

RURAL SENSE OF COMMUNITY OF OJA IN NIGERIA

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my amiable wife and lovely children

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## ABSTRACT

The success of neighbourhood open space planning, design, and management in uniting diverse ethnic groups depends on the interaction between the cultural perceptions, utilization, satisfaction, and sharing capability of its residents. Recent developments in the field of built environment have led to an interest in exploring the perception of neighbourhood open spaces and its impact on the sense of community of residents. There are numerous types of open spaces in the Nigerian neighbourhood environment such as the market square, sports and playground areas, streets space, public plazas, and town parks. This study focuses on the market square known as *oja*, which remains a significant character in the context of Nigerian rural neighbourhood spaces. Currently, there has been little effort in the exploration of the significance of *oja* towards achieving harmonious social relationship among residents of diverse ethnicity. To address this gap, this research explores the potential contributions of resident perception towards *oja* in achieving a sense of community through the meaning and attachment to the place. A quantitative research approach was adopted in order to explore the people-place relationship. The data extracted from 382 fully completed purposive survey questionnaires were analyzed using Statistical Program for Social Sciences version 22 (SPSS) and Analysis of a Moment Structure (AMOS) software package version 22 via Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) techniques. The results obtained were triangulated with feedback from 50 observed users and 35 focus group interviewees to test the research hypotheses and answer research questions. The research findings reveal that *oja* connotes a new meaning of cultural heritage. Also, a new hub of interactive concepts can be established consisting of ten main actors and five forms of relationships among *oja*'s users of different ethnicities. Residents were physically and socially connected to the present location of *oja* and therefore opted for its re-planning rather than being relocated. In addition, residents' utilization of *oja* positively impacts their sense of community and satisfaction. Conclusively, spatial improvements for *oja* could better achieve a sense of community among residents, which plays a vital role in rural development and sustainability. Thus, the research recommends an appropriate managerial policy formulation and introduction of clearly defined social interaction spaces in the future planning and design of *oja* in Nigeria. This research outcome is beneficial to all stakeholders in the field of built environment through establishing the significance of creating *oja* as a sustainable neighbourhood open space in Nigeria.

## ABSTRAK

Kejayaan perancangan, rekabentuk dan pengurusan ruang terbuka kejiranan dalam menyatukan kumpulan etnik yang pelbagai bergantung kepada interaksi antara persepsi budaya, penggunaan, kepuasan, dan keupayaan perkongsian penduduknya. Perkembangan terkini dalam bidang alam bina telah membawa kepada minat untuk meneroka persepsi kejiranan kawasan lapang dan kesannya terhadap perasaan bermasyarakat bagi penduduk. Terdapat banyak jenis kawasan lapang di persekitaran kejiranan Nigerian seperti dataran pasar, sukan dan kawasan taman permainan, ruang jalan, plaza awam, dan taman-taman bandar. Kajian ini memberikan tumpuan kepada pasar awam dikenali sebagai *oja* yang memainkan peranan penting dalam konteks ruang kejiranan luar bandar di Nigeria. Pada masa ini, terdapat usaha terhad dalam meneroka kepentingan *oja* ke arah mencapai hubungan sosial yang harmoni di kalangan penduduk pelbagai etnik. Untuk menangani jurang tersebut, kajian ini menerokai potensi sumbangan persepsi penduduk terhadap *oja* dalam mencapai perasaan bermasyarakat melalui makna dan tanggapan terhadap tempat tersebut. Pendekatan penyelidikan kuantitatif telah digunakan dalam usaha untuk meneroka hubungan tempat dan manusia. Data yang telah diambil daripada 382 soal selidik keseluruhan sepenuhnya telah dianalisis dengan menggunakan *Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS)* versi 22 dan *Analysis of a Moment Structure (AMOS)* versi 22 melalui teknik *Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)*. Keputusan yang diperolehi daripada teknik tersebut telah ditriangulasikan berdasarkan hasil pemerhatian 50 peserta yang diperhatikan dan 35 ahli kumpulan fokus yang telah ditemubual untuk menguji hipotesis penyelidikan serta soalan penyelidikan. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa *oja* memberikan suatu makna baru terhadap warisan budaya. Ianya juga merupakan hab baru konsep interaktif yang boleh diwujudkan terdiri daripada sepuluh aktor utama dan lima bentuk hubungan di kalangan pengguna *oja* yang pelbagai etnik. Penduduk melalui aspek fizikal dan sosial yang berhubung dengan lokasi semasa *oja* telah memilih untuk satu perancangan semula dan bukannya dipindahkan. Tambahan lagi, penggunaan *oja* oleh penduduk adalah positif terhadap perasaan bermasyarakat dan kepuasannya. Kesimpulannya, kemajuan khusus untuk *oja* adalah lebih baik untuk mencapai perasaan bermasyarakat di kalangan penduduk yang memainkan peranan penting dalam pembangunan luar bandar dan kemampunan. Oleh itu, kajian ini mencadangkan penggubalan dasar pengurusan yang sesuai dan pengenalan ruang interaksi sosial yang jelas dalam perancangan masa depan dan rekabentuk *oja* di Nigeria. Hasil penyelidikan ini memberikan manfaat kepada semua pihak yang berkepentingan dalam bidang alam bina melalui kepentingan mewujudkan *oja* sebagai kawasan lapang kejiranan yang mampan di Nigeria.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

Place study context has been gaining persistence advocacy in recent years, as specific location becomes a place when imbued with meanings (Relph, 1979; Cresswell, 2009). Studying place is synonymous with a cultural landscape that hinged on the outcome of interactions between people and their immediate environment. Thus, it brings about neighbourhood open space's planning that constitutes a bridge between the past and present day relationships. According to Said (2001), cultural landscape symbolizes the belief and cultural values of ethnics in homogeneous and heterogeneous societies. It as well portrays an intrinsic understanding and relationship between residents towards environmental sustainability of any place (Ibimilua, 2014). Place indicates summation of peoples' activities, and conceptualization of the entire physical environment (Canter, 1977). In this study, the place is *Oja* which could be defined as a spatial setting located in the rural neighbourhood, assigned with meanings and values through people's perception. In view of this, it possesses unique experience that enhances worthwhile living. Succinctly, it could be stated that *Oja* stands as a composition of both physical environmental character, peoples' diverse activities and perceptions.

According to Relph (1976) and Devine *et al.*, (1997) appropriate understanding of a place encapsulates three main interrelated components. The first component is the physical features and appearances, while the second component referred to the permissible activities

and functions. The third component is the ascribed meanings to such place. Apparently, physical features and appearances of *Oja* could be viewed in line with the provision of essential facilities such as good roads network, services such as electricity, water, and landscape features. Likewise, the activities within the *Oja* and its related functions incorporate socio-economic, cultural, religious, and recreational activities. The ascribed meanings portray the people's perception that hinges on ethnic backgrounds, cultural differences, and preferential activities. The term place is more than ordinary spaces and usual interpretation in terms of buildings, streets, landscapes, and facilities. Rather, it is a quality environment that forms part of a neighbourhood with meaningful values and meanings (Norberg-Schulz, 1980; Healey, 2010). In this vein, the quality aspect of *Oja* snow-balled into harmonization of residents' physical experiences, activities, values, and meaningful interpretations. Therefore, in a bid to create its quality as a place, it is expected to explore residents' perception in relation to the *Oja*.

Rural neighbourhood connotes the social immediate environment consisting of communities based features that exist at certain geographical level (Holdsworth and Hartman, 2009). It remains a central place to social, economic, and political activities of any nations (Woods, 2009). This research work succinctly pitched its rural neighbourhood definition with Schwiran (1983); Kallus and Law-Yone (2000); and Berk (2005); as organized part of the rural community comprising groups of dwelling units occupied by residents. In addition, it possesses identifiable boundaries with community facilities. Meanwhile, it becomes imperative to state that the social and physical conditions of the neighbourhood could affect the residents' perceptions and attitudes (Abdullah *et al.*, 2013). Similarly, diverse neighbourhoods exist in various sizes, years of existence, housing type, the composition of essential amenities and facilities. In addition, a relationship exists between the neighbourhood and its occupied residents. For this reason, resident's forms consensus interactive network of both formal and informal social ties within the neighbourhood. The outcome of interactions helps in the accomplishment of various needs as expressed by common identity (Schwiran, 1983). Primarily, the formal social ties include activities related to groups' interactions which in some cases might occur periodically. The activities include cultural, religious and traditional related activities. Informal social ties encapsulate everyday activities that are not periodicals, such as

economic related relationships. Notwithstanding, the residents' expressions could be identified from the amalgamation of economic, social and cultural related perceptions.

Varna and Tiesdell (2010) and Carmona (2010) established the various definitions of neighbourhood open space in three aspects. The first aspect is the definition in terms of ownership. The second aspect relies on its accessibility and functions. Meanwhile, the third definition hinges on its peoples' judgment based on personal impressions, feelings, and opinions. Notwithstanding, the definitions capture various human encounters and interactions. Notably, tolerance of peoples' differences also formed the core dimensions of its definition (Young, 1990; 2000; Lipovsca and Stepankova, 2013). Neighbourhood open space in this study is an accessible arena to all groups, with freedom of activities, and lower claim of ownership. Moreover, it is recognized as enabling human actions, interactions, and contacts. Throughout this thesis write up, the term neighbourhood open space will be abbreviated as NOS, while the sense of community stands for SOC. Market square connotes *Oja* in Nigeria parlance as coined out of numerous typologies of NOS. Therefore, NOS and *Oja* will be used interchangeable.

