

REDEEMING THE AESTHETIC BEAUTY OF NIGERIAN CITIES:
ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Keywords: Urban Planning, Sustainable Landscape Design, Environmental Degradation, Aesthetic Beauty, Nigeria	Abstract: Nigeria has a unique natural landscape and cultural heritage that have been threatened by overdependence on natural resources and unplanned developments. This study investigates the aesthetic beauty of Nigerian cities. The study adopts a qualitative research method using data from credible scientific journals and publications to determine the state of the Nigerian environment and how the natural environment can be modified by adopting improved architectural and sustainable landscape designs in improving town planning and buildings, promoting inclusive, safe and resilient human settlements as envisioned by Sustainable Development Goal 11. The findings from the study revealed that Nigerian cities are at risk of critical health conditions, depletion of natural resources, and other critical environmental hazards such as flooding and rapid degradation. Thus, improper architectural plans deteriorate the aesthetics and attractiveness of the area to tourists. It was concluded that a strategic framework incorporating social and economic developments in each region will reposition and transform Nigeria's infrastructural developments and town planning, thereby reducing negative impacts, communal conflicts, and poor building plans. This study recommends improving environmental policies to drive the desired change in the restoration of Nigeria's aesthetic beauty.
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Introduction

The aesthetics of an environment is linked to the physical and mental well-being of residents or tourists (Mendes et al., 2024). Such environments can increase stress recovery (Wang et al., 2019) and improve physical health as citizens are exposed to such natural

environments, thus enhancing their receptivity and willingness to support conservation programmes (Gobster, 2007). The management of green spaces, ecological restoration, and ecosystem rehabilitation enhances the aesthetics of an environment, and the aesthetic characteristics of a location are critical attractive

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features and determinants of socioeconomic growth and development. Beauty, creativity, and innovation are interconnected and aid the social, economic, and well-being of the people in a region (Baggio & Moretti, 2018).

In Nigeria, there is a lack of insight into the unpleasant experiences that affect the aesthetic beauty of the cities, which requires improving tourists' experiences and the perception of the area (Giné et al., 2021). The pattern of land use in Nigeria reveals the quality and cityscape, highlighting the abnormalities that impact socioeconomic aspects. Improper architectural planning of the settlements, open spaces, and water bodies can lead to overpopulation, indiscriminate disposal of wastes, and threats to life (Olubi, 2020). The spatial structure of the cities shows the relationship between the physical elements, uses and activities in the town (Sadeghi et al., 2014). Land use is fundamental in public policy making, planning and aesthetic assessments (Subiza-Perez et al., 2019), which establishes the relationship between landscape and its attractiveness (Ode et al., 2008). This includes the biological, socioeconomic and ecological elements which can be comparatively analysed to protect and rate the natural environment.

Global Perspective of Aesthetic Beauty

Internationally, attracting and retaining tourists is crucial, as visitors increasingly seek aesthetically appealing locations that leverage the natural beauty and architectural heritage of cities with stunning landscapes (Liu et al., 2025). In China, some researchers discovered the health benefits of urban green spaces in compact cities and thus concluded that rapid increases in stress

levels can be alleviated by constructing urban green spaces with high aesthetic quality (Wang et al., 2019). According to the WHO (2017), exposure to environments with green spaces and aesthetic quality can relieve stress and help prevent mental illness (WHO, 2017). Climate change has induced alterations in some destinations that were popular with visitors, thus impacting tourism due to landscape dissatisfaction (Salim et al., 2021).

Geography encompasses the humanities, natural sciences, and philosophy with forms and aesthetics (Brigstocke, 2024). The satisfaction and scenery of an environment may be viewed differently based on the contrast between home (local environments) and vacation environment (international landscape), which can be a quest for redeeming the aesthetic beauty of cities in Nigeria (Kirillova et al., 2014). The gradual increase in novel technologies, such as combining artificial intelligence with Geographic Information Systems (Fang et al., 2024), has enhanced city-scale intelligence and evaluation of specific built environmental features (Biljecki & Ito, 2021).

Aesthetics of Nigeria, Issues and Challenges

Nigeria has a unique cultural heritage with vast, rich and aesthetic beauty (Emeni, 2019). In Nigeria, there is an environmental difference which depicts the mode of life and economic activities (Arenibafo, 2017). Most of the historic natural accomplishments showcase the cultural diversity and serve as a symbol to be remembered in addressing societal issues of concern (Oyinloye et al., 2020).



Figure 1: Map of Nigeria

Redeeming the aesthetics of Nigerian cities is critical in fostering tourism, foreign partnerships and employment (Ugochukwu et al., 2025). The interaction of Nigerians with their natural environment in industrial activities, agricultural practices, commercial and domestic purposes has led to detrimental consequences such as pollution, environmental degradation, depletion of natural resources, rapid urbanisation (Itaryar & Thomas, 2012) and critical health conditions which require rural community awareness and extensive environmental monitoring services (Akpan, 2015). Currently, Nigeria is facing unprecedented heavy rain and flooding. The thirty-four (34) states are severely impacted, with many communal dwellers displaced and more projected to be at risk, including children and youth (Stromsta, 2024).

