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The use of symbolism in campus landscape design: A case study of University of Lagos (UINLAG)

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Abstract

This study examines the use of symbolism in the campus landscape of the University of Lagos, Nigeria. It addresses a gap in existing literature concerning the lack of systematic classification of symbolic landscape elements and limited understanding of how these elements express institutional identity and support place-making in Nigerian university campuses. The study identifies and classifies symbolic landscape features on the campus, analyses their spatial relationship with circulation networks and ceremonial spaces, and examines how they contribute to institutional identity and environmental legibility. The research adopts a qualitative approach using primary data from site observation and photographic documentation, supported by secondary sources including academic literature, archival materials, institutional publications, planning documents, historical records, and campus master plans. Content analysis and thematic interpretation are used to examine how symbolic elements are embedded within the campus landscape and how they communicate meaning. Spatial analysis of documented layouts further supports the interpretation. The study views symbolism in landscape architecture as a communicative medium through which institutional values, history, and narratives are expressed within the physical environment. Findings reveal that symbolic elements at UNILAG—including the Senate Building, the "Culture & Justice" statue, the lagoon front, and various green spaces—function as carriers of institutional identity, cultural representation, and historical memory. By analyzing the University of Lagos as a case study, the research contributes to discussions on cultural representation, identity formation, and symbolic expression in campus planning and provides insights that may inform future campus development and heritage conservation strategies.

Keywords: Campus Landscape; Cultural Heritage; Institutional Identity; Place-Making; Symbolism

1. Introduction

Campus landscapes are important components of the built environment of universities. They contribute not only to the physical appearance of an institution but also to the experiences and perceptions of those who use the space. A well-designed campus landscape can enhance students' well-being, encourage social interaction, and create opportunities for informal learning outside the classroom. Beyond these functional roles, campus landscapes can serve as powerful tools for communicating institutional values, heritage, and identity through the deliberate integration of symbolic elements (Spaces4Learning, 2025). This integration moves campus environments beyond mere functionality, transforming them into rich tapestries that narrate an institution's past, present, and future.

Symbolism in landscape design refers to the intentional use of physical elements to convey meanings that extend beyond their functional purposes. These elements may include sculptures, monuments, memorials, spatial layouts, pathways, water features, or natural landscapes that represent cultural values, institutional achievements, historical events, or

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philosophical ideas (Yussupova et al., 2017). Through symbolism, landscapes become communicative environments that tell stories about an institution's history and aspirations (Tilley, 2021). In university campuses, symbolic landscape features often serve as landmarks and gathering points while reinforcing the collective identity of the academic community, fostering a deeper sense of belonging among its members (Nasar, 2014).

Across many universities worldwide, symbolic landscape elements are strategically integrated to strengthen institutional branding and spatial identity. Statues of notable figures, commemorative monuments, ceremonial plazas, and carefully arranged spatial axes frequently represent academic excellence, national heritage, or intellectual legacy (Yildiz et al., 2019). Such symbolic components shape the visual character of the campus and influence how students, staff, and visitors emotionally connect with the university environment. They serve as anchors for an institution's narrative and guide how its members perceive themselves within the larger university community (Lewicka, 2011; Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2014).

In Nigeria, universities also incorporate symbolic elements within their landscapes, though scholarly documentation of their meanings and contributions to campus identity remains limited. Many campus environments contain statues, memorial spaces, and distinctive spatial arrangements that may represent institutional values, commemorate important personalities, or reflect historical milestones. However, these symbolic features are often experienced visually without adequate academic analysis of their intended meanings and spatial significance, particularly within the context of African cultural narratives and institutional histories (Afolayan, 2016; Oyelere & Omole, 2018). This represents a research gap, as most existing Nigerian scholarship on urban environments and university campuses tends to focus on physical planning, infrastructure, or environmental performance at broader scales (Adelekan, 2016; Ayanlade et al., 2020).

