Figure 4. 4: Six Geo Political Zones

4.2 Landscape Charter Workshops

The necessity for workshops arose to enumerate and understand existing Federal, State and Local Government environmental policies; understand the basis of these policies; and present landscape as a better environmental thinking process. Two categories of workshops namely, national and geopolitical zone workshops are considered. The latter is necessary to comprehend how State Government policies align with the cultural aspiration of the people in each bioregional.

4.2.1 National Workshop

The effect of 40 years of military rule is still very strong in this democratic dispensation. Unitary military governance system still overwhelms fiscal federalism. On that note, Federal agencies and ministries continue to dictate environmental standards nationwide. They should be identified as major stakeholders. Included are Federal Ministry of Environment and her agencies especially NESTRA, National Parks Commission and Forestry Department ; Federal ministry of agriculture and various research agencies; Federal Ministry of Water Resources; Ecological Fund Department in the Presidency; Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development; Federal Capital Ministry; and National Museum especially Heritage Department. Other major stakeholders are National Assembly Committees on environment, agriculture and tourism; foremost environmental, agriculture and tourism nongovernmental organisations; and environmental professional bodies including landscape architecture, architecture, planning, engineering, forestry and agriculture. The goals of national workshop are to sift through the various policies; understand prevailing planning philosophy; identify existing people oriented policies; and present landscape philosophical thinking as a tool to modify future land management policies.

4. 2.2 Six Geopolitical Zone Workshop

Desktop study identified six geopolitical zones. Super imposing the geopolitical map over bioregional maps will provide a better platform for participatory approach to landscape policies generation. This is the goal of the 6 geopolitical zone workshops. It involves inviting traditional institutions (representative of the people); relevant State Governments Agencies and Ministries responsible for formulating and implementing land management policies; Federal Agencies operating in the zone; local NGOs and regional chapters of environmental professional bodies to the workshop. The aim is to collate existing State Governments

policies in the zone relative to their bioregion and primary information on ecosophy principles of the people as basis for generating local landscape policies. The geopolitical government officials and various professional bodies are expected to evolve holistic landscape policy objectives and developmental strategies that will redefine human settlements and productive rural landscapes. Information from these sectoral workshops is particularly useful for environmental professionals and academia for place identity conscious developmental ideology. They provide information on diverse socio cultural and biophysical forces that generate contextual unique town and building forms required by architects, landscape architects, urban designers and regional planners to redefine urbanism specific to each geopolitical region at this point in time. The same parameters are required by resource analysts, agriculture experts, foresters and land use planners to evolve a more productive regional land and water resources philosophy that will trigger developmental policy objectives. It is expected that each State within the geopolitical zone will further refine the findings to suit the policy objectives aspirations of her people. This is equally required for local government areas in the State. When city government is eventually restored by national assembly, existing State, and local government extractions becomes a very useful resource to define the aspirations of city states.

4.2.3 Landscape Policy Objectives and Strategies National Panel Review Workshops

Nations, Cities, villages, battlefields, tourism destinations, farmsteads, forest estates and unprotected natural areas are located on landscapes. The final workshop is to review the findings from the seven workshops (i.e. national workshop and six zones workshops). Stakeholders will be purposively drawn. The panel review workshop is a platform to evolve a unified national landscape philosophy. Included is desired urbanism; agricultural, protected area, mining, integrated coastal area ideology; and envisioned rural Nigeria dictum that cut across all bioregions. This will lead to national policy objectives for various areas of the landscape. Such policies will lay a foundation for long term Federal, State Government, local government and city landscape developmental strategies.

5. CONCLUSION

It is necessary to understand how a typical landscape function if planning and remediation measures are desired. Landscape is an agglomeration of ecosystems whose functionality is dictated by inherent characteristics including structures, processes and location. Structural

functionality expresses relationship between climates, landforms, soil, flora, fauna and man. Processes expresses the in and outflow of materials, energy and living components to the landscape. The presence of man in this equation has been the core of present global environmental crises manifesting in diverse landscapes. That is, landscape is a reflection of dialogue that occurs between human and ecological processes. Sustainable planning therefore demands a through comprehension of type, form and sequence of these dialogues on time scale. The understanding views human processes on social, economic and demographic scenario of the region. This will shed much needed light on how “people perceive, value, use and adapt to changing landscapes” (Ndubusi, 2006).

Propose Nigerian Landscape Charter aims at creating a bottom-up framework that will generate home grown philosophies, policies and strategies for planning, restoring, protecting, sustaining and managing most valuable land and water resources at both urban and regional scales. National urban and regional landscape matters should therefore emanate from developmental philosophy and democratic political vision with ecological, economic and social productivity in goods and services as goals. Participatory approach remains the preferred alternative to achieving urban and regional spatial planning policies. When green economic sustainability principles are superimposed on the derived spatial planning details, desired equity in sharing of natural capital proceeds is easily achieved. A simple and direct submission of this new thinking for the nation is that there is one and only Nigerian landscape. All units of this landscape system are meaningful and useful to someone.

The proposed sustainable management of Nigerian landscapes is about redefining the future of the people; and influencing the emergent of productive landscapes that respects the geomorphology and historical identity for healthy social, economic and cultural well being. Spatial planning that stresses sustainable regional development is inevitable if productivity is desired. In the absence of national spatial planning philosophy there is a need for sustainable regional development based on territorial dimensions. This is because territorial distinctiveness is landscape driven and landscapes are fundamental part of natural, historical and cultural heritage. The bottom line for this people driven landscape dictum is the recognition of physical, social and cultural environments positive influences on quality of life and solution to myriad of national environmental challenges engineered by climatic anomalies, population upsurge, energy deficiency, sprawling urbanisation and stifling globalisation of central business district. These challenges cut across geopolitical boundaries and demand a holistic strategic institutional framework on city, local government, regional

and national scale. Such framework needs a new set of visions, mission statements that emanates from culture and translated into green economic policies that accommodate the aspirations of all stakeholders in the daily quest for socio economic development that leverages dreamed quality of life.

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