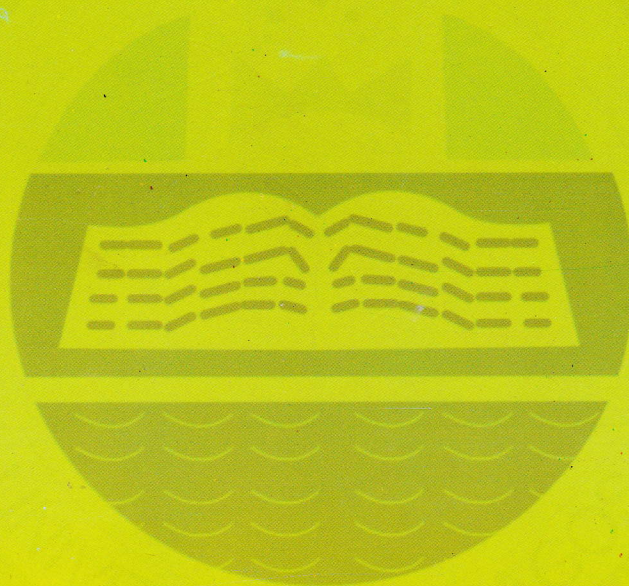




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## **Table of Contents**

	Page
Editorial Board	ii
Notes to Contribution	iii
Table of Contents	iv
 Planning and Design: Incorporating Crop Farming as an Urban Land Use in the Lagos Metropolis. <b>C.O. Odudu.</b>	 1
 Waterfront Regeneration for Recreation and Tourism: A Case for Lagos, Lagoon, Nigeria . <b>Nnezi Uduma-Olugu.</b>	 9
 Inter-Ethnic Mix and Housing Unit Allocation in the Lagos State Development and Property Corporation Estates. <b>Anthony K. Adebayo &amp; Anthony C. O. Iweka.</b>	 16
 Revitalization of Public Low Income Housing Neighbourhoods through Community Participation in Lagos, Nigeria. <b>Abimbola Omolabi &amp; Pauline Adebayo.</b>	 22
 Assessing the level of SDI Development for Spatial Planning in Lagos. <b>S.O Dekolo &amp; Leke Oduwaye</b>	 32
 Megacity in Transition: A Study into Mobility Problems at the Ifo Peri-Urban Community Edge of Lagos. <b>P. O. Fagbohun &amp; Leke Oduwaye.</b>	 43
 Students Perspective of Factors Affecting Academic Performance of Urban and Regional Planning Students in Lagos State Polytechnic. <b>Kamal Ibrahim Adedeji.</b>	 53
 Criteria for Evaluating Performance of Commercial Property Investment in Victoria Island, Lagos. <b>Esther O. Thoutteh &amp; Modupe M. Omirin.</b>	 58
 Road Users' Awareness and Compliance with Pedestrian Crossings in Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria. <b>Bashirn Adisa Raji, Dennis Ade Oloriegbe &amp; Akeem Adewumi Adeoshun.</b>	 65
 Residents Aspiration and Quality of Jankara Open Space in Lagos Island, Lagos, Nigeria. <b>Olabode Orelaja, Leke Oduwaye &amp; Taibat Lawanson</b>	 75



# Residents' Aspirations and Quality of Jankara Open Space in Lagos Island, Lagos, Nigeria

**Olabode Orelaja, Leke Oduwaye & Taibat Lawanson**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper promotes the need to provide community open spaces that reflect the needs of inhabitants, respect character of the urban forms and promote social cohesion in study area. It identifies and takes inventory of the existing open spaces as it also considers the desires of residents and their willingness to pay for open space services. This study is conceptualized by the collaborative planning framework among community residents, the local authorities and the professionals.*

*Data was gathered from respondents in the selected buildings within 1km radius of the existing open spaces with the aid of structured questionnaires and informed participant interviews. Data on socio-economic characteristics of the residents, their proximity to the community open spaces and the extent that it is made public form the basis of this study. The relationship between the desires of residents for community open spaces and its quality were determined using correlation co-efficient statistical tool.*

*Findings revealed that 69.6% of the respondents are not satisfied with the existing community open space as the facilities do not meet their needs. 73.3% of the respondents desire greenery while 7.8% of the respondents desire exclusive children playground. 67.9% of the respondents are willing and ready to pay for open space services if the quality is well enhanced. The study also revealed a strong association between residents' aspiration and quality of community open spaces in the study area.*