The University of Lagos, established in 1962 as one of Nigeria's pioneering federal universities, provides an important context for examining symbolism in campus landscape design. Located in Akoka and largely surrounded by the Lagos Lagoon, the university occupies a vast campus characterized by diverse outdoor spaces, monuments, sculptures, and natural features (University of Lagos, n.d.). These landscape elements contribute to the physical and cultural identity of the institution while shaping the daily experiences of students and visitors who interact with the campus environment. As one of Africa's fastest-growing megacities, Lagos's urban fabric is dense and continuously expanding, making UNILAG an ideal site to study how symbolism in landscape design navigates rapid urbanization while retaining cultural significance.

Despite the presence of several monuments, statues, and distinctive outdoor spaces across the University of Lagos campus, there is limited scholarly documentation analyzing how these elements function as symbolic representations within the landscape. Existing studies on university landscapes have largely focused on environmental comfort, spatial planning, and ecological functions, with relatively little attention given to the symbolic meanings embedded within campus design (Chen & Huang, 2018; Olapade & Oduwale, 2020). As a result, the explicit identification, analysis, and evaluation of the role of these symbolic elements in shaping the identity, memory, and spatial character of the university remain insufficiently understood.

This gap highlights the need for a systematic examination of symbolic landscape features within the University of Lagos campus. Understanding the symbolic meanings embedded within these elements can provide insights into how landscape design contributes to institutional identity, cultural expression, and the overall perception of the campus environment. Such analysis may also inform future campus planning and conservation strategies by emphasizing the importance of symbolic landscapes in reinforcing the heritage and values of academic institutions. By focusing on a single, prominent institution, this study seeks to provide a nuanced, case-based assessment of symbolic communication within a specific African university context.

Accordingly, this study investigates the use of symbolism in campus landscape design at the University of Lagos. The research focuses on identifying key symbolic elements within the campus environment, examining their intended meanings, and evaluating how they collectively contribute to shaping a distinct and recognizable campus identity. By situating the case study within broader discussions of symbolic landscape design and institutional identity, the study aims to contribute to the understanding of how landscapes function not only as physical spaces but also as carriers of meaning within university environments.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- What are the prominent architectural structures, natural features, and artistic installations that serve as symbolic elements within the University of Lagos campus landscape?

- What are the officially intended symbolic meanings behind the design and placement of these elements within the University of Lagos campus?
 - How do these identified symbolic elements actively contribute to shaping a unique and recognizable campus identity for the University of Lagos?
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2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical Foundations of Symbolic Landscape Design

The theoretical underpinnings of landscape design have evolved beyond purely functional or aesthetic considerations to encompass deeper symbolic meanings. Current scholarship emphasizes that landscapes are not merely physical spaces but are also imbued with cultural, historical, and institutional significance. This perspective, rooted in semiotics and cultural geography, posits that built and natural environments serve as powerful communicators of values, heritage, and identity, shaping human experiences and perceptions within a given setting. The intentional integration of symbolic elements transforms landscapes into narrative environments.

Within university campuses, landscapes often function as pedagogical tools and identity markers. Research indicates that the symbolic features within these environments contribute significantly to students' sense of belonging and institutional pride. The collective memory and shared experiences associated with symbolic spaces strengthen the academic community's cohesion and connection to the institution, making them vital components of campus identity (Nasar, 2014; Lewicka, 2011).

However, while the general concept of symbolic landscapes is well-documented globally, specific analyses concerning its application and interpretation within African university contexts remain less explored. The unique cultural narratives, historical trajectories, and socio-political dynamics of West African nations, such as Nigeria, present distinct frameworks for how symbolism is integrated and perceived within their academic landscapes.

2.2. Vegetative Language: Planting as a Symbol of Identity and Heritage

Planting design on university campuses can extend beyond ecological and aesthetic functions to convey symbolic meanings. The selection of specific plant species, their arrangement, and overall landscape typology can represent institutional values, commemorate significant figures or events, