



The cultural sustainability of traditional market place in Africa: A new research agenda



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ABSTRACT

Recent rural developments in the field of the built environment have led to a renewed interest in exploring residents' sense of community which has been associated with the harmonious relationship among diverse groups. However, limited studies have recognized the influence of neighbourhood market square on community development concept such as the sense of community in the rural areas of South-west, Nigeria as a city in Africa continent. A total number of three hundred and eighty-two ($n = 382$) quantitative survey data and seventeen (17) qualitative participants' observations were analyzed via structural equation modelling (SEM) version 22 and descriptive frequency of activities. Findings reveal that the utilization of market square positively impacted on residents' sense of community, while the paucity of frequencies of users' interactions and purpose is achieved. The research concludes that improvement in the quality of market square through a better planning, management, and design would enhance residents' sense of community and sustainability of the market in the rural areas.

1. Introduction

Market is a gathering point where farmers buy and sell their wares (White, 1999; Huang and Scott, 2003; and Agboola, 2016). Market, according to Zakariya et al. (2016) and World Bank (2009) refers to market as an institution, an avenue for social relation, and transaction of businesses and services. Market (Oja in local dialect) succinctly referred to a place where various goods and services are distributed. Meanwhile, there has been a growing recognition in the published literature that established the significance of market as a public gathering place for buyers and sellers at appointed locations, and at regular time (Hodder and Lee, 1974; and Okafor and Onokerhoraye, 1986). The trading activities in market is either at individuals or group level, which has remained the most popular activities in the informal sector of the economies of Nigerian cities and villages (Ogeah and Omofonmwan, 2013; Omole et al., 2012; and Agboola et al., 2016b). Historically, the market square is adjudged to be a spatial planning that has been in the existence from the inception of a typical settlement and as such has formed an integral part of all Nigerian town and villages (Uzuegbunam, 2012; Okafor and Onokerhoraye, 1986). Diverse roles of markets manifest from its distinctiveness and values attributed by both the residents and the visitor (Adejumo et al., 2012; and Agboola et al., 2014). Over time, the multifunctional role of the market includes economic,

socio-cultural, religious and recreational benefits. The economic importance of market is established having constituted a venue for traders and patrons to exchange goods and services with currencies. Hence, it could be established that the economy of any country is vested solely on huge contribution of markets at both the state, local and national levels (Shakur et al., 2012). The paramount functions of markets as a commercial center remains unchanged over time, while markets are regarded as a cultural environment in which local community lifestyles are showcased (Ashworth, 2000; Weiss, 2001; Crespi and Perez, 2015). The manifestation of the market's cultural virtues is reflected in its drives as an avenue for local tourist attraction via various cultural and festival-related activities.

Neighbourhood open space (NOS) according to Agboola et al. (2016a) is a social area situated in a neighbourhood where various passive and active sharing activities are carried out without contesting for users' accessibility, right of use and ownership. In other words, it is an arena that favoured publics' accessibility, meeting, interaction and engagement. Generally, the scope and typologies of NOS cover European farmers market, streets, town square, green spaces, plaza among others (Carr et al., 1992; Sutton and Marianne, 2008; Gehl, 2001; Rose et al., 2009; and Vecchio, 2009). Out of the numerous typologies mentioned market square in Nigeria context remains significant due to its primary functions as a communal, economic, religious, and

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connection place (Olorunfemi, 1999; Oluwole, 2000; and Agboola et al., 2017a). Over time, several scholars across the countries of the world conducted studies on physical qualities of public spaces and its contribution to residents' sense of community (Lund, 2002; Kim and Kaplan, 2004; Sullivan et al., 2004; Francis et al., 2012; Agboola, 2016). Similarly, most studies on place attachment have attempted to understand people's feelings about the environment in different countries of the world, such as New-York, Poland, Michigan, Kenya, and Nigeria. Such studies include attachment to home (Cooper-Marcus, 1992), and neighbourhood (Rivlin, 1987, 1994; Lewicka, 2005; Rose et al., 2009; Lalli, 1992; and Chigbu, 2013a).

In view of the aforementioned, the justification for studying the users' sense of community and their attachments to the market in this study is vested solely on the need for markets' sustainability and rural development consequent upon the current urbanization process being experienced in the case study towns. In recent years, urban and cultural researchers have also shown a growing concern over the threats of urbanization towards the markets (Zakariya et al., 2016; Adeyinka et al., 2016). Urbanization according to Cobbinah et al. (2015a, 2015b) and Cohen (2006) indicates the increasing concentration of population in towns and cities and has proven to be essential in stimulating socio-economic development (Cobbinah et al., 2015a, 2015b; and Cohen, 2006). Thus, population explosion increases the socio-economic demands of the markets. In Asia, for instance, market vendors contribute about 10–35 percent of the growth of the informal sector (United Nations, 2014). Therefore, market development and sustainability can be viewed as changes brought about through the process of growth, expansion or urbanization of the rural place. In the same vein, it becomes imperative to sustain the tangible and intangible cultural qualities of the markets throughout its redevelopment process and in the future (Zakariya et al., 2016). Sustainability aims at the development that meets peoples' present needs without compromising the ability to meet the future needs of generations unborn, while the greatest challenge for landscape architects, planners, and designers is how to improve and manage the cultural and social sustainability of the built environment (Stren and Polese, 2000; and Agboola et al., 2015).