Studies have shown that NOS varies in size and owned by either individual, public agency or community, constituting essential elements that enable a tie between environment and users' diversities. Adequate use of NOS has the tendency to improve residents' symbolic interaction via the sense of community. On the other hand, the SOC variables include neighborliness, community cohesion and attachment (Sarason, 1974; Mcmillan and Chavis, 1986; Gobster, 2001; Farahani, 2016). Neighbourliness enhances residents' social relationships which relied on equal ownership, belongingness, tolerance and mutual respect (Butterworth, 2000; Kellick and Berkosz, 2006; Aydin and Siramkaya, 2014). The neighbourliness detailed an association through which residents are encouraged to communicate and involved in meaningful sharing of NOS. Thus, social interaction according to Rasidi *et al.*, (2011) is the bonds or relationship between two or more individuals in the context of multi-cultural diversity. Social interaction within NOS hinges on its sharing capability to unite diverse community residents. Interactions occurred in various forms such as trading, socio-cultural, religious, and community-related activities. On this note, NOS in Nigeria acting as a unifying metaphor and common denominator

which could help in building the country irrespective of the existed challenges (PM news, 2009).

Residents' perception on NOS is synonymous with appropriate comprehension of what is perceived (Schater *et al.*, 2011). Thus, there exist both positive and negative perceptions. It depends on who is perceiving, methods of perception, and mode of engagement or involvement (Dinnie *et al.*, 2013). The positive perception focuses on the appraisals that are of immense benefits, while the negative showcase the challenges associated as viewed by the assessor. For instance, the positive perception of NOS in East London permits casual social encounters which remain a key element in people's attachment to their locality (Dines and Cattell, 2006). Thus, positive perception influences peoples' desire to stay in such a specific place. Individuals' perception intertwines with social characteristics, cultural values and meanings (Tyrva, *et al.*, 2008). Likewise, past studies have shown that attraction to a particular place termed place attachment is a positive emotional bond to a particular place (Low and Altman, 1992). Other place theorists have identified with Low and Altman's definition of place attachment through a broader description that incorporates functional and psychological attachments (Williams, *et al.*, 1992). In brief, place attachment in this study is defined as an emotional, cognitive and functional bond with *Oja* as a typology of NOS. It signified the existence of strong links between people and places.

In Nigeria context, recent rural development initiatives have led to renewed interest in studying *Oja* as a typical example of NOS among researchers. NOS consist of sports and playing grounds, market square, streets, a public plaza and town parks. From literature, *Oja* remains a significant landmark feature acting as common denominator due to its values and usefulness to the community residents. It is spatial planning feature acting as a meeting point for residents towards the efficient distribution of the commodities and services (Omole *et al.* 2014). The significance of *Oja* could not be overemphasized because of its location within the neighbourhood. Also, it enables diverse functions and activities ranging from socio-economic, historic, religious, cultural, and recreational activities that enhance appropriate liveability (Adejumo *et al.*, 2012). According to Okedele *et al.*, (2011), *Oja* acts as arrival space for commodities and foodstuffs from adjoining villages and hamlets. While at the same time links the traditional institution's

abode called *afin* with other parts of the community. Notably, *Oja* in this study is a physical environment permitting various functions and devoid of any forms of restrictions irrespective of the cultural and ethnic background of its users. Remarkably, it is an accessible place located in close proximity to the residents' abode which permits diverse activities capable of enhancing harmonious interactions among diverse users.

Over the past century, there has been a drive towards the various perceptions on the use of *Oja* which depends on residents' behavioral pattern and attitudes. In addition, people with different cultural and ethnic background are bound to perceive, utilize and attaches value to *Oja* differently. This assertion was supported by Burgess *et al.*, (1988) in a similar study in the UK. The study's finding revealed part of the benefits derived from the utilization of *Oja*, as its potentials in uniting diverse ethnic residents. This could be achieved through the provision of a comfortable meeting venue that enhances social ties and purpose (Hodder, 1965). In this regard, *Oja* acts as a balance between people traditions and cultures (PM news, 2009; Zakariya *et al.*, 2016). Studies have shown that *Oja* is not only meant for economic activities but also serve as social interaction place that unites diverse ethnic groups, racial backgrounds, cultural traits, and political affiliations (Vagale, 1972).

Diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria have different beliefs and utilization pattern in *Oja*. This could be attributed to differences in class, age, gender, race, and ethnicity. Similarly, the people's perception on *Oja* differs as inspired by their activity, socio-cultural factors, religious beliefs, and personal attributes. *Oja* is viewed based on traditional norms, beliefs, historical values. The issue of cultural factor intertwined with traditions and religion manifested through the fact that, most *Oja* serves as sacrifice or ritual places. This is affirmed by the present of the shrine in *Oja* where prayers were rendered to the market gods (Meillassoux, 1971). The essence of this is to allow peace to reign at the *Oja*, and the entire neighbourhood at large (Omole *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, residents' attachment and satisfaction within *Oja* could be traceable to independent factors which include, sex, socio-economic, and cultural background. Meanwhile, other factors relate to cognitive interpretations based on individual characteristics.

At present, few studies have been initiated toward exploration of ethnics' residents' perception on NOS such as *Oja* with a view of achieving SOC in South-west, Nigeria. Significantly, the primary concern of studying *Oja* relied on the need for an adequate understanding of the relationship between users, their immediate environment and the communal relationship among residents termed sense of community. Appropriate understanding of *Oja* through its attachment buttresses its physical features, appearances, activities, functions, and associated meanings. In related developments, peoples' attachment to *Oja* expresses in clear terms, the social relationship which has impacts on diverse interest, cultural, religious affiliations, and lifestyles of its inhabitants. Therefore, advocacy for peoples' attachment to *Oja*, becomes imperative.

On this premise, current study explores SOC as a reflection of experiences manifested within the interplay of individual or group that generate a perception of belonging, ameliorates feelings of individualism. It becomes pertinent to explore whether *Oja* as part of the element of the built environment through planning; design and management could possess the requirement to foster SOC and facilitates encounters between community residents. Summarily, the level of sharing in multi-ethnic settings of *Oja* and its impact on community neighbourliness in the rural community of Nigeria needed to be studied (Falade 1989; Ukiwo, 2006). The research findings would become a focus point for policy makers, planners, designers, and all stakeholders who are concerned with the planning of *Oja*, and promotion of sustainable rural communities.

This chapter consists of 14 sections that anchored research background (section 1.2), research scope (section 1.3), and study's context (section 1.4). Others include problem statement (section 1.5), research gap (section 1.6), research conceptualization and underpinning (section 1.7). The research aim and objectives (section 1.8), research questions (section 1.9), research hypothesis (section 1.10), the significance of study (section 1.11) are incorporated. Lastly, are the definition of terms (section 1.12), and the thesis outline (section 1.13).

## 1.2 Research Background

Landscape architecture and rural planning studies advocated the comprehension of the significant contribution of open space development, and the subjective relationship between people and the environment (Jellicoe, 1975; Van der and Long, 1994; Aalen *et al.*, 1997; Scazzosi, 2004; Antrop, 2005). Primarily, this research work sought interest from numerous fields of studies such as cultural landscape planning, environmental psychology, rural planning, and people's environment and behavior with a view of establishing the meanings people ascribes to their environment (Line and Gross, 1998; Stephenson, 2007).

Geographers conceptualized space and place as meaning between distinct perception and attachments. In line with this, a meaningful interrelationship exists between location, locale, and place (Cresswell, 2004). The location is the absolute point in space with specific coordinates and measurement, while locale refers to the material settings for social relation, which include the buildings, streets, parks and other tangible aspects of a place. The values and meanings attributed to place are anchored by the relationship between physical space and the social environment (Friedman, 2007). This implies that place perception imbued with human experiences, meaning, and social relationships (Schofield and Szymanski, 2011). Past study of Agboola *et al.*, (2014) noted that place perception, the feelings, and emotions a place evoke associated with SOC.

In recent time, NOS studies have gained prominent feature in rural landscape planning, while global awareness has been increased on NOS development. Therefore, much interest has been created towards studying residents' perception about places, the uniqueness of places, continuity of neighbourhood pattern and typologies. In the United States, for example, there is advocacy in the provision and enhancement of a friendly environment which tends to increase residents' social relationships between community residents. Consequently, developers and planners in the country have come out with new development strategies towards revisiting the design of their old neighbourhoods and open spaces targeting the enhancement of the SOC (Nasar and Julian, 1995; Talen, 1999; Lund, 2002; Kim and Kaplan, 2004).



SOC remains the key aspect of community neighbourliness that characterizes by cordial respect for each other's values and respect for diversity. For instance, the significance and awareness have been on increase targeting the inclusion and formation of policies towards unifying diverse ethnics and creation of neighbourliness in Australia (Holdsworth and Hartman, 2009). Then it could be stated that good interaction and acceptance of diversity amongst neighbours, friends and family exhibits a unanimous sense of belonging that remain a factor that enables communal living. Nevertheless, the trends of events in rural form and exploration of residents' perceptual characteristics have ignited new direction in landscape and rural planning studies (Gobster, 2001; Thompson, 2002).

Similar studies in the field of environmental psychology identified important constructs in the study NOS, through place attachment theory. Place attachment refers to emotional bonds or ties that people have to certain places and its peripherals. In other words, place attachment is generally seen as having positive impacts on individuals as well as neighbourhood at large. For individuals, it affords an opportunity for security, accessibility to the social network, and a sense of identity. On the other hand, for neighbourhoods, it associated with a cohesive environment where residents play an active role.