*Close co-ordination of national policies, recognition of the specific role of local authorities, encouragement of community and neighbourhood-based schemes and encouragement of initiatives from the private sector and related agencies with significant emphasis on education and information on open spaces are recommended to enhance provision and management of open spaces in the study area.*

**Keywords:** Open Spaces, Community, Aspiration, Quality

## **INTRODUCTION**

The need for open spaces in cities and environment cannot be over emphasized as the degree of adoption and sustenance of natural tendencies in present world is critical to the survival of the whole world (Ogunbiyi, 2013). Therefore, quality of urban open space as a desirable asset and essential elements for the composition of cities is of major concerns to urban planners (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2006). The negligence of its adequate planning and development affect cities from achieving maximum utilization of their social, economic and environmental sectors (Officha, Onwuemesi, Enete & Nzeamalu, 2013). Also, managerial problems in maintaining the few available urban open spaces have led to their gradual decay and loss. Inefficient use and loss of urban open space had invariably reduce its comfort, aesthetic view, relaxation, recreation, communal interaction and preservation of natural system (Officha, Onwuemesi & Akanwa, 2012).

Baycan-Njikamp (2009) reported that there is lack of desired open spaces in cities and the obligation to provide usable open space for the public and a captive audience in its immediate surroundings is necessary. Open space is the largest casualty of unplanned development with staggering growth as it is characterized by problems like insufficient access, poor maintenance, and crime and safety issues (Baycan-Njikamp, 2009). Also, Falade (1998) reported that open spaces in Nigeria suffer neglect due to minimal attention given to them by stakeholders, which invariably affects their quality. The decline in the quality of open spaces in Lagos metropolis can also be attributed to lack of reliable data on open spaces, and poor understanding of the changing demands and pressures put upon open spaces by urban population. The availability of accessible and attractive open spaces is an integral part of quality of urban life. The number and location of open spaces should be adequately planned to serve local



populations well due to the strong relationship between residents' proximity to physical activities and use of open space.

Against this background, this study investigates aspiration of users as it considers the state and usage of open spaces in order to maximise community value and its contribution to creating green spaces in the study area. This will enhance improved urban management and sustainability measures in the urban environment.

### THE STUDY AREA

Lagos Island is located in the south-eastern part of metropolitan Lagos. It covers a total land area of about 8.7 km<sup>2</sup>. It is bounded by the North by the lagoon that separates the island from the mainland from Adeniji Adele Street junction to Ije, the South by Macgregor canal to Lagos lagoon up to Marina at the boundary with Lagos Island East. Eastern part of the study area is bounded by Macgergor canal while the west by C.M.S through Alli Bamgboye junction and Alli Street to Princess Street to Adeniji Adele Street. Land uses in the area are predominantly commercial and residential land uses as larger percentage of residents are traders and civil servants. Open space facilities in the study area can be categorized into school playing fields, sports centres and parks. These are Onikan Stadium, Freedom Park, Dolphin Park, Adeniji Adele loop recreation centre, Ejalonibu playground, Jankara playground, Amuto playground, National Museum, Tinubu Square, Campos Sports Centre and Marina Park.

Jankara playground is located in Oko-Awo community, Lagos Island Local Government Area of Lagos State. It covered about 1,650square metres of land space, which is located around predominantly residential land use. As shown in Plate 1, the space is currently used for active recreational activities with no greenery or natural features.



Plate 1: Jankara Playground, Oko-Awo, Lagos

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTS

The historical beginnings of open spaces dates back to the Greek Agora and the Roman forum and were mostly used for political, economic, cultural activities and for pleasure and socialization in the capital cities (Reeves, 2000). Open spaces in the middle age era was described as the isolated use of market square, cathedral square and others which are confined to single uses of economic, political or religious purpose in renaissance cities (Naz and Ashraf, 2008). Public and green open spaces were reintroduced into the urban realm when modernism was highly challenged, as pollution and vehicular traffic dominated cities (Gehl and Gemzoe, 2001; Suhardi, 2002). The introduction was to solve the growing pollution rate of the environment as well as a means of reclaiming the city space from vehicles and motor ways. Since then, public space became an important element of urban life in many developed countries and just recently for developing countries.

