

## Symbolism in the Conceptualization of Contemporary Yoruba City Central Business District Urban Design

*Tunji Adejumo<sup>1</sup>, Niyi Okedele<sup>2</sup>, Mike Adebamowo<sup>3</sup>*

(Dr Tunji Adejumo, University of Lagos, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, tadejumo@unilag.edu.ng)

(Prof. Niyi Okedele, University of Lagos, Department of Architecture, niyiookedele@gmail.com)

(Dr. Mike Adebamowo. University of Lagos, Department of Architecture, adebamowo@unilag.edu.ng)

### 1. ABSTRACT

Design failure of central business district in Nigeria cities is traceable to colonial urban planning 'dual city' concept and 'tropical architecture modernism' philosophy that ignored culture in planning process. Culture creates the image that frames the vision of a city. Central business district planning with strong cultural expression as a backdrop projects meaningful values to the citizens. This paper explores cultural symbol inherent in King's Market (Oja-Oba) in the conceptualization of contemporary Yoruba cities central business district. The study is underpinned by place making and symbolic economy theories. The study adopted qualitative methodology. Data gathered through scoped literature on Yoruba urbanism and two hour each interview of ten sages on Akesan market at Oyo as typical traditional Yoruba central business district were analyzed using grounded theory. The paper revealed Oja-Oba as Yoruba city mindscape. It carries the economic, social, festive, religious, historic and work place images of the city as activities that enhance liveability. These activities were identified as 'place' themes that constitute local urban design context. The study evolved a CBD conceptual framework by grafting the 'place themes' on Yoruba city cosmogram. The paper concluded that urban designers should explore strategic thinking that accommodate Yoruba world view and situate sustainability within localized design to manage the stifling impact of globalisation. It recommends architectural hybridization where identified local urban design context serves as culturally sustainable rootstock to receive compatible architectural design values as scions.

### 2. INTRODUCTION

Two glaring concepts laid the foundation for twentieth century urban planning and architecture in Nigerian cities including Lagos namely colonial dual city philosophy and post independent tropical urbanism dictum. Research works on colonial urbanism revealed a dual city composed of European Reservation Areas (ERA and native quarters (Immerwahr, 2007 and UN Habitat, 2009). While ERA were planned on British Garden City model, the native areas were organic and not tampered with according to the principles of segregation established in the cantonment proclamation (Immerwahr, 2007). The architecture of colonial Lagos was equally dual with British architecture style used in ERA and Gothic architecture finished with verandas, baroque ornamentation, and classical columns in civic buildings and churches. Despite the post independent Nigerian urban design policy to use architecture as a tool for the redefinition of the free new nation the dual city philosophy persists in a slightly modified dimension. European Reservation Areas transforms to Government Reservation Area (GRA) while informal shanty town housing urban poor, blue collar workers and junior civil servants sprang up unchallenged. Construction of more GRAs in form of new towns and new public realm facilities especially within the CBDs, hospitals, tertiary institutions and social infrastructures were designed on the platform of tropical modernism (Immerwahr, 2007). Citing Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew (1962), he observed that the focal point of tropical architectural modernism is climatic adaptation of international modernism style associated with Le Corbusier in tropical nations without any consideration for the place of culture. The shortcoming of Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew culture free tropical urbanism manifested in their partnership with Le Corbusier for the urban design of Chandigarh - the capital of Punjab province in India. Typical example is hierarchy of open spaces as major public realm (Brolin, 1976).

Chandigarh metropolitan open space was conceived on three levels namely leisure valley; sector parks; and individual green spaces around residential areas. Leisure Park was intended to play the role of modernized central parks in western cities meeting the social recreational, outdoor educational needs of the people. Leisure parks were little used in spite of the fact the Chandigarh is a western oriented elitist new city. Brolin

(1976) traced the failure to Le Corbusier's neglect of traditional Indian way of life that is family oriented and influenced by geosopic religious beliefs. Entertainment and recreation culturally take place indoors as against imposed public outdoor spaces. Sector parks and neighborhood parks in Chandigarh did not fare better for the same reasons. Brolin (1976) summarized this modernism inspired open space design shortcomings as lack of 'Indianness' in their conception. Brolin (1976) concluded that modernism in any form never accommodated indigenous people's behaviour rather emphasise how they should live and how the settlements should look like. In support of this view, Carmona et al. (2008) citing Shelton (1999) works on Japanese cities emphasised that the absence of western city components including civic spaces and squares should not be equated to inferior city planning. His submission is that Japanese architectural form is rooted in cultural belief and must never be judged on western line drawings. Architecture must therefore be seen as cultural intervention in urban design projects.