Low and Altman (1992) and Hammitt *et al.*, (2006) critically reviewed place study and identified various place concepts in relation to cognitive and affective aspects. The concepts substantiate, place identity (Proshansky, 1978; Proshansky *et al.*, 1983); place dependence (Stokols and Shumaker, 1981); place familiarity (Wynveen *et al.*, 2007; Stedman, 2003); place rootedness (Tuan, 1978, Tuan, 1980); social bonding (Rankissoon *et al.*, 2002). Place attachment incorporates cultural beliefs and practices of residents that bound them to place (Low *et al.*, 2006). Adapting studies on environment and behavior in urban forms by Low *et al.*, (1992) into rural study revealed residents' attachment to NOS such as *Oja* have the capability to enhance their quality of life and SOC.

Environment encircled place, hence it encompasses natural, artificial, and social characteristics that could be categorized mainly as tangible and intangible elements (Pillai, 2013; Aydin and Siramkaya, 2014). These elements are deduced from the outcome of the

continuous interaction between man and environment. Tangible elements consist of man-made environment, natural environment, people, and functional items. In this case, man-made environment comprises of buildings, streets, parks and plazas promoted by social processes, involvement and shared experiences (Davenport and Anderson, 2005). Meanwhile, intangible elements are histories, memories, norms, values, and behavioral attitudes (Pillai, 2013).

Planning, design and management of NOS to accommodate diverse residents in the multiethnic community according to Altman and Rapoport, (1980) and Sweeney (2004) required the following three elements. The first element is the residents' perception. The second element is the peoples' movement and interactions pattern within the settings. The third element hinges on people's cultural lifestyles and behaviors. Previous studies in the developed countries have reported that perception plays a major role in the examination of meanings and usage of NOS (Kaplan, 1984; Carroll and Alexandris, 1997; Stodolska and Jackson, 1998; Burger, 2003; Gearin and Kahle, 2006; Burns and Graefe, 2007; Byrne and Wolch, 2009; Lo and Jim, 2010). Thus, human perception of NOS leaned on a three-step process of selection, organization, and interpretation of each identified step affected by cultural diversity (Schater, *et al.*, 2011).

Plethora of studies revealed that the level of human 's perception and utilization of NOS depends on the individual experiences, values, and culture (Relph, 1976; Chigbu 2013; Hesham *et al.*, 2014). Meanwhile, residents' attitude in this regard could be measured in terms of emotional, cognitive, and behavior (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001). Emotional evaluations simply refer to place attachment as the positive bond that develops between groups or individuals and their environment (Altman and Low, 1992). This indicates that people ascribed a positive meaning to favorable places created by their attachment to the setting. Cognitive evaluations rallied around place-identity that involves human beliefs, knowledge and thought towards a place. It showcases the extent at which users use a particular setting. Behavior relates to the level of activities and preferences initiated within the place. It is a reflection of individual and socio-cultural factors, place characteristics and attributes, types and quality of the activities (Severcan, 2012).

Studying environment enables proper enhancement of people's understanding of NOS sharing in multi-ethnic groups which constituted an equal right of access, ownership, and control (Megalhaes, 2010; Kazmierczak, 2013). These attributes relate to a network in terms of residents' social relationship, engagement and participation in social neighbourhood activities and events (Kang, 2006). Others significance attributes include having trust and confidence among residents which relied on happiness derived from such relationship. These affirmed the importance of NOS towards the social, economic and cultural development of the community.

The accessibility to NOS has been ideologically linked with positive human health outcomes, from the garden city movement of Howard (1998) to more recent discourses concerning rural sustainability (Saunders, 2010); and health (De Vries *et al.*, (2003); Bedimo-Rung, *et al.*, 2005). Equitable access and proximity to NOS are increasingly addressed and propagated (Talen and Anselin, 1998; Wolch *et al.*, 2005.). A well functioned NOS facilitates cohesiveness (Peters *et al.*, 2010); and ensure an avenue for resident's recreational activities (Chiesura, 2004). Hence, NOS should be available to all ethnic groups with a view to accommodating personal, cultural, social and physical activities necessary for community building (Stanley *et al.*, 2012).

Planning of NOS in multiethnic context according to Sweeney's study in Canada affirmed its importance in creating harmonious co-existence among diverse groups which footholds on the social values, peoples' tolerance, and environmental safety (Sweeney, 2004). In the same vein, contemporary NOS' planning has been suggested by researchers targeting the creation of an adequate place for social interaction, and exchange of ideas among users (Gehl, 1987; Carmona, 2010). NOS have been noted to create a venue for residents' socialization, interaction, and gathering (Maas *et al.*, 2009; Wood and Giles-Corti, 2010). Encounters in NOS could help build a sense of commonality and tolerance that provide the underpinnings for thriving life in an increasingly diverse, multicultural society (Marcus and Francis, 1998).

Nigeria is a country of about 158.4 million populations, in which nearly half of its citizens reside in rural areas and nearly 55 percent of the total populations live below the country's poverty line (World Bank, 2012). Delving deeper in rural sociology field, it has

been argued that rural areas remain unique because of their spatial and social-cultural identities (Chigbu, 2013). Hence the exploration of *Oja* as a typical open space in the rural neighbourhood could be seen as a mean to promote residents' relatively harmonious and functional way of life (Jagboro, 2000; Ajetunmobi, 2010). A similar study in a developed country such as Northern Ireland, reinstated that NOS holds the potentials to unite residents' diverse cultures by protecting their interest either as minority or majority ethnic groups (Gaffikin *et al.*, 2010). Nevertheless, NOS remains meaningful when it facilitates the opportunity for interactions among resident of different social strata and ethnic background (Lofland, 1999).

Meanwhile, Nigeria context is a reflection of residents' emotional and symbolic perceptions towards *Oja* is filtered by culture, beliefs, values, and experience. These factors remain a veritable tool that can influence ones' feelings towards *Oja* as a distinctive landmark identity. The place identity associated with a host of morphological, historical and cultural parameters (Sepe, 2013). Morphology and arrangement involve examining the factors that lead to settlements transformations in terms of its forms and characters developments. It portrays the proof of environment's transformation by human activities in a bid to fulfill current basic needs. Likewise, people-place relationship annexed the immediate environment in connection with the peoples' utilization over considerable periods of time (Adejumo *et al.*, 2012). Emotional connection to a setting culminated to people's favorable evaluation, and attitudinal behavior. While, Anschuetz *et al.*, (2001) reinstated that through continuous physical modifications, experiences and sharing of memories; communities reshape their geographical spaces. Similarly, through peoples' various activities their surroundings are transformed into quality areas.

In Nigeria, open space planning, design, and management have been in persistence advocacy among researchers, planners, architects and policy makers in built environment (Falade, 1989; Oduwaye, 1998; Oyesiku, 1998; Oruwari, 2000; Jagboro, 2000, Adejumo, 2007). Studies have been conducted on *Oja* in Africa, among which includes the works of Saleh (1999), Oluwole (2000), and Omole *et al.*, (2012). The findings of the studies attest to the fact that certain challenges such as improper planning, inadequate stalls, and amenities militate against the development of *Oja* and needed to be resolved. For instance, *Oja* is found virtually in all rural neighbourhoods in Nigeria, but the growth has been

disorderly and incoherent as a result of improper planning (Hodder, *et al.* 1963). Hence, its development needed to be addressed through appropriate design, planning, and management. This would assist in achieving good interaction among the residents. The attraction to *Oja* needed to be encouraged in an effort to consolidate the benefits derived from peoples' activities. Figure 1.1 depicted pictures of *Oja* in Nigeria through which the activities initiated therein should be aimed at promoting unity among the residents and the community at large.



**Figure 1.1:** Pictures of typical *Oja* in Nigeria

The significance of *Oja* as a meeting place for social, economic and cultural activities could not be overemphasized. In addition, acting as an avenue for commercial purposes has proven to have improved community sustainability (Omole *et al.*, 2012). The social and cultural dimension of sustainable communities involved SOC. In view of this, Bramley and Power (2009) opines that peoples' social interaction and attachment could promote community sustainability. The significance of public involvement in the planning process and sustainability of NOS in Nigeria could not be overemphasized. The public includes individuals and voluntary organizations groups within the community. The main objective of residents' involvement in *Oja* management includes the need to establish an adequate communication link with the public right from the project inception and spanned to completion stage. Also, it elaborates planning procedures, the scope, limitation, and

selection of alternatives useful means that will be of immense benefits to the community. Consequently, responsive planning approach in which a gap between the residents' perception of suggested environmental model and professional perception could be harmonized (Oduwaye, 2006).

The interrelationship between landscape qualities, experiences, perceptions and activities has been understudied; while fewer studies have really explored the significance of ethnic residents' perception and interactions within *Oja* toward creating SOC concept. Consequently, this research work hinges upon the cross-examination of resident's perception on *Oja* and its impact on SOC in a multi-ethnic rural setting of a typical south-west Nigerian community. The exploration is achieved through attachment and place meaning theories. SOC, on the other hand, is the bonding expertise of diverse residents in a spatial formulation of a neighbourhood (Tsai, 2014). Thus, it is associated with the social environmental characteristics of NOS, while the perception by residents has been linked to physical features of the built environment cum sharing, utilization and satisfaction degree (Greenhalgh and Worpole, 1995; Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001; Plas and Lewis, 1996; McMillian and Chavis, 1986).

It is postulated in this research work that improvement on the present condition of *Oja* will assist in the enhancement of residents' SOC. Hence, the emphasis is attached to the overall study of attachment to the *Oja*, residents' satisfaction derived cum residents' SOC. The improvement on interactions among residents and users within *Oja* could further strengthen the social and communal interrelationships irrespective of ethnic heterogeneity. It becomes evident that a decline exists in residents' SOC in recent time and therefore the onus lies on the professionals in rural neighbourhood planning and landscape architecture, to promote the development open space as a preferable measure against rural ailment (Nasar and Julian, 1995).