In the midst of the urbanization challenges, fewer empirical studies have examined the relationship between the utilization of market square towards the enhancement of the residents' sense of community in the context of Nigerian rural areas. Hence, there is a strong need to explore the connections between the rural residents and their attachment to the present location of the case study markets squares. Studying peoples' attachment to place enhances better understanding of individuals, groups, and cultures through various processes (Low and Altman, 1992). Studying market in the research work is based on the peculiarity of the historic market in the users' attachment with a view of evolving effective planning, design and management strategies for rural development and sustainability (Eben-Saleh, 1999; Oluwole, 2000; Omole et al., 2012; and Zakariya et al., 2016). This attests to the significance of the market in the socio-economic and cultural sustainability of rural environments. Emotional evaluations simply refer to place attachment as the positive bond that develops between groups or individuals and their environment (Low and Altman, 1992). This historically reflected from developments showcased around markets that were considered as an important arena to make a daily living (Daniel et al., 2015).

Globally, there is need to look into the challenges associated with the planning of market square and the sustainability of the entire neighbourhood at large (Tumbuan et al., 2006; Udegbe, 2007; and Suryadarma et al., 2007). Enhancement of an adequate sense of community plays a major role towards the improvement of residents' social interaction and participation in community activities (Agboola et al., 2017b). Hence, studying interrelationships among markets' major actors remained a major problem that calls for remedy in such a large and pluralistic community in Nigeria (Alubo, 2011; and Adejumo et al., 2012). It has been argued that the lack of sense of community is a

potential reason for the increase in violence, and impacts negatively on the community sustainability (Lohmann, 2006; and Devreux, 2010). Treading this path, scholars such as Adejumo et al. (2012) were clamouring for further explorations on the interrelationship between the people and their environment in order to consolidate the landscape qualities, design, and management in Nigeria. This study focused on two salient attributes of people and place relationships. First, is to empirically investigate the interrelationships between the utilization of market square and residents' sense of community. Second is to identify the various relationships that existed among the major actors that utilize the market through a qualitative approach. The significance of the study targets the means of establishing appropriateness in promoting sustainable communal living among local residents in Nigeria. Hence, this study is underpinned by attachment and place meaning concepts, while the objectives are tailored toward exploring peoples' preferences, utilization towards the enhancement of the residents' sense of community.

2. A new urban agenda and sustainable rural development goals

There is a growing interest among Nigerian and international government agencies towards contribution of Urban New Agenda through sustainable rural development. The new global agendas vested solely on the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda. As parts of the New Urban Agenda, drives towards sustainable rural development goals become inevitable as cities and rural environments act as centers for culture, learning, and science (Beel et al., 2017). The global community recently acknowledged cities' unique role in sustainable development by including cities in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2016). In September 2015, world leaders committed to achieving 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets as part of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. These goals are intended to provide direction to government leaders, civil society, and communities on the ways to end extreme poverty, achieve health, and protect our environment. Sustainable development goals (SDG 11) focus on "Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable". It was proposed that by the Year 2050 more than two-thirds of the world will be urban dwellers (United Nations, 2014). For this reasons, the onus lies on the global community to discourage rural-urban migrations by making rural areas sustainable, as this will have unique roles in national development (Chigbu, 2013b). According to Daniel et al. (2015), Agenda 2030 framework targets ways to achieve success through communities' strategies and interventions which will invariably impact on hosts of goals and targets such as quality of life. The acceptance of the 'Agenda Habitat' at the UN Conference on Human Settlements 'HABITAT II', in Istanbul in 1996 asserts that the quality of life of all people depends on spatial conditions, characteristics of villages and towns. This is quite different from the general opinion relating to socio-economic, environmental, and cultural factors. Hence, the spatial layout, level of public space's utilization, the density of population and buildings, and easy accessibility to basic infrastructures and services could impact on the residents' quality of life in a neighbourhood settlement.

The challenges facing local, regional and national governments of Commonwealth countries includes the present levels of urbanization. In order words, most Commonwealth countries have faced a very rapid growth in their urban populations and making it difficult for their government to curb. The scale of urban population growth projected for 2015–2030: for India stands at 10.9 million new urban dwellers a year, while that for Nigeria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Tanzania were 4.8 million, 2.3 million, 1.9 million, and 1.1 million respectively (United Nations, 2016). On this note, Urban Agenda Partnership on Urban Poverty (2016), asserts that the increase in population has some vital implications on employment, poverty, and strategies to provide basic infrastructure and services. Similarly, inadequacy and non-functioning

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