Adoption of tropical modernism as an architectural style for post independent offices and CBD buildings truncated the agitation of very few Nigerian architects in nineteen sixties, especially Oluwole Olumuyiwa and Vaughan-Richards to accommodate Yoruba vernacular design culture as an urban branding tool (Immerwahr, 2007). In the absence of home grown architecture philosophy, post independent Yoruba urban form and her CBD is a mosaic of diverse architectural incursions devoid of cultural meaning to both the people and tourists. Culture creates the image that frames the vision of a city. Culture drives the city economy through its ability to provide visible symbols and spaces (Petrow, 2011). Central business district planning with strong cultural expression as a backdrop present meaningful values to the citizens especially symbolization of productive economic growth. This paper explores cultural symbol inherent in King's Market (Oja-Oba) in the conceptualization of contemporary Yoruba cities central business districts.

## 2.1 Study Area

Yoruba speaking area in Nigeria falls between longitude 1° 25' E and 6° 45' E; Latitudes 5° 55' N and 9° 10' N. It constitutes the south western geopolitical region (Figure 1). It is fully made up of five federating units of Nigeria including Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun and Ondo states. Parts of Kwara, Kogi and Edo states are inclusive. All classic Yoruba cities share the same form (Obateru, 2006). The city is radial in form with a very strong central core. The residential areas of Yoruba cities are in quarters with well defined spatial limit (Obateru 2006). Each quarter is a homogenous group in the mode of an urban neighbourhood. These quarters are administered by chiefs on behalf of the king (Oba). At the core of the city are the palace (Afin) and the central king's market. The market and adjoining civic structures play the role of central business district. Zukin (1995) concept of symbolic economy is relevant to this study. Deconstructing this indigenous downtown will isolate symbolic cultural values that contributed to economic success of classic Yoruba city state.

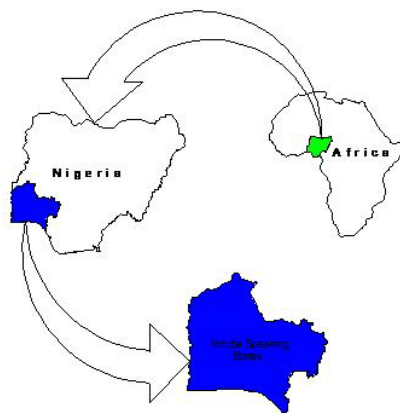


Figure 1: Yoruba Speaking Area in Nigeria

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Symbolic economy emphasize the use of culture to create unique spaces, to brand human settlements and to provide creative advantage that enhance prosperity over and above other cities (Fischer, 2008). Symbolic

economic concept highlights how city business and political leaders use culture to create a particular image of the city that reflects the interests of chamber of commerce and urban growth advocates. The role of culture in cities is evident on the context of social interactions. Fischer (2008) identified five broad city's cultural realms including art, urban aesthetics, entertainment, eateries, and diverse ethnic coloration. Cultural art of a people is displayed in museums, art galleries, and public art. While aesthetic manifests city culture in architecture, streetscape, parks and landscape works; fast foods, restaurants and coffee shops provide platform to exhibit the feeding and food habits of the people. Theatres, music venues and other performing arts meet the daily entertainment that enhances livability. Culture as a branding tool revolved around generation of sense of place with a distinct identity. Zukin (1995) identified four image-making process themes in cities to include art and aesthetic diversity; the privatization of public space; the aestheticization of fear; and the aestheticization of diversity. Cultural realm she maintained provides museums, libraries, concert halls boutiques, restaurants and other specialized sites that support ideal social spaces where contemporary businesses are exchanged. Such spaces constitute meeting places for the business class and creative middle class (Fischer, 2008). Underpinning urban design with strong cultural expression through integrated artworks in civic buildings and public spaces project meaningful economic, social, cultural and aesthetic values to the citizens. This accounts for Brecknock (2002) advocacy that artworks must move out from museum and galleries to the streets, open spaces and public realm in general as it was in Renaissance era. Brecknock (2002) cautioned on purposeless use of urban art on what he called 'Plonk Artworks' in city plazas that have no consideration to local urban context and hence not meaningful to the places they inhabit. Meaningful public art as vehicle for relating local history, belief system and political agenda then becomes an indispensable place making tool.

Zukin's (1995) "diversity in art aesthetics" involves all of the different ways a city uses the arts in architecture to enhance her image. They are the platform for iconic architecture rooted in mimetic theories, bio mimicry and cosmic world view of aboriginal people. Carter (2003) confirmed the importance of "place" conscious iconic architectural works of Jorn Utzon. He observed Jorn Utzon respect for phenomenological understanding of architecture and its appreciation of the specific qualities of 'place'. Such architecture is site specific, poetic and humane; society driven while meeting individual needs; and above all appreciates nature as the source of inspiration. On a CBD scale, Alraouf, (2005) concern on the dearth of sustainable concepts, process and approaches in Dubai as a model of urban development in Arab world is a typical example of insensitivity to holistic local urban context. He argued that Dubai is conceived primarily on 'images and icons rather than strategic thinking that accommodate Arab peninsular process and situate sustainability within localised design to manage the domineering impact of globalisation. He observed that Dubai's cityscape emerged from developmental models that emphasized global aspiration. Such concept diminished her historical identity. The immediate shortcomings include social consequences of vertical development, absence of sense of place, redefinition of cultural meaning of Arab neighbourhoods.

The concept of 'place' in urban design addresses man's relationship to his environment especially how such city landscape is used over a period of time to create a site specific identity. Such identity emanates from the fusion of economic, social and cultural meanings a 'place' generates to the inhabitants (Bertschausen, 1995). Shortridge (2002) referred to this place concept as 'nature in place'. Nature embraces the aesthetic configuration of available flora, rhythmic sounds of water bodies, influence of fauna, and the circular movement of celestial bodies as culturally interpreted. 'Place' is therefore a holistic setting for local people, nature, and built environment generating unique experience that promotes liveability. Iconic architecture in downtowns may therefore glean from Benyus (1997) view of biomimicry which she explained as "a new science that studies nature's models and then imitates or takes inspiration from these designs and processes to solve human problems." In biomimetic design, natural form expresses its surroundings; natural form goes beyond an image-based encounter to accommodate use-based; and potentially reflect natural processes. Imitating form in 'place' design phenomenologically understand ability to modify physical elements that shape the social and spiritual aspect of the people. Therefore natural forms are not only biological but also cosmic. It is in line with Akkerman (2000) view that "the cerebral theme in the layout of planned towns since antiquity has often reflected the image of cosmic harmony and perfection, unfolding in various notions of the Ideal City". This corroborates Lefferts (2007) thinking that 'the assumptions of how to design our

human-contrived social and technological constructs, are generally based on old perception of how life and the cosmos actually work.' It demands the comprehension of pre industrial human settlements intuitive planning and design intents.

Understanding the evolution of human social complexity from distant past demands exploration of preliterate and preindustrial cosmological world view (Nelson et al. 2010). The driving astronomical knowledge and local view of the universe played dominant roles in the spatial configuration of ancient cultural landscapes. The beliefs composing the worldview were often incorporated into the political ideology of rulers, who as 'man-god' was held responsible for the proper functioning of the universe, alignment of civic and ceremonial architecture and lay out of city elements according to cosmic order and form (Smith, 2007 and Nelson et al., 2010). This paper studied central King's market premises as traditional central district in classic Yoruba urbanism for symbols and traditional planning themes that may be employed in the redefinition of contemporary Yoruba city central business district.

### 3.1 Methodology

This study is phenomenological and interpretive in nature. Interpretative research in architecture range between investigating people in a particular environment; analysis; and interpretation of texts, signs and images about a landscape. It stems from an epistemological position that focused on meaning. It is in two stages namely desktop study to understand the philosophy of Yoruba urbanism and her king's market public realm; and two hour semi structured interview of ten Oyo sages on Akesan as typical King's market public place. The paper recognized previous research works on "geosophic perspective of Yoruba urbanism" and "environmental harmony and architecture of place in Yoruba urbanism" as secondary data sources (Okedele et al ,2011). The research adopted qualitative methodology. Data gathered through Oyo sage's interview were transcribed and analyzed using grounded theory. Each transcribed interview was subjected to open coding to derive incidents, codes, concepts and categories on the phenomenon. The open coding proceeded in parallel, treating each interview as confirmation or further development of results from earlier one. Personal observation at Akesan market was used to authenticate findings from desktop study and analyzed interview.

## 4. FINDINGS

Desk top studies revealed that Yoruba urbanism is a reflection of her cosmological worldview. (Okedele et al, 2011). The cities were platted on cosmological philosophy that evolved from her mythology of earth creation. In Yoruba understanding of heaven (intangible realm) there are 16 prominent deities (orisas) on the beck and call of God (Olodumare). On the earth (material realm) there are also 16 Chiefs (Oloye) answerable to the king (Oba). The principle is planet earth (Ikole aye) must be a replica of heaven (Ikole orun) where God (Olodumare) sends 16 divinities to create earth after the big flood. On aerial basis, four cardinal primary roads radiate from the core to divide the city into four theoretical sectors (Figure 2). Each of the sectors is then further divided in to four minor sectors to arrive at sixteen quarters which make up the cosmogram. Cosmic urban form referred to the 16 sided polygons influenced by the 16 divinities in Ifa earth creation mythology. In addition to cosmic form is the square that corresponds to the cardinal points often attached to primordial deities. The influence of cosmological world view on Yoruba urbanism manifested in the three planning and design properties namely design cosmogram, '16'and '4'design numerology and cardinal orientation.

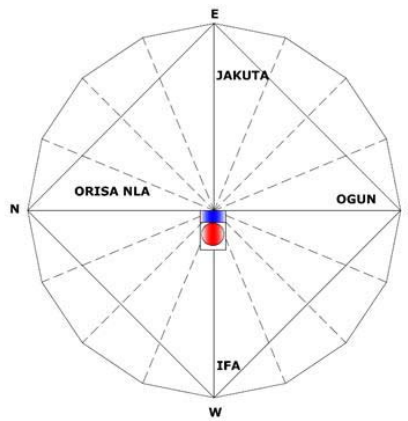


Figure 2: Yoruba Urbanism - Cosmogram and Theoretical Framework

#### 4.1 Oja-Oba Place Activities

Grounded analysis of Oyo sages transcribed interview and personal observation of Akesan market provided narrative structure of deconstructed ‘Oja Oba’ as eight ‘place’ theme. Attachment to urban open space is a reflection of people involvement in various activities entrenched in the space. The King’s market is a beehive of activities on regular market days, national and municipal occasions. As the city’s multipurpose space, Oja - Oba’s intuitive configuration accommodates economic, social, recreational, festive, cultural and religious activities. While the commercial activities are daily the festive and cultural activities are periodic. Besides, some of these activities were not really within the market but used the premises as transition point to the palace. There are three groups of religious activities namely religious activities that are in transition to the palace; cult related activities that announce the sovereignty or demise of the incumbent king; and activities relating to the propitiation of deities resident in the market. The themes are the various activities inscribed in the landscape of the market premises. The activities carry the cultural values that generate place meaning that bond the people to the market open space (Figure 3). Include are Oja Oba economic ‘place’ theme; religious theme; social theme; culture theme, recreation; historic theme; governance and ‘place’ to work theme. The themes are what Carmona et al. (2008) referred to as local urban design context. Religious theme exhibited in the public space is in four layers. The layers are resident shrine of the market deity; religious activities that use the market as transition space on the way to the palace; commodity association appeasement of gods for profitability within their sector; and convergence of 16 ‘orisas’ especially the four primordial ones. At Akesan, Ojuelegba was the resident temple, while the adjoining streets were periodically used as ceremonial roads for other national gods.

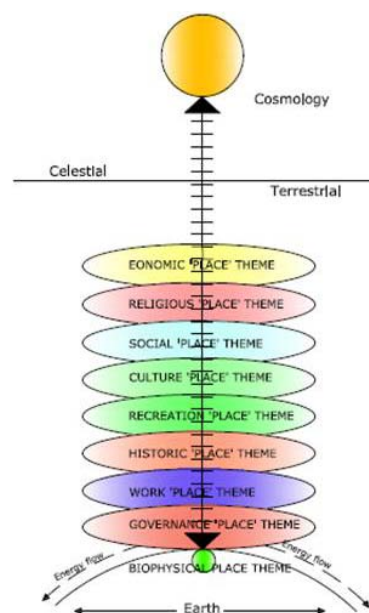


Figure 3: King's Market Public Open Space Intuitive Planning Themes

“Oja – Oba” was the platform for the King’s economic, political and religious leadership of the city. Trading was very crucial in classic Yoruba cities (Obateru 2006). The economic success of the reigning King depended on the functionality of the market system and ability to raise much needed financial capital through tolls and taxes from traders (Akintoye 2010). Political strength was equally measured by the peaceful conduct of the various city quarters which was often reflected by peaceful business transaction in the market. “Oja Oba” was the symbolic economy of Yoruba city state on one hand and the tenural success of the incumbent ‘man-god’ king on the other. At the centre of ‘work place’ theme is the issue of place dependency for economic livelihood. Place dependency addresses connections to place that are based on specific livelihood activities in a defined space. Dependency grows from man’s intended use of an area and the area’s ability to provide that use relative to similar alternative sites. ‘Work place theme’ is closely related to ‘economic place’ theme. Trading activities at Akesan falls within informal economic sector providing daily economic returns for the people and tax for the administration. “Oja – Oba” as a social ‘place’ theme may be captured on four levels including communal social gatherings; festivals; private ceremonial overflows and meeting points. Meeting points are within the market commodity areas laid out by the traditional institution. These were waiting spaces for friends and family members from city quarters and adjoining villages as expressed by the Oyo sage’s interviewees on Akesan. Festive roads followed the ceremonial routes mentioned in religious theme and terminate at the palace. Social space theme portrayed Oja Oba as city square to foster interaction between quarters, families and friends. Closely related to social ‘place’ theme is the culture theme. Although Yoruba city state was a homogenous cultural group, differences were still visible from one quarter to the other. Culture ‘place theme’ in public space configuration is rooted in the beneficial values of diversity to enhance sustainable patronage of king’s central open space. Social and cultural themes directly influenced recreation place theme. Recreational activities were passive in Oja Oba open space. These activities often operated on the platform of spectators and social gatherings. Historic theme addressed the sequence in settlement, religious landscape, heritage resources within the market premises. It is about the historic meaning that provided traditional authenticity of the ‘place’ exhibited by available arts, artifacts, and memorable landmarks. “Ojuelegba” temple is the most visible heritage resources at Akesan market. Historic theme provided an opportunity for heritage conservation and provision of museum and monuments in 21st century central business district spatial configuration. The common denominator of these themes is the direct influence of Yoruba cosmological world view (Figure 4). This confirms Rapport (1982) submission that cosmos that dictate the physical form of the city may be reflected in the final outlooks of city component parts. The cosmological world view is mirrored in the governance institutional frame work that needed “Oja - Oba” as a platform to retain community order, establishes sustainable cultural image, and financial prosperity through the various activities. Oja Oba as public place was the image of city state as well as the image of the king.

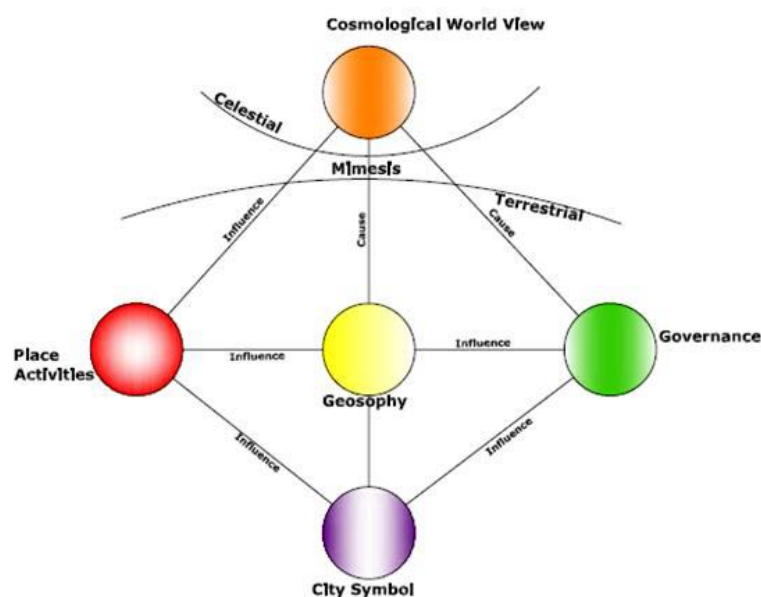


Figure 4: Theoretical Framework for Oja-Oba place Planning

## 4.2 City Symbol

‘Oja – Oba’ fulfils two roles within the spatial configuration of classic Yoruba city formation namely nodal arrival hub and transition space (Okedele et al 2011). It is an arrival space between all city quarters, sub urban villages and the farmsteads. It links the entire kingdom to the traditional institution resident in the palace. Secondly, it is a grand transition space between the quarters and the palace. It therefore operates on a two dimensional planes. Vertically it is a portal between heaven and earth (Fatunbi 2004) and horizontally a city dissemination point to the various quarters and farmsteads that constituted each city kingdom. “Oja-Oba” is therefore a Yoruba city mindscape. Bianchini et al. (2007) explained mindscape as happenings between the physical landscape of a city and people’s visual and cultural perception. Mindscape is composed of local and external images of a city, which are manifested in visual arts, myths, ritual and festive events. It carries the economic, social, festive, religious and recreational image of the city. “Oja – Oba” is therefore the emblem of the kingdom through which the king as the chief priest performs his dual role to the people and visitors alike. It symbolically becomes the local and external images of the city, manifesting in visual arts, myths, ritual and festive events.

## 5. CONTEMPORARY YORUBA URBANISM CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT CONCEPTUALIZATION

Urban design promotes the prime position of public realm conceptualisation in the sum total architecture of the city. It accomodates socio cultural values in the design process to highlight community identity. Public realm transcend buildings to include open spaces and public infrastructure. In public realm design the buildings and the surrounding spaces are platforms to communicate distinct cultural values, behavioral patterns, economic achievement and much desired security. An important consideration for central business district conceptualisation is the art of “place making” which involves provision of distinctive, lively, appealing and memorable centres. Delivering environmental distinctiveness in downtowns demand imaginative place making that accommodates symbolic economic principles. Petrow (2011) noted the importance of symbolic images to communicate the qualities of public realm in urban landscape. Symbolic images can be communicated through architecture, landscape architecture and urban arts.