Nigerian remains a developing country in which efforts are geared toward improving its economy through grass root level. Therefore, *Oja* plays a significant role in its economic boost activity for the greater percentage of the populace operating small retail trades. This is an important notion relating the social and cognitive functioning of rural

residents. Thus, resident's cognitive and emotional attachment to *Oja* could be enhanced. Residents' appraisals of *Oja* in the diverse context of the socio-economic, cultural and ethnic background without avoidance of doubt remain a significant issue that needed to be studied especially in the built environment field.

In the context of appraising *Oja* as a fraction of NOS, different dimensions and perspectives are involved through which users express their feelings. Adejumo *et al.*, (2012) elucidates that the planners and designers in recent time are concentrating more on visible space rather than social space, which implies that little concentration seldom given to effective usage of such social spaces taken in cognizance the multicultural status of Nigerian communities. The present stride in the development plan of Nigerian government is hinged on industrialization, with emphasis on rural areas industrial development and sustainability (Uzuegbunam, 2012). Sustainability is aimed at the development that meets peoples' present needs without compromising the ability to meet the future needs of generations unborn. Hence, the sustainability bid of *Oja* and its environment in developing nation such as Nigeria has deserved exploration.

### **1.3 Research Scope**

Literatures have identified neighbourhood open space classifications based on either as green space, civic space, and grey space (Williams and Green, 2001). However, there are other categories based on the mode of the establishment, expected functions, operation, spatial location and physical characteristics features. This study focused on long existence neighbourhood open space such as *Oja* located at the central core areas of rural communities in South-west, Nigeria. In other words, the study is limited to *Oja* which possesses similar features and characteristic with others located in different parts of rural communities in the region. In efforts to properly discern the significance and characteristics of these *Ojas*, morphological studies, ethnic residents' utilization patterns were explored. The morphological studies enable examinations of the spatial transformation of *Oja* cum the neighbourhood physical characteristics. Meanwhile, the utilization pattern hinged on studying the residents' perception and the attachment drives.

## 1.4 The Study Context

The choice of *Oja* in this context was formed on the premise that it a historic feature in Yoruba land that facilitates rural activities in terms of economic, social, cultural, festive, religious, and recreational. It draws attention to distinctive forms and its character as rural community intricacies which play a significant role towards enhancing outdoor spatial activities. Similarly, the consideration was as a result of *Oja* peculiarities in enabling easy accessibility regardless of age and cultural differences of its users across other Southwest regions of the country.

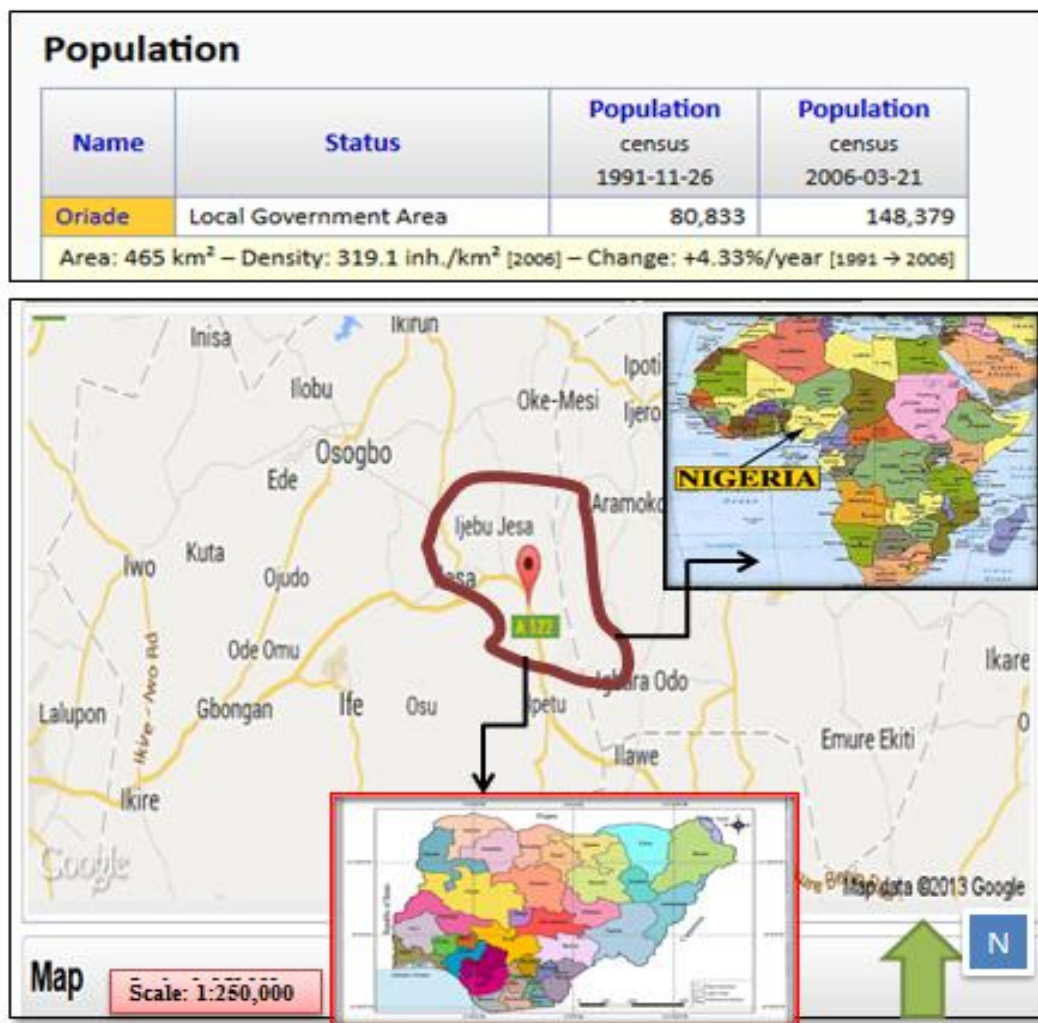
Access to *Oja* and its ability to convey community feelings play an important role in the measurement of the quality of rural residents, hence it needed to be properly planned and managed. The study of *Oja* could be in diverse perspective in terms of its size, mode physical quality, facilities for users and maintenance level (Ikelegbe, 2013). Studying within this framework helps built positive attitudinal changes towards the shaping of *Oja*. Also, the planning, management, and design could be structured towards building and shaping local identity. This study not only explores the perception of people on *Oja* as a place, rather the study is in conjunction with the entire rural community. It thus rooted in the adoption of theories on perceptual and people-environment relationships in the perspective of ethnicity involving Hausas, Ibos, and Yorubas groups. Primary data includes survey questionnaire, on spot-site observations of the users' socio-cultural activities, and focus group discussion with the residents and the professionals. Therefore, the study context explored evolution, residents' perception, the diverse behavioral pattern of users, socio-cultural activities and relationships among the users of *Oja*.

### 1.4.1 The Research Setting

This study was initiated in three rural neighbourhoods of South-western part of Nigeria. The neighbourhoods were found within the Oriade local government, which happens to be the largest out of the thirty (30) local government owned by Osun state. The choice of rural areas was hinged on the fact that it allows variations in the public services utilization between the diverse community residents. Similarly, the study's findings will



enhance community development and revitalization bid both socially and economically. This equally enhances a coordinated system of governance that expatriates on social, economic, and diversity at the grass root level. Further justifications on the choice of the rural communities are narrated in Section 4.6.1 of Chapter 4 (Research Methodology). The research setting is located within Nigeria and Africa maps are depicted in Figure 1.2.



**Figure 1.2:** Research setting, Nigeria and Africa maps

Source: (i) <https://www.google.com/search?q=map+of+ijebu-jesa>.

(ii) [http://www.manuelaresidence.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/nigeria\\_in\\_africa.png](http://www.manuelaresidence.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/nigeria_in_africa.png)

(Accessed 20<sup>th</sup> January 2015)

### 1.4.2 Unit of Analysis

Meanwhile, the unit of analysis is residents and visitors comprising three majority ethnic groups, which are the Yorubas, the host community in the South-western part, the Ibos who are the settler migrated from the south-central parts of the country. Lastly, the Hausas that itinerate from the Northern part of the country. These are 3 dominant ethnic groups out of over 250 groups, comprising between 60 and 70 % of the total population of Nigerians, having a powerful influence on the structure of politics (Blench and Dendo, 2003; Kolluhlon 2003; Attah, 2013). This phenomenon sometimes referred to as tripartite politics. The classification was in line with the large administrative divisions of North, West, and East dating back to 1939. Thus, the groups considered in this study are of both genders aged 12 years and above. Studies have established that age groups possessed matured perceptual attributes pertinent to this study's context (Hay, 1992; Yuksel, *et al.*, 2010; Kil, *et al.*, 2012). The cultural characteristics and backgrounds of the three ethnics are discussed in chapter 3.

### 1.5 Problem Statement

Plethora of literature conducted on *Oja* in Africa has affirmed that certain challenges in design, planning, management, and provision of facilities, exist and needed to be given adequate considerations. These includes the works of Vagale (1972); Eighmy (1972), Onyemelukwe (1974), Sada and Oguntoyinbo (1978), Agiri (1979), Trager-Lillian (1979), Nwafor (1982), Eben-Saleh (1999), Oluwole (2000), Omole *et al.*, (2012). Thus, it becomes pertinent to study residents' perception on *Oja* as regards the present spatial conditions, utilization, and satisfaction with a view to understanding the significance contributions towards residents' SOC in rural areas of Southwest, Nigeria.