Contemporary provision of urban open spaces rests largely on professional assumptions about its significance in the lives of residents. Jacquelin, Carolyn & Melaine (2012) showed that the most highly valued open spaces are those which enhance the positive qualities of urban life: variety of opportunities and physical settings; sociability and cultural diversity. These improve the social aspects of life that enhance people's satisfaction, experiences and perceptions of the quality of their everyday environments (Mahdavinejad & Abedi, 2011). Whyte (1980), Appleyard (1981) & Francis (1987) regarded use as one of the pre-requisites and measures for a successful open space. It is believed that open spaces, whether used or unused, give an idea of constructive environmental quality and serve as an attraction to the surrounding area or neighbourhood also the failure of a place referred to as a place, which is either underused or used in a way that it was not meant to. Understanding the relationship between the urban population and the green spaces is very important in evaluating their functionality, and future planning and management.

Clement (2012) presented an alternative approach of meeting recreational needs through multiple-use of facilities and partnerships with a variety of organizations in Florence-Firestone, Los Angeles. He argued that the traditional approach through development of new parks, which require substantial financial and land resources, is not feasible due to lack of public funding and land in urban areas. He further stated that instead of devoting significant resources – on land acquisition and facility



construction, public agencies should actively identify and pursue alternative ways, locations, and partners to offer recreational services, which include the joint use of school facilities; the introduction of recreational uses on land owned by utilities; mobile gyms; transportation of residents to outside recreational facilities; and temporary use of parking and vacant lots, reuse of existing buildings, and temporary closure of streets for recreational purposes.

Ogunbiyi (2013) emphasized the need for open spaces in Lagos State and also noted that it is important for residents and users to support the environmental initiatives of the government. However, it is also important for the government to understand that the way in which change comes about also influences how that change is accepted by the society. This notion is supported by Franks (2012) stating that when stakeholders have an opportunity to actively participate in the decision-making of developments and ensure the project is consistent with their values and livelihoods, their experience and acceptance of those developments tend to be more positive and their attitudes toward projects more supportive. In response to the need for open spaces in Lagos State, Udo-Udoma (2014) questioned the availability, accessibility and usage of open spaces. She reported that the majority of open spaces with substantial space are vacant most of the time and located near major roads and motorways, where cars are going at high speeds and park users are exposed to health hazards from noise and air pollution. She also suggested that there is need for government to understand people's relationships with the policies and spaces being created. In the article, one question that was asked which is relevant to this study states that "*if these spaces are not being used then who are these spaces made for and how are they benefiting the city of Lagos?*"

Feierstein (2012) gathered from her survey on the amount, quality and patterns of use of public open space in Israeli cities and towns, and people's current needs and attitudes with regards to neighbourhood open space that civic spaces and streets are more intensively used by pedestrians than public gardens. She added that many public open spaces remain unused as they are usually not well located and do not connect services areas and do not include activities that attract people. Small settlements show a much higher amount and better quality of public open space yet much lower activity levels than observed in bigger settlements. Also, her findings show the failure of quantitative open space standards to assure meaningful public open space in Israeli cities.

Parks usability is very important in improving of urban function especially for residents' recreation, leisure, and physical activities. Therefore, designers need to know basic and systematic information about users' motives and preferences for park activities because 'such information seems very important for planning and providing activity in the present and future urban. On the whole, urban dwellers use different kinds of nature in their cities. The preference for specific types of nature depends on cultural background, accessibility and tradition, although social status can also play an important part. Although the socioeconomic status of urban dwellers plays a role in their general free-time behaviour, there are certain nature-related outdoor activities that are independent from this status, instead it reflects peoples' cultural status within society. Thus, peoples' relationship to nature depends on the culture shared by all the members of the society (Priego et al 2008).

*Kaczynski & Havitz (2010) examined the relationship between proximal park features and residents physical activity in neighbourhood parks. The study was conducted in 1km radius around 33 municipal parks within the four neighbourhoods. The Environmental Assessment for Public Recreation Spaces (EAPRS) instrument was found to be a valuable tool for examining the park features that may be related to physical activity. Data from participants showed that having five facilities (unpaved trail, meadow, water area, basketball court, and soccer field) and six amenities (restroom, historical/educational feature, landscaping, bike rack, parking lot, and a roadway through the park) within a nearby park was significantly related to an increased likelihood of using neighbourhood parks for physical activity. One other nearby facility, a ball diamond, was related to significantly lower odds of engaging in at least some physical activity in neighbourhood parks. Parks with a variety of built and natural facilities and amenities can support a range of physical activity behaviours.*

## CONCEPTS

Relevant concepts to this paper are needs assessment concept and concept of socialability and public life in the study.



### **Needs Assessment Concept**

A needs assessment is a systematic process for identifying, determining and addressing needs, or gaps between current conditions and desired conditions or wants (Kizlik, 2010). The variance between the current condition and desired condition must be measured to appropriately identify the need which may be a desire to improve current performance or to correct a deficiency. Bryne and Sipe (2010) identify it as an alternative to planning standards approach which considers the socio-demographic and bio-physical characteristics of areas for which parks are needed, or where park facilities will be upgraded. There are several underlying assumptions to a needs-based assessment.

Needs assessment is driven by the idea that the population for whom an open space is planned should be calculated according to need.

It assumes that the spatial distribution of both populations and resources within a given area will be uneven, and that people will minimise travel costs (e.g. time, fuel costs, energy etc.) by using the closest available resource.

Apart from considering the absolute number of people within a given geographic area, it also takes into account socio-demographic composition, their leisure and recreation preferences and those of various sub-groups within this population, and the type and number of facilities required to serve those needs. Although it may be more time consuming and resource intensive, a needs-based assessment may provide the capability to better estimate the amount of open space required, the design of that space, and the facilities and programs that foster recreation within that space. But a needs-based assessment must necessarily go beyond the needs of existing residents to also forecast those of future residents which is a major aspect of sustainability though a difficult task can be achieved through the proper understanding of the likely demographics that new built environments will foster.

### **Concept of Sociability and Public Life**

Montero-Avila (2001) in her research identified two concepts to be of help in understanding people's sense of public spaces.

They include sociability and public life. Sociability based on people's needs in terms of affiliation and interaction with others. This affiliation is based on acquiring psychological comfort through public participation in a supportive social system (Lang, 1994) which is similar to (Whyte, 1980) ideas and believes

that people attract people. Sociability allows for connection and the exchange of information. It is believed that sociability occurs when certain favourable features like physical amenities, activities, security, and climate conditions are available for attracting people.

Public Life on the other hand involves bonding of different and diverse people together and defining their role in the community in order to become members of groups to make social and political statement. The character of public life is dependent on the settings characteristics, activities; culture of the people that interact in it and the time activities takes place.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study identified three (3) community playgrounds in Lagos Island. These are Jankara playground in Oke-Awo community, Amuto playground and Ejalonibu playground. Among the three, Jankara playground was selected for study due to its uniqueness in terms condition and patronage. Data was gathered from respondents in the selected buildings within 1km radius around the existing open space with the aid of structured questionnaires, direct observation and informed participant interviews. Data on socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, their proximity to the community open spaces and the publicness of the open spaces form the basis of this study. The relationship between the desires of residents from community open spaces and its quality was determined using correlation co-efficient statistical tool.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

As shown in Table 1 below, findings on the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents revealed that 73.3% of the respondents are male, 83.1% are between the age 18 and 65 years old. Also, 30.9% of the respondents are traders while 44.9% of the respondents have secondary school certificate. This implies that the community has working class population that requires open space for leisure and physical activities.



**Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents**

		Frequen	Percenta
<b>GENDER</b>	Male	178	73.3%
	Female	65	26.7%
<b>AGE</b>	<18yrs	14	5.8%
	18-65yrs	202	83.1%
	>65yrs	27	11.1%
<b>OCCUPATION</b>	Civil Servant	8	3.3%
	Trader	75	30.9%
	Student/Apprentice	63	25.9%
	Unemployed	53	21.8%
	Artisan	44	18.1%
<b>EDUCATIONAL LEVEL</b>	Informal	19	7.8%
	Primary	88	36.2%
	Secondary	109	44.9%
	University/Polytechnic	27	11.1%

Source: Author (2014)

Findings revealed that 69.6% of the respondents are not satisfied with the condition of the existing community open space as the facilities do not meet the needs of the residents. This is as shown in Table 2.0 below.

**Table 2: Condition of Open Space**

Condition	Frequy	Percentage
Satisfactory	18	7.4%
Not Satisfactory	169	69.6%
Indifferent	56	23%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Author (2014)

Data gathered on the respondents' awareness of the benefits of open space revealed that 56.4% of the respondents are aware of open space's benefits. As shown in table 3.0, this implies that the respondents desire open spaces. It is now the responsibilities of the designers to meet the need of the people so as to have maximum benefits accrued from the use of open spaces.

**Table 3: Awareness of Open Space Benefits**

	Frequy	Percege
Yes	137	56.4%
No	59	24.3%
Indifferent	47	19.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Author (2014)

Table 4 gathered data on the desired type of open space and facilities by the respondents. 53.9% of the respondents representing the largest, desire theme park

desire museum. This justified the data on socio-economic activities as related to desired open space. On the other hand, 73.3% of the respondents desire greenery and sensorial design elements while 18.9% and 7.8% of the respondents' desire playground and football and exclusive children playground respectively. This implies that greater percentage of the respondents is desirous of open spaces characterized with nature for health and mental balance after stress. The data is justified by the 75.7% of the respondents desiring theme parks and playground, which are also characterized with greenery and other natural features

**Table 4: Aspiration of Respondents**

Variable		Freq uency	Percent age
<b>Desired Type of Open Space</b>	Theme Parks	131	53.9
	Playground	53	21.8
	Sports Centre	48	19.8
	Reserves & Museum	11	4.5
<b>Desired Facilities in Open Space</b>	Greenery and Sensorial Design Elements	179	73.3%
	Football playground	96	18.9%
	Exclusive Children Playground	19	7.8%

Source: Author (2014)

Data on the residents' frequency of patronage to the open space as indicated in Table 7 revealed that 54.3% of the respondents patronize the open space occasionally while 16.9% of the respondents have not visited the playground before now. Occasional patrons reported that their visit to the playground was for social engagements and when there is special football competition among neighbourhoods.

**Table 5: Frequency of Patronage**

	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	21	8.6%
Weekly	49	20.2%
Occasionally	132	54.3%
Never	41	16.9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Author (2014)

It was also gathered that that 61.3% of the users interviewed come from other communities to participate in football game. The study also revealed a strong association between residents' aspiration and quality of community open spaces in the study area. Observational study gathered that the study area lacks security and safety measures, public convenience and spots for relaxation as desired by the residents. Based on the data gathered on the recreational facilities in Jankara, the community playground does not meet the need of the residents, who should be the



immediate beneficiaries. This has led to misuse of residents' leisure time and need to visit other locations to meet their recreation needs. Public perception of recreational facilities in the study area is based on awareness, provision, management and accessibility. It is believed that if there is proper dissemination of information pertaining to importance of recreation and its facilities, it will encourage participation. The supply of functional facilities, the proper handling of recreational resources and nearness to facilities will improve the state of recreational facilities as well as encouraging visitation of these facilities.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The design and planning of open space requires the determination and involvement of intending users as this will enhance the provision of facilities that will meet the needs of the users, thereby preventing conversion or abusive use of such recreation centres. Knowing who to provide for, what to provide and where to provide is very important in order not to waste resources. Having summarized all these, it is recommended that users' participation in the improvement of recreational facilities be encouraged so as to increase their level of patronage and awareness of benefits accrued to the use of open spaces in the study area. Proper awareness should start from the grassroots, that is, informing people of little or no knowledge of recreation and recreation facilities about the importance and then gradually encouraging people to take part in recreation in recreational facilities. Information on where accessible facilities are located can also encourage people to participate.

Also, provision of functional facilities that meet the recreational needs of users is necessary. Before developing a recreational facility, there should be an assessment on the socio-demographic characteristics of the area as well as consideration of the recreational demand of the people. Sufficiency of recreational facilities in neighborhood localities will encourage people to participate in recreation and reduce congestion in some other recreational facilities.

Location of recreation facilities determines the level of patronage and participation. Recreation centres should be located in areas that need them as well as providing facilities in neighbourhood localities. Recreation facilities should be accessed by foot between 15 and 30 minute drive. Also, entry into these facilities should not be a task.

Public outdoor recreational facilities should be in good condition in order to encourage people to use them. Replacement and repair of facilities that require such

should be considered. Incorporating the private sector into managing and maintaining of recreation facilities can improve the state of facilities which will pull people in. Competent and qualified professionals should be consulted in terms of recreation design, allocation, supply and maintenance. Incorporating masters of the profession will allow for things to be done properly.

### CONCLUSION

This study recognized a strong association between residents' aspiration and quality of community open spaces in the study area. It expressed the potential of public open space *as intervention site for promoting physical activity and communal interaction among residents*. Conclusively, the need for open spaces is universal as its use improves health and wellbeing; it brings social interaction and happiness. Therefore, adequate provision of facilities required by the residents and other intending users should be made in Jankara playground so as to prevent loss or decay of the recreation centre.

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