### 5.1 Symbolism CBD Architecture.

Exploration of Oja Oba ‘place making’ themes in the redefinition of twenty first century Yoruba cityscapes through compatible relationship with the cosmogram will generate a distinctive image that may not be diminished by the current internationalisation of down town building forms. CBD place making conceptualisation process considers the prime position of the cosmogram; the identified urban design context defined by the themes; and the cardinal orientation characterised by her four principal gods. Each of the principal gods has distinct character with colour emblem that may be explored in design issues. Expectations conveyed through colour specification vary with cultural background (Daggett & Cobble, 2008). The expectation is further influenced by belief system and contextual ecosystem. Colour expectation in Yoruba worldview is rooted in the symbolic representation of the 4 primordial gods in the cardinal orientation of the cosmogram (Table 1).

S/N	Yoruba Principal Deity	Cardinal Orientation	Primary Color	Secondary Color	Interpreted Character
1	Orisanla	North	White		Uprightness, purity
2	Jakuta	East	Red	Off White	Action, Danger
3	Alakaiye	South	Green	Black	Fertility, Earth, Warrior
4	Ifa	West	Brownish green	Yellow	Wisdom, Earth, Order, Intellectual

Table 1: Yoruba gods Cardinal Orientation and Interpreted Characteristics

Choice of colour in art and architecture is not geared towards aesthetics in African communities. The philosophy behind symbol or art works in Africa is not individually driven to exhibit physical beauty (Segy,

1975). Rather the underpinning philosophy is based on the social, political and religious community inclinations that are emotionally represented. This is line with Momoh (2000) submission that African philosophy is the African doctrine on communal spiritualism which he defined as “the culture of harnessing the spirit of whole and community to enhance and transform spirit, interests, aspirations and ambitions of the parts and the individuals”. Abstractions of the character of the each goddess with its interpretive character provide opportunity for the use of iconic architecture principles in the cardinal definition of the CBD. Iconic architecture on this platform must be rooted in local mimetic consideration, bio mimicry and Yoruba cosmic world view. Such biomimetic designs must consciously explore the contextual ecosystem for forms in the mode of mimetic cosmogram and design numerology. It is imperative for architects to manipulate the communicative properties of colour, form, soft landscape and construction materials to serve the functional use of their designs that appeal to global audience (Kesan & Shah, 2005). This must be complimented by the creation of local symbolic and iconic building meaningful to the people.

### 5.2 Symbolism in CBD Planning.

Superimposing the eight ‘place’ themes and their components on the cardinal axis with the characteristic ruling god’s emblems allows for spatial use arrangement that creates a cultural atmosphere in all CBD facets (Figure 5). Locating religious place theme to the north; recreation and social ‘place’ themes to the east; economic and work place themes to the south; culture and history to the south; governance at the centre will invoke the Yoruba ‘spirit of place’ on a central business development scale. Application of this framework to new central business district will enhance the grouping of buildings according to functions.

### 5.3 Symbolism in CBD Landscape Design.

While architecture and urban arts sees symbolic economy as objects of high culture landscape architects frames city spaces for public life and recreation (Petrow, 2011). Conceptualising public space framework to create meaningful CBD may again look at identified place themes on four interrelated forms to communicate Yoruba image. The first is a reflective space that broadly accommodates multi religious dimension. Secondly is a political space that inscribed past and prevailing governance values. Economic space that defines generational dimensions of financial capital developmental strategies and an intellectual space to enhance communally driven intellectual values are the two other concepts.

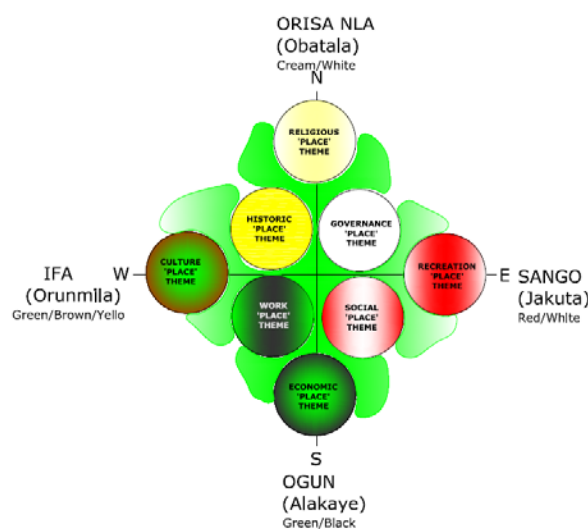


Figure 5 : Place Making Conceptual Frameworks in Yoruba Urbanism

### 5.4 Symbolism through CBD Public Art

Incorporating public art driven by mythology, historic events and people enhance attachment to open spaces. Public art at this level is centred on deeds, contributions and exploits made by local heroes and outstanding opinion leaders of yesteryears. Such art works reflect communal aspiration and thematically located in connected downtown places and streetscapes that play dominant role in symbolic revitalisation schemes.