The potential of *Oja* towards anchoring social relations among diverse groups remains a challenge for such a large and multicultural society as Nigeria. The interactions among diverse ethnic's residents in *Oja* are often threatened by indigene and settlers' dichotomy and as such have negative effects on the rural developments efforts. For

instance, the contestation over the use of open space among ethnic groups in Nigeria has led to varying degree of rift which has equally snow-balled into rancor in recent time (Alubo 2011). The struggles for the utilization of *Oja* was attributed to improper spatial development planning that led to traders and vendors sharing a limited number of space available. This has resulted to indigene-settlers' dichotomy within *Oja* in rural communities (Odoemene and Olaoba, 2010). Similarly, Nigerian rural residents are faced with challenges emanated from exclusion on the part of some groups which has resulted in conflict and rift within various *Ojas* in the South-west geopolitical zones of Nigeria. The conflict in this context was attributed to behavioral differences between indigenes and settlers as iterated by Ukiwo (2006).

The contestation in the use of space has resulted in ownership and participation control in the communal use of *Oja* among ethnics has been on the increase for past years in Nigeria. The problem got heightened at around 1990s which further exacerbates ethnicity crisis (Ikelegbe, 2013). The occurrence of inter-ethnic conflicts has adversely affected the sustainability of socio- economic development of rural communities. It has equally affected community residents and their living conditions (Ojie and Ewhrudjakpor, 2009). In view of this, concern towards resolving indigene-settler conflict calls for better open space planning (Sayne, 2012). Hence, the management, design, and planning of *Oja* in the multi-ethnic neighbourhood require equitable treatment and inclusion of minorities' voices in the contexts of social diversity (Attah, 2013).

In affirmation of the rift in *Oja*, there was a Guardian Newspaper's report dated 23rd May 2015, captioned "*Ekiti's Largest Market Razed by Arsonists for Violence*" with a rider "*Hausa Traders Evacuated*". The report had it that the largest neighbourhood market square called *Oja-oba* situated directly opposite King's palace; which adjudged to be the largest in the state, dominated by the various ethnic groups was razed down at about 2.am in the early hours of the 22nd May 2015. The crisis led to the destruction of over 200 shops and property worth millions of naira was burnt. The consequence of the crisis was the relocation of all Hausas residents to a neutral ground called *Shasha* situated along Ado Ikere-Ekiti road for protection from assailants. Meanwhile, the recent ethnic and regional clashes between Yorubas and Hausas of Northern Nigeria extraction at Mile 12 market, Ketu, Lagos, was the latest in a series of clashes between host communities (indigenes) and

settlers across the country. The crisis as reported by Nigerian Tribune newspaper and Sahara reporters dated Thursday, March 4, 2016, captioned “7 killed as Yoruba, Hausa clash in Mile 12” and “Mile 12 clash: Between indigenes, Settlers, and citizenship Rights” respectively. The Mile 12 market is famous for its availability of perishable foodstuffs such as tomatoes, yams, and cucumbers from the Northern part of the country. Scores were reported dead in the clashes, while properties worth millions of naira were destroyed. The aftermath of the crisis had it that Hausas traders were relocated to new ground.

Therefore, challenges associated with *Oja* as a shared environment has threatened residents’ social interrelationships thus, exploring residents’ level of cultural values and interactions becomes paramount. As a result, the cultural values relating to SOC garnered further investigations has corroborated by Francis *et al.*, (2012). Following this, there is a need for an exploration based on different cultural disposition and behavioral codes of residents in the multi-ethnic rural setting of Nigeria. The starting point to resolve these challenges is to better understand the users’ cultural and social diversities. The critical investigation of the spatial characteristics and features of *Oja* vis-a-vis residents’ interactions and attachment to *Oja* becomes imperative (Oruwari, 2000). ICG (2010) elucidates that traditions of peaceful coexistence indicated that conflict is not inevitable and appropriate mix of social and holistic measures can alleviate the scenario.

The challenge in the proportion of open spaces in urban centers is as a result of widespread urbanization, which triggered an influx of ethnic groups to the rural areas in recent time (Jagboro, 2000). This migration has equally affected the rural areas, which therefore formed the necessity to explore the spatial qualities, planning, and status of the general condition of *Oja*. The establishment of *Oja* in Nigeria communities was a vision, but the growths of these markets have been disorderly, and incoherent attributed to lack of planning (Hodder *et al.*, 1963). Consequently, it was discovered that all the spatial peripherals of *Oja* have been encroached and taken over by residential structures due to the upsurge in the population of traders. Invariably, this has equally led to contestation in the spatial use of *Oja*. Moreover, the contestation in the use of *Oja* in Nigeria has affected its physical and management status (Rose *et al.*, 2009). This study revealed that the challenges emanated as a result of inadequate planning and maintenance of which if properly

addressed could foster positive social, cultural and economic development of the community.

In the same vein, people's unreasonable interference with the environment to satisfying human needs forms issues that needed critical examinations. In affirmation, green areas, trees, flowers, and vegetation play a vital role in peoples' quality of life, environmental protection and beautification of the neighbourhood. Evidently, it was discovered that no trees, grasses, shrubs, vegetation or plants are found within and around the case study *Oja*. Consequently, the users are subjected to serious environmental hazards and inconveniences. Literature indicated that the long surviving trees were cut down due to the traditional belief that the trees harbor evil spirits such as ghost (Ekemode *et al.*, 2013). It was believed that ghosts meet and live in trees located within and around the *Oja*, which resulted in the removal about 40 years ago.

In another dimension, residents' opinion, suggestion and contribution in decision making as regard the planning, design, management and physical developments of NOS have not been practicing in other developed and developing countries (O'Connor, 2010; Gilchrist, 2003; Lahiri-Dutt, 2004). The problem could be resolved if the residents concerned are allowed to participate in planning, management, and execution of projects that are beneficial to them (Oyesiku, 1998; Oduwaye, 2006; Officha *et al.*, 2012). In view of this, incorporating residents' opinion in decision-making process could impacts positively on the specific needs of the people (Akinmoladun and Oduwaye, 2000). Summarily, the challenges associated with *Oja* in multi-ethnic community of Nigeria could be resolved through proper management, designs, and planning in order to achieve better social interactions among the residents. Furthermore, to summon the challenges required sustainability approach through community-based planning and policy, as rooted by the integration of economic, environmental and social performances (Monfared *et al.*, 2015). The challenges are summarized as follows:

- (i) There are conflicts between residents over the use of economic spaces such as *Oja* which has seriously threaten both the social and economic developments of

Nigeria (Attah, 2013). Hence, the need for improvement in the spatial planning and development of *Oja*.

- (ii) Challenges associated with inadequate management of facilities, infrastructures, and absence of greenery element within the *Oja* area. This has affected the quality of life of people. These elements include trees, flowers, grasses, water. Hence a need for improvement becomes imperative. As iterated by Officha *et al.*, (2012), mismanagement /inappropriateness in the maintenance of NOS in Nigeria has further exacerbated the poor quality and decay of built environment. Poor physical comfort in terms of micro-climate condition, a polluted environment, inadequate facilities, and non-provision of comfortable seating areas within the *Oja* has constituted major problems.
- (iii) Residents' opinions in the decision-making process concerning the management, design and planning is important and should not be underrated. The existing physical planning framework gives little attention to residents' contribution towards modeling the *Oja* in Nigeria (Oduwaye, 2006). As a result, it needed to be considered in a bid to improve the quality of *Oja*.
- (iv) Meanwhile, SOC relates to the level of neighbourliness among the community residents (Sarason, 1974). Evidently, SOC is on the decline in recent time in various communities of both developing and developed Nations (Putnam, 2000). The reasons for this are attributed to the people's lifestyles and cultural differences (French *et al.*, 2014).

## 1.6 Research Gap

A plethora of literature has examined the interrelationship between human and the shared physical environment in Nigeria (Amin 2002; Chokor 2005; Alubo 2011; Attah 2013; Chigbu 2013). Other researchers have equally studied the socio-cultural differences in the use of neighbourhood open space such as *Oja* in terms of income, age differences

and gender (Oruwari, 2000; Adejumo *et al.*, 2012; Ikelegbe, 2013; Omole *et al.*, 2014). A host of literature has equally dealt with the study of *Oja* in Africa. This includes scholars' works of Vagale (1972); Eighmy, (1972); Onyemelukwe (1974); Sada and Oguntoyinbo (1978); Agiri, (1979); Trager-Lillian, (1979); Nwafor (1982); Eben-Saleh (1999); Oluwole (2000); Omole *et al.*, (2012). However, little efforts have been geared by the past studies towards exploring residents' perception on *Oja* with a view of enhancing residents' SOC in the rural community of South- west region of Nigeria. This study aspires to establish empirical evidence of a direct relationship between SOC construct and the residents' perception of physical attributes of *Oja*. The two concepts have received little attention in past studies in Nigeria context. Likewise, it becomes imperative to study the emotional and symbolic meanings ascribed to *Oja* in terms of qualities, experiences, perceptions and activities in both developed and developing countries (Dwyer and Childs, 2004; Balram and Dragicevic, 2005; Chigbu 2013).

A host of literature on people attachment to places is concerned with physical characteristics and settings; rather, few types of research have dwelt with exploring multiple dimensions of the study of *Oja* through attachment and perception by the residents. In addition, the study of *Oja* in relation to community social and cultural values has been understudied. The greatest challenge for landscape architects, planners, and designers are how to improve and manage cultural and social sustainability (Stren and Polese, 2000). People emotional relationships with places affirm the definition given to the places (Kyle *et al.*, 2004). Likewise, Morgan (2010) while discussing place theory, highlighted that emotional bond to a place was based on a long-term experience with a particular place and rooted the meaning individual's link with the place.

Despite the fact that *Oja* is located in every Nigerian rural community, the development and expansion have not been properly coordinated and coherent due to inadequacy in planning and management strategies (Hodder and Ukwu, 1963). In line with this, Chigbu (2013) carried out a study on rural town of Uturu, by adopting place-based attachment theory using qualitative approach (in-depth interview and observation) to check its impacts on Uturu community, South-eastern Nigeria. The researcher's work takes little cognizance of the values of residents' perceptual views and opinion about *Oja* among the

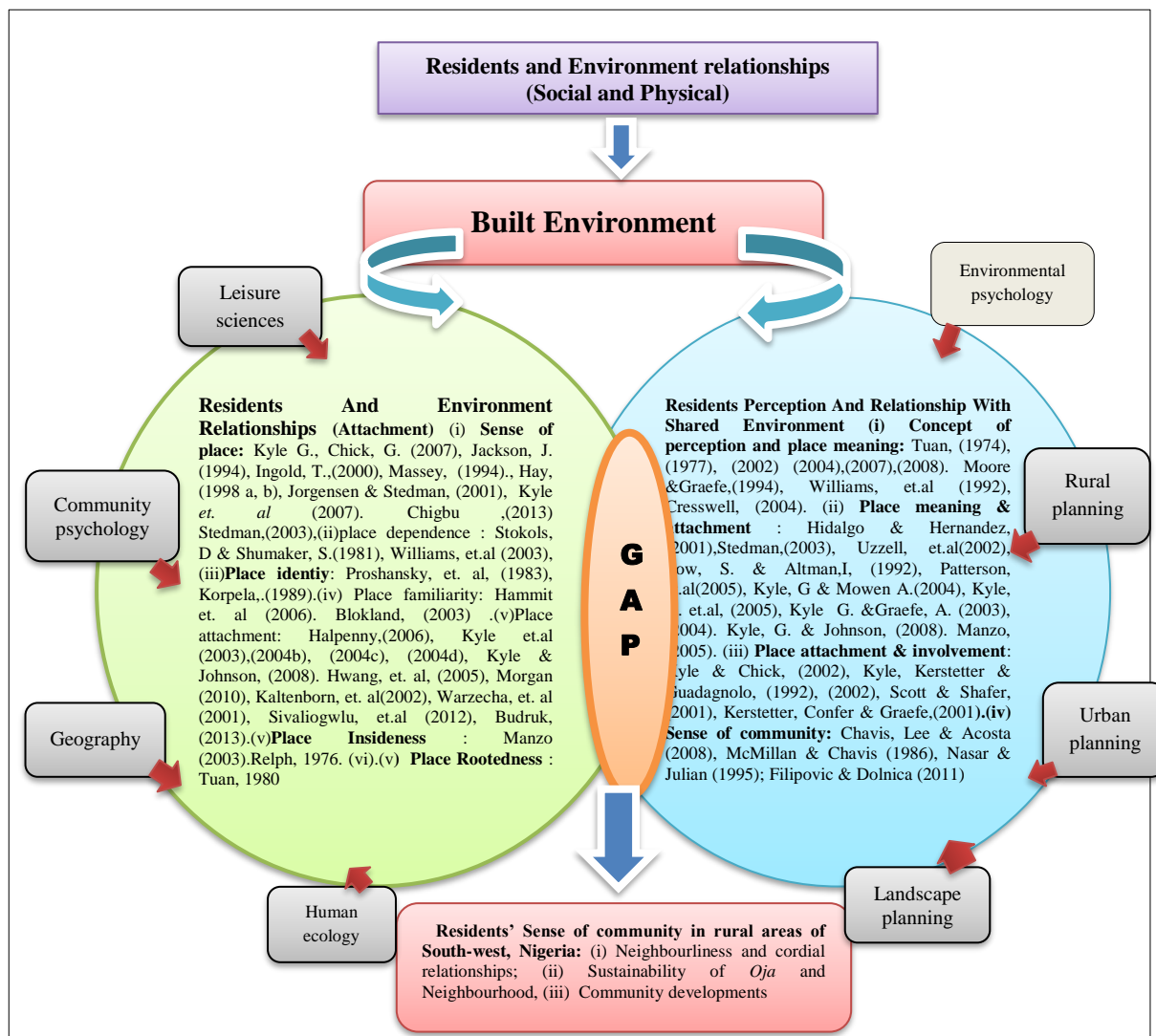
residents. Nevertheless, the researcher's findings revealed a positive contribution of rural sense of place towards fostering community developments.

This research attempt to look beyond the sense of place rather aims at fostering SOC in a holistic approach. The sense of place according to Curtis and Jones (1998, p.86) is the meaning, intention and value that individuals or group ascribed to a particular place. Meanwhile, SOC refers to the feelings that members matter to one another and to the group, based on shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to being together (McMillan and Chavis 1986, p9). Therefore, it becomes imperative to state that SOC captures more perceptual scope in relation to the residents' meaning as well as fostering togetherness among diverse groups. This study is in furtherance to the research work by Chigbu (2013) through a mixed method approach. Also, the research work focuses on the impacts of residents' perception on *Oja* through attachment concept with a view of gaining insights on its capability towards achieving SOC. The sense of community elaborates on neighbourliness and social interactions among diverse ethnic groups; through which the sustainability of *Oja* and community at large could be achieved. Notably, there exists a gap between residents in the local setting, meaning ascribed to the *Oja* and residents' SOC

However, researchers have conducted the examination of sense of community in neighbourhood context in the developed countries and the results have been linked to host of community outcomes such as neighbourhood attachment, community participation and improved neighbourliness (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Hull, 1994; Abu-Ghazze, 1996; Lucy and Phillips, 1997; Gobster, 2001; Simson, 2000; Austin, 2004). The similar studies have not been studied in Nigeria context as developing nation. Therefore, the major concern of this study is hinged on an exploration of peoples' perception and its impact on their SOC through attachment, social interactions, and satisfaction degree. Researchers from various fields such as environmental psychology, leisure sciences, landscape architecture, rural and urban studies, community psychology and geography have studied and identified place related theories under various concepts. For instance, concept of place meaning (Tuan, 2008; Cresswell, 2004; Moore and Graefe, 1994), place meanings and attachment (Low and Altman, 1992; Kyle and Johnson, 2008; Morgan, 2010), sense of place and SOC (McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Chavis, Lee and Acosta,



2008; Nasar and Julian, 1995; Filipovic and Dolnica, 2011; Francis, *et al.*, 2012). The research gap is analyzed graphically in Figure 1.3



**Figure 1.3:** Research gap framework

Conclusively, in order to address the associated challenges, this research aims at exploring *Oja* in the context of residents' perceptions, utilization, sharing capabilities and satisfaction degree. This acts as a pointer toward achieving (i) harmonious relationships termed SOC, (ii) residents' quality of life cultural and social sustainability, (iii) development of *Oja* via design, planning, and management to promote cultural and social sustainability of the community.

## 1.7 Research Conceptualization and Underpinnings

This study is structured toward theories that encompass place and human-environment relationship concepts. Consequently, this study conceptualizes place perception and meaning as well as the concept of place attachment. The adopted concepts emanated from various disciplines in environmental psychology, leisure, and tourism, community psychology, social sciences, anthropology, human geography. Others include human psychology, human philosophy, environment and behavioral studies, landscape, rural and urban morphology, rural sociology, human sociology and community psychology. The two theories adopted have helped in understanding how perception, preferences, and emotional connections to place relate to SOC. Thus, it is iterated that people perceived their environment through direct personal experiences, conscious experiences, and interactions (Jandt, 2004).

The role and perception of a place could be thoroughly studied by place attachment which Low and Altman (1992) also termed as the emotional bonds that developed between individuals and their environment. Meanwhile, the research underpinning is supported by (i) perceptual and place meaning theories; and (ii) place attachment theory. Succinctly, *Oja* has good potentials in establishing effective resident's SOC (Kim and Kaplan, 2004). Besides, *Oja* could enhance SOC through the creation of interaction among neighbors. Kang (2006) opined in his study in China, that access to NOS had a higher degree of community engagement. The interaction could either be directly or indirectly promoting a SOC. The strongest predictors of actual SOC according to McMillan and Chavis (1986) are (i) expected length of community residency (ii) satisfaction with the community and (iii) neighbors' interactions. However, Francis *et al.*, (2012) affirms the benefits of relationships between open space and resident SOC in terms of increased feelings of safety, participation in community affairs, and responsibility.

### 1.7.1 Theory of Perceptual and Place Meaning

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the definition of place; meanwhile, Tuan (1974, 1984) was the first researcher to incorporate meaning into its definition. He reinstated that spaces when imbued with meaning translates into places

through human experiences. The perceptual theories termed topophilia, indicated an emotional bond between people and their environment. In addition, other environmental psychologists such as Proshansky, *et al.*, (1983); Altman and Low (1992) have further stressed place-related attitudes, behaviors, and feelings, while phenomenological theories by Husserl, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, conducted philosophical investigations to support perceptual and place meaning concept.

This research underpinning is hinged by perceptual and place meaning theories (Tuan, 1984; Greider and Garkovich, 1994; Cresswell, 2004; Morehouse, 2008; Morgan 2010). The meanings ascribed to *Oja* are based on users' experiences and reflections of socio-cultural identities. Meanwhile, the vivid knowledge and experience people gathered within *Oja* is a reflection of peoples' perception and specific importance derived. The affective bond between users and *Oja* could be based on the socio-cultural and individual's perception. Understanding the meaning of *Oja* is necessary as it gives an insight into what is to be formed and managed within the context of a particular place. In view of the aforementioned, measurement of *Oja*'s characteristics and features becomes paramount while exploring its meanings.

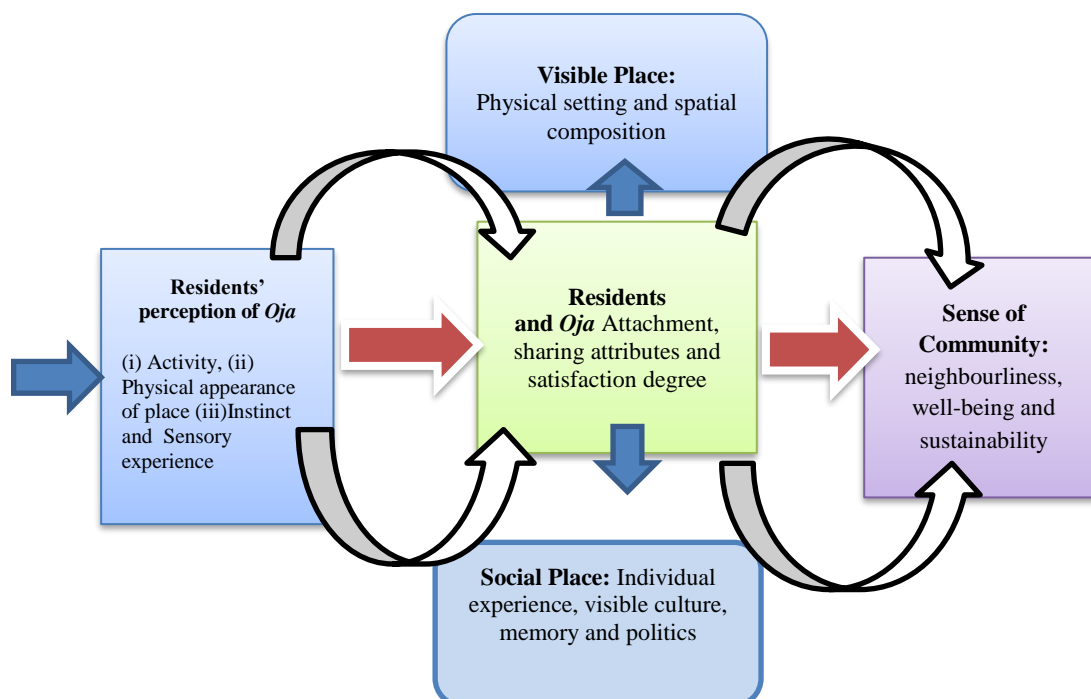
### **1.7.2 Place Attachment theory**

Place attachment refers to human and environment relationship derived from Low and Altman (1992); Kyle *et. al* (2004); Gross and Graham (2008); Scannell and Gifford (2010); Budruk and Stanis (2013); Budruk *et al.*, (2013). There are various theoretical overlaps between diverse place constructs, but recently number of attempts has been made to better define and interpret these constructs (Francis *et al.*, 2012). However, place attachment in this context is synonymous with individual or collective meanings comprising both physical and social attachment ( Scannell and Gifford, 2010).

A human being ascribed a different meaning with their physical environment through place attachment. Place attachment in term of emotional or symbolic meaning is referred to as place identity while functional meaning is coined as place dependence (Kyle, 2004, Williams and Vaske, 2003; Moore and Graefe, 1994). Thus, attachment to *Oja* relates to (i) individuals and ethnic groups' perception, and (ii) evaluation based on the resultant

effects of the degree of resident's activity, and cognitive responses. The perception of *Oja* by users forms part of the natural condition of the human senses that are stimulated by either physical or social conditions. Succinctly, the theory of attachment to *Oja* not only relates to its physical setting alone but associated with its interpretation through user's experiences. This further expatiates the affective bond between people and *Oja*.

Attachment to neighbourhood possesses reliable potentials in strengthening a SOC (Rivlin, 1982; Kim and Kaplan, 2004) and growing the likelihood of enhancing social interactions (Gehl, 1987). Resident's involvement and interactions in NOS possess the capability to improve SOC and subsequent increase in the level of neighbourhood attachment (Illia *et al.*, 2015). Measuring SOC was attributed to having imbued with contact among the residents, and attachment to the neighbourhood (Fillipovic and Dolnicar, 2011; Tsai, 2014). The degree of residents' satisfaction towards *Oja* rooted in their interactions and place dimensions. Interaction in *Oja* facilitates a sense of communality and tolerance in such a multicultural settings (Marcus and Francis, 1998). Figure 1.4 refers to the research conceptual flow chart.



(i) Perceptual theory and place meaning: Tuan (1984); Cresswell (2004) and Morehouse (2008).

(ii) Theory of attachment : Low and Altman (1992); Kyle et al., (2004); and Scannell and Gifford (2010).

**Figure 1.4:** Research conceptual flow chart

## 1.8 Research Aim

This research aims at determining the significance of *Oja* as a neighborhood open space towards enhancing residents' Sense of Community in Nigeria.

### 1.8.1 Objectives of the study

This study aim will be achieved through the following objectives

- (i) To determine the evolution and physical spatial development of *Oja*,
- (ii) To identify the perception of *Oja* among Yoruba, Hausa, and Ibo ethnic residents, which result to place attachment,
- (iii) To determine the impact of the use of *Oja* on residents' sense of community, and
- (iv) To assess the residents' satisfaction degree through the use of *Oja*.

## 1.9 Research Questions

- (i) What are the factors that contributed to the development in a physical spatial pattern of *Oja*?
- (ii) Does the residents' perception of *Oja* differ among the three ethnic groups?
- (iii) Does the use of *Oja* influence residents' sense of community?
- (iv) Does residents' satisfaction with *Oja* is a function of their utilization?

## 1.10 Research Hypotheses

In a bid to buttress the research aim and objectives of this study, the hypotheses are formulated, which will be statically analyzed and tested using statistical tools.  $H_0$  is used to represent null hypothesis while  $H_1$  connotes alternative hypothesis.

- (i) RH1- The residents' meanings of *Oja* differs among the three ethnic groups in the study areas.  
RHO -The residents' meanings of *Oja* will not differ among the three ethnic groups in the study areas.
- (ii) RH2- Residents' utilization of *Oja* positively influences the resident sense of community.  
RHO - The residents' utilization of *Oja* will not influence resident sense of community
- (iii) RH3- Residents' satisfaction degree in *Oja* is a function of their utilization.  
RHO- Residents' satisfaction degree in *Oja* is not a function of their utilization

### 1.11 Significance of Study

It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the potential of *Oja* towards maintaining and improving the inter-ethnic relationship (Vagale 1972; Ajetunmobi 2010). This research establishes the significance of *Oja* as an everyday setting in a neighbourhood towards its contribution to residents' SOC in rural areas of Nigeria. It has been established that improved residents' SOC would strengthen the cultural sustainability of such communities (Chigbu, 2013), and its incorporated land use feature such as *Oja*. The *Oja* play significant roles in the lives of rural residents as well as developments of villages and hamlets. Therefore, it becomes imperative to have an insight into resident's cultural norms, values, and practices with a view to identifying the commonalities in terms of interests and attachments to *Oja*. However, this study further established methods capable of fostering ethnic interaction through effective sharing, utilization, and satisfaction derived from *Oja*. This demonstrates the emergence of the new paradigm of appropriateness in space planning, design, and management.

Studying peoples' attachment to place enhances better understanding of individuals, groups, and cultures through various processes (Low and Altman, 1992). Similarly, understanding peoples' perception, satisfaction and SOC becomes pertinent with

a view of evolving effective planning, design and management strategies for *Oja*, as acknowledged by similar market studies in the developed and developing countries (Hodder, *et al.*1963; Saleh, 1999; Oluwole, 2000; Omole *et al.*, 2012; Zakariya, *et al.*,2016). For instance, a similar market study in Malaysia reinstated that both the spatial and socio-cultural aspects are factors necessary to be considered when planning for future improvements of the marketplace (Zakariya, *et al.*, 2016). In view of this, it becomes evident to understand the diverse meanings that place holds for its residents in order to create a place (Loukaitou-Sideris, 1995). The understanding would help in fostering action on parts of all groups who have an emotional attachment to a place (Lukas, 1985); that constitutes an important setting where social relations and people perception could be integrated into practice (Williams and Patterson, 1996).

Studying people-place connections in terms of meanings ascribed to *Oja* would iterate its significance. Therefore, understanding people perception on the place will assist in developing a conceptual framework that accounts for planning with culture (Stephen, 2010). Besides, people's perception on *Oja* determines how the setting will be shared, maintained, utilized, and negotiated, which will afterward enhance residents' socio-cultural interrelationship and satisfaction. In addition, understanding the attachment to *Oja*, and its contributory factors affords greater opportunity to identify contested meanings and values assigned. The findings of this study are hoped to enrich people's views about the relationships between place attachment and associated factors

SOC is feelings of mutual trust, social relations, shared concern, and community values (Manzo and Perkins, 2006). Thus, enhancement of residents' SOC allows better study of people and place relationship (Francis *et al.*, 2012). Its significance reflects on the exploration of social bonds within people and place, as well as the physical and cultural implications of the community (Mannarini *et al.*, 2005). It was established that lack of a SOC in open space study is a potential reason for the increase in rift and its impact is often felt in terms of soliciting support by others residents when the need arises (Williams and Patterson, 1996). The study has shown that place attachment and SOC plays a significant role in neighbourhood revitalization bid (Brown *et al.*, 2003). Furthermore, this study formulates models of the planning and management of *Oja* towards the enhancement of residents' SOC through effective sharing and utilization. This aims at suppressing conflict

that characterizes ethnically diverse community (Davenport and Anderson, 2005). Stedman (2003) acknowledged that researching into attitudes and satisfactions about places widens peoples' knowledge borne out of preferred meaning.