Though natural resources play a critical role in the economy of Nigeria, mitigation measures must be established to promote and preserve the environment (Eneanya, 2022). A simultaneous blend between the natural and human environment will restore the natural architecture and landscape design (Imaah, 2010). The economy of Nigeria was declared in recession around August 2016. In 2016, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) declared the economy of Nigeria to be in recession, which has led to different intervention strategies (Aboyade et al., 2017). The conservation of the architectural heritage, which comprises culture, aesthetics, economic importance, history, and other social aspects, is achieved through the use of innovative technologies to offer ecologically friendly options (Fais et al., 2018; Urzi et al., 2010; Kourouma et

al., 2005). Further, the rise in population, characterised by high industrial activities due to overdependence on natural resources, has exposed the environment to pollution of water, soil, and air, which underscores the importance of redeeming the aesthetic culture, numerous creeks, rivers, streams, and forests (Nwizu & Olori, 2024).

Sustainable Solutions for Redeeming the Aesthetics of Nigerian Cities

Redeeming the aesthetics of Nigeria's environment entails modifying the natural environment and improving architectural and industrial designs. Some of the criteria for measuring the aesthetic beauty of a nation are good architecture, art, street graphics and planning (Bankole, 2013). There has been significant improvement in environmental policies aimed at environmental awareness, assessment, protection and restoration plans (Ikporukpo, 1983). Green sustainable developments offer unique opportunities to mitigate the environmental impacts and socioeconomic challenges faced in Nigeria (Adam, 2019). As pollution, erosion, and poor urban planning are on the rise, a more pragmatic approach of adequate funding for afforestation programmes, environmental protection, and conservation programmes is required (Ajayi & Ikporukpo, 2007). The redemption of the aesthetic beauty of Nigerian cities will enhance the understanding of environmental sustainability by increasing human consciousness of sustainable landscape designs (Hemmati, 2016).

The Sustainable Development Goal 11 emphasises the importance of making cities and

human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Chapter 7 of Agenda 21 seeks to promote sustainable human settlements, which include land-use planning and management, sustainable energy and transport systems, as well as integrated environmental infrastructure (United Nations, 2023). Almost all the geopolitical zones of Nigeria, which comprise 6 areas, are entangled with communal conflicts relating to environmental issues such as desertification resulting from poor land management in the North, gully erosion due to poor agricultural practice and exploitation of natural resources in the southeast, soil degradation and air pollution in the south-south, due to oil spills and gas flaring, respectively. At the same time, the southeast is experiencing ineffective town planning and poor building plans, as buildings have been extended to the coastlines, in addition to the increase in plastic and marine waste (Folorunso & Folorunso, 2022).

Discussion

The achievement of innovative sustainable solutions entails understanding the causes of environmental issues and challenges of poor environmental management in each part of the country, so that the strategic and economic value of resources in those regions is visible and utilised sustainably, with adequate town planning (Folorunso & Folorunso, 2022). Agenda 2063 of the African Union provides a strategic framework for inclusive social and economic development, sustainable development, and regional integration to reposition Africa for a renewed economic growth, infrastructural development and

transformation of the African continent (African Union, 2025). The activities of man ranging from unregulated agricultural practices, urbanisation, improper waste disposal, and deforestation has depleted the aesthetics of Nigeria, transforming the serene, beautiful landscape to a derelict land plagued with desertification, disrupted ecosystem, health issues, pollution, acid rain and prolonged wet season, rapid warming up of the earth and flooding (Onuoha et al., 2022). Nigeria can benefit from planning and development policies that drive a change in spatial development patterns, which will reduce the negative impacts over time (Wright et al., 2021).

Summary

Nigeria has a beautiful landscape that is challenged by rapid urbanisation, which has significantly reduced the green spaces and disrupted ecological processes, making the cities less attractive to tourists. Preserving Nigeria's aesthetic beauty is crucial and comes with numerous health benefits, including reduced stress levels and improved mental wellness.

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Conclusion

Nigeria is very diverse in culture and economic activities, which can foster tourism and economic development (employment and foreign partnership), industrialisation, and commercial activities. The unprecedented weather conditions resulting from resource depletion can be linked to climate change. They can be mitigated by improving environmental policies and commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 11, which promotes creating resilient and sustainable cities.

Recommendation

Nigeria requires a sustainable land-use development plan to achieve a lasting solution to the beautification of the landscape. Hence, this study recommends an inclusive regional socioeconomic development plan that considers the unique needs of each state to mobilise and integrate the required socioeconomic infrastructure, prioritising the poorly planned displaced settlements from the bottom to the top.

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