## 6 CONCLUSION

The reality of cultural dynamism in this century is fuelled by developmental pressures on cityscape. As noted by Carmona et al (2008) pressures that threatened local urban context include “globalisation and internationalisation; standardisation of building types, styles and construction methods; loss of vernacular tradition; use of mass produced materials; estrangement of people from natural world; and increased personal mobility and dominance of cars”. As globalisation threatens to overwhelm cultural diversity in non western cities, it is increasingly important for urban designers, architects and landscape architects to embrace what Alraouf, (2005) called “the principles of critical regionalism, an alternative theory that respects local culture, geography, sustainability, and climate”. Such respect must be rooted in the understanding of aboriginal cosmological world view.

It is now apparent that the colonial “dual city philosophy” and “post independent tropical modernism dictum” are responsible for the meaningless architecture in Yoruba city central business districts. Rehabilitation must commence from the key functions of her cosmological world view namely manipulation of her cosmogram; understanding the eight ‘place themes’; and orientation and characteristics of the principal deities along the cardinal points. Therefore, developing high quality 21st century Yoruba cityscape demands dynamic relationship between originality, authenticity, aesthetics and architectural reinvention rooted in her cosmogram. Originality must delve into cosmic mimicry enhanced by founding Ifa charter of each city on one hand and biomimicry of forms and processes in contextual ecosystem that mirrors Yoruba cosmos. Authenticity should look at the bioregional functionality. The ecoregional functionality is threefolds namely a guinea savannah, rainforest and sand-lagoon barrier coastal bioregions. Aesthetics accommodates grafted western finishes to allow individual preferences on a community landscape. Architectural reinvention produces structures, though western, but invokes the much desired spirit of Yoruba contemporary art. This will emanate from the platform of architectural hybridisation where local urban design context (8 ‘place making’ themes) serve as culturally sustainable rootstock on which may be grafted compatible aesthetic driven western design intents as scions.

Underpinning CBD planning and design with strong cultural expression through integrated artworks in civic buildings and public spaces will project meaningful values to tourists and people alike. It is an evolution of the architecture that creates Yoruba atmosphere. This is in line with Carter (2003) submission on iconic architectural pieces of Jorn Utzon that focused on phenomenological understanding of architecture and its appreciation of the specific qualities of ‘place’. Such architecture is site specific, poetic and humane; community driven while meeting individual needs; and above all appreciates nature as the source of inspiration. Nature at this level is beyond biospheric ecosystem to include planetary ecosystem – the domain of cosmological world view. This paper recommends that ‘place making’ of 21st century central business district spaces needed to be viewed on two levels.

- On site scale, designs should determine the use and generate a Yoruba specific atmosphere. Use is a choice from the pool of socio cultural activities that define “Oja-Oba” as a symbolic ‘place’.
- Secondly, such atmosphere should subsequently create sustainable images beyond the building and space itself. Created images are to reposition the cities physically in economic prosperity; in high quality of life; in ecologically healed tropical urban centers; and in demonstration of power. Power is seen here as political will on city, local and state government levels that manifest in visionary people oriented green infrastructure designed on cultural platform.

## 7. REFERENCES

Akintoye, S.A.: A History of the Yoruba People. University Press. Ibadan, 2010.

Akkerman, A., Harmonies of Urban Design and Discords of City-form: Urban Aesthetics in the Rise of Western Civilization. In Journal of Urban Design, Vol.5, issue 3, pp. 267- 290. 2000.

- Alraouf, A. A.: Dubaization vs. Glocalization: Arab Cities Transformed. In Gulf First Urban Planning and Development Conference. Kuwait. 2005. Retrieved from [http://ipac.kacst.edu.sa/eDoc/2010/183533\\_1.pdf](http://ipac.kacst.edu.sa/eDoc/2010/183533_1.pdf)
- Bertschhausen, R.: On Time and Place: A Philosophy of Place. Fox Valley. Unitarian Fellowship. 1995. Retrieved from [www.essaytree.com/philosophy/](http://www.essaytree.com/philosophy/).
- Bianchini, F., & Ghilardi, L.: Thinking Culturally about Place: Place Branding and Public Diplomacy. In Palgrave Journals. Vol.3. Issue 4, 2007. Retrieved from [www.palgravejournals.com/pb/journal/v3/n4/full/6000077a.html](http://www.palgravejournals.com/pb/journal/v3/n4/full/6000077a.html)
- Brolin B.C.: The Failure of Modern Architecture. Cassel and MacMillan Publishing Limited. London, UK: 1976.
- Brecknock, R.: This Place - This Time - This Culture. Darwin. Australia. 2002. Retrieved from [www.brecknockconsulting.com.au](http://www.brecknockconsulting.com.au)
- Carmona, M.; Heath, T.; Oc, T.; Tiesdell, S.: Public Spaces - Urban Spaces: The Dimension of Urban Design. Architectural Press. London. 2008.
- Carter, A.: Between Earth and Sky: The work of Jørn Utzon, as an Exemplary Phenomenological Approach to Modern Architecture Made Concrete. Institute for Architecture and Design, Aalborg University, Denmark. 2003. Retrieved from [vbn.aau.dk/files](http://vbn.aau.dk/files).
- Daggett, W.R.; Cobble, J.E.; & Gertel, S.J.: Colour in an Optimum Learning Environment. 2008. Retrieved from [www.leadered.com/pdf/Color%20white%20paper.pdf](http://www.leadered.com/pdf/Color%20white%20paper.pdf)
- Fatunbi A.F.: Odu and Ifa Concept of History: The African Perspective. Part IV. Awo Study Centre. 2004. Retrieved from <http://www.Scribd.com/doc/47350772/odu-ifa-concept-of-history>.
- Fischer, N.L.: Bilbao on the Mississippi? The Symbolic Economy of the Twin Cities. Augsburg College, Minneapolis. 2007. Retrieved from [allacademic.com/meta/p\\_mla](http://allacademic.com/meta/p_mla).
- Immerwahr, D.: The Politics of Architecture and Urbanism in Postcolonial Lagos, 1960–1986. In Journal of African Cultural Studies Vol. 19. Issue 2. 2007. Retrieved from <http://journalsonline.tandf.co.uk/>
- Kesan, J.P. & Shah, R.C.: How Architecture Regulates. (2005). Retrieved from [http://www.governingwithcode.org/journal\\_articles/pdf/How\\_Architecture\\_Regulates.pdf](http://www.governingwithcode.org/journal_articles/pdf/How_Architecture_Regulates.pdf)
- Lefferts, M.: Cosmometry: Embracing a New Paradigm of Understanding and Design, 2007. Retrieved from <http://www.cosmometry.net/pdf>
- Momoh, C.: Nature, Issues and Substance of African Philosophy. In Momoh (Ed.) The Substance of African Philosophy. African Philosophy Projects Publication (pp 1-22). Auchi. (2000)
- Nelson, B.N.; Lekson S.H.; Šprajc, I; Sassaman K.E., Shaping Space: Built Space, Landscape, and Cosmology in Four Regions. Prepared by the Built Space/Environment Working Group for the Santa Fe Institute Workshop on "Cosmology & Society in the Ancient Amerindian World. 2010 Retrieved from [www.santafe.edu/media/workingpapers](http://www.santafe.edu/media/workingpapers).
- Obateru, O.: The Yoruba City in History: 11th Century to the Present. Penthouse Publications. Ibadan. 2006.
- Okedele, N. and Adejumo, O. T.: Geosopic Perspective in Yoruba Urbanism. In the Proceedings of WABER 2011 Conference. Accra. Ghana Editor: Sam Layrea. 2011 <http://www.waberconference.com>
- Petrow, C.A.: Hidden Meanings, Obvious Messages: Landscape Architecture as a Reflection of a City's Self-Conception and Image Strategy. Journal of Landscape Architecture . ECLA. Spring 2011, pp. 8-19. 2011.
- Rapoport, A.: The Meaning of the Built Environment. Sage Publications. Beverly Hills. 1982.
- Shortridge R.: Ingredient of Place. Journal of Urban Land Institute. Washington DC. Vol. 61. Issue 7, pp. 36- 41. 2002.
- Segy, L.: African Sculpture Speaks. Da Capo Press Inc. New York. 1975.
- Smith, M. E. : Form and Meaning in the Earliest Cities: A New Approach to Ancient Urban Planning. Journal of Planning History, Vol.6. Issue 1, pp.3-47. 2007
- UN Habitat: Planning Sustainable Cities: Global Report on Human Settlements. Earthscan Publishers, London. 2009.
- Zukin, S.: The Cultures of Cities. Cambridge, MA. 1995.