This research attests to the significance of *Oja* hinged on the fact that, its planning, management, and design could contribute to rural quality developments and improved social sustainability as supported by a similar study by Lofti and Koohsari, (2009). The existing challenges in the provision of appropriate landscaping such as sidewalks, broad passages, enough parking space and adequate security in *Oja* could be resolved, which could then have positive impacts on the residents' well-being. The potential contribution of adequately planned NOS such as *Oja* could impact positively on the life of its users (Massam, 2002). Hence, comprehension of people's perception *Oja* could help in better re-planning and management to meet users' satisfaction. Thus, it is important to explore the perception of residents in order to be adequately informed on their opinion about the place, which increases a vivid knowledge about initiating a meaningful and positive experience about such places.

Exploring diverse residents' views in the context of the appropriateness of open space facilitate adequate joint utilization through involvements and contributions. Landscape architects and planners needed to be versatile with neighbourhood open space concept in relation to perceptions, attitudes, values, and activities in order to conceptualize space planning models that enhance sharing and utilization among different users (Gu and Ryan, 2008). In view of this, it becomes imperative to research into interrelationships that exist between ethnic groups within a typical local community in developing nation like Nigeria. Also, resolving the conflict that associated with the planning of NOS could be resolved through residents' opinion and involvement (Deutshe, 1996; Perkins, *et al.*, 2006; Matsuoka *et al.*, 2008). Thus, the consequence of the resolution would add to the co-existence and growth of neighbourhood open space. The study's findings establish the role of social influences such as participation in community activities, which forms important influence on interaction and SOC (Moudon *et al.*, 2006).



## 1.12 Definitions of Terms

*Afin*: Kings' palace acting as the seat of government for the incumbent, and equally acts as the hub of the town (Adejumo *et al.*, 2012).

*Oja*: is referred to as market square in Yoruba parlance as a traditional setting of an open space or a covered arena where the distribution of commodities, services and social interaction takes place (Vagale, 1972; Omole *et al.*, 2014).

*Ahia*: is referred to as market square in Igbo parlance.

*Obi-emeghe ohere*: neighbourhood open space in the Igbo language meant for socio-cultural activities in Ibo land.

*Kasuwa*: connotes market square in Hausa parlance.

*Dandeli*: neighborhood open space for various social cultural activities in Hausa land

*Oja-Oba*: act as a neighbourhood open space that portrays the onerous image of the neighbourhood as well as the incumbent *Oba* (Adejumo, *et al.*, 2012).

*Iyalojas*: these are market women association leader appointed by the *Oba* to oversee and regulate the affairs or operation of the members in the *Oja*.

*Babalojas*: these are the market men association leader appointed by the King to oversee and regulate the affairs or operation of the trading members.

*Ojubo-orisa*: shrine or ritual center where supplications are made to the market gods.

*Orisas*: are the market gods that are generally believed to have a spiritual influence on the progress of the *Oja* in terms of economic and social prosperity.

*Alarobos*: middle men and women acting as intermediaries between the producers or vendors especially of farm product and the consumers of such products or buyer. They are middle retailers often time does not owe any specific stalls or shops in the market.

*Alabaru*: people that help or assist the buyers to carry the purchased goods from one area to another within the *Oja*. They are luggage carriers readily available to offer their services at any time during market activities.

Primordialism: Refer to the acceptability of different ethnic groups to endure or tolerates each other within the space (Ukiwo, 2006).

### 1.13 Thesis outline

This thesis is organized in a logical way by addressing the Research Objectives. In view of this, it comprises six chapters as illustrated in Figure 1.5.

**Chapter 1:** This Chapter introduces the study and its keywords such as neighbourhood, open spaces, utilization, and residents' perceptions of *Oja* and SOC. The importance of *Oja* and its brief historical background were briefly discussed. Research scope, variables, and unit of analysis were as well presented. However, the statement of the problem, research gap, research conceptualization and underpinnings were clearly iterated. Details of aim and objectives of the study, research questions, and hypothesis were enumerated. In addition, the significance of the study, and definition of some terms used in relation to the study were succinctly discussed. The organization of the thesis chapters' framework which formed the basis for extensive literature review in chapter 2 is discussed.

**Chapter 2:** This chapter discusses neighbourhood open space and its dimensions in relation to the development of various open space concepts, characteristics, and historical planning systems. The benefits derived, locations, typology, and morphology of neighbourhood open space were discussed.

**Chapter 3:** Reviews of the relevant literature to the study's theoretical framework such as ethnics and cultural diversities, definitions, roles and typology of *Oja*. In addition, reviews of studies on place concept, theory and dimensions were discussed. Residents' attachment to *Oja* and SOC coupled with the interactions among community residents are succinctly explained. This chapter 3 and chapter 2 represent research concept framework and methodology to be adopted in chapter 4 of the study.

**Chapter 4:** The achievement of study aim through appropriate methodology succinctly expatiates in this chapter. It hovering around research methodology and the essence of using mixed methods approach, through morphological study, survey questionnaires, focus group workshop, and participant's observation strategies. In connection to this, the research measurements, study area population, sample sampling, and justification for the methodology were elucidated properly. It showcases the analysis of the research data and presented the chronological analysis reports. Similarly, it buttresses the research tools, variables, and measuring items that rooted the findings, summary and conclusion in chapter 5.

**Chapter 5:** The research result and discussion from the analysis in chapter 4 are properly presented in a logical way in this chapter 5 in relation to the evidence established in the literature review of chapter 2 and chapter 3.

**Chapter 6:** This chapter evolves adequate conclusions that justified the study goal, which also precipitated the recommendations, research implication, limitation and future research study.

**References:** It enlisted the cited literature in the dissertation.

**Appendices:** Comprised of relevant supporting documents that added to the understanding of research study.

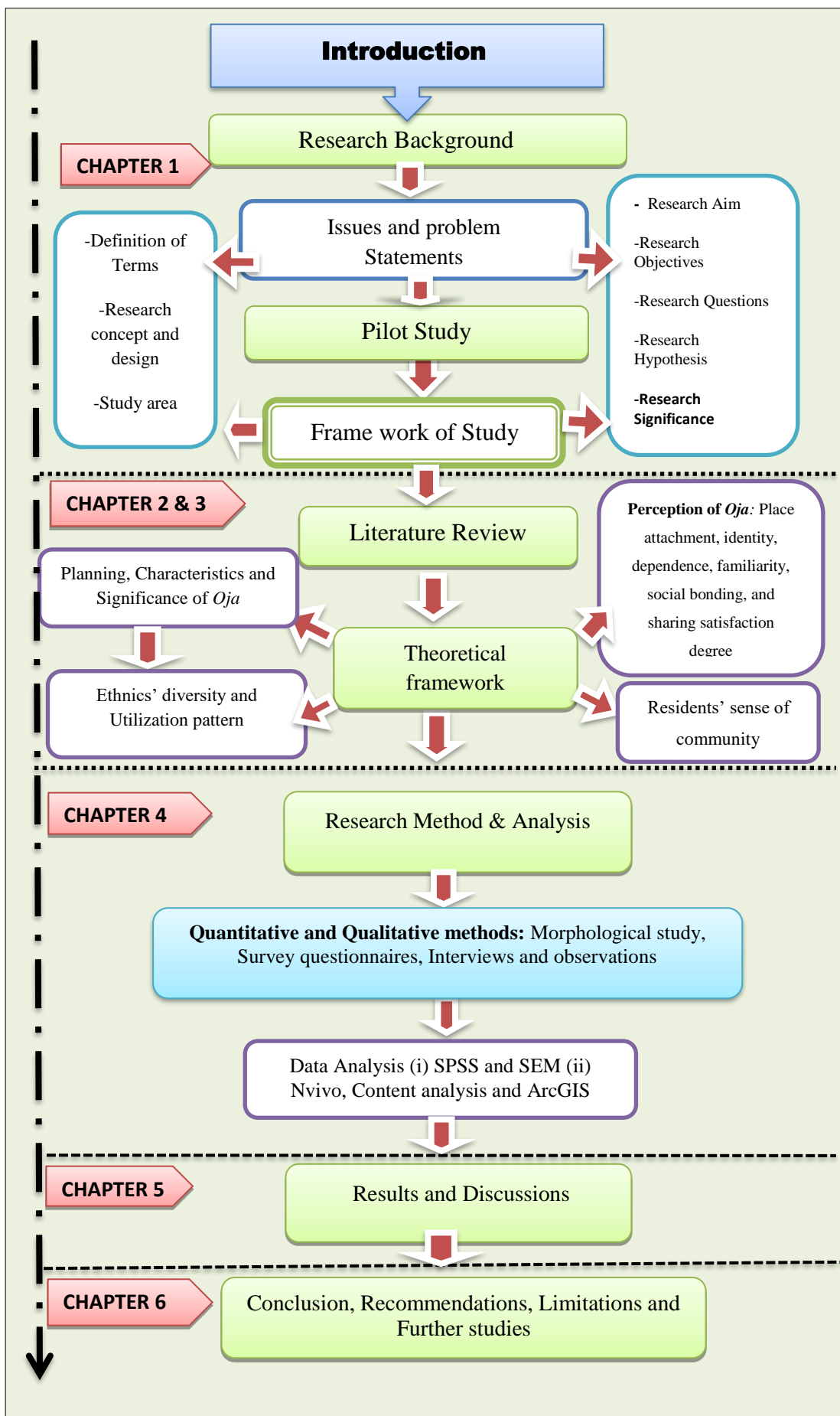


Figure 1.5: Thesis structure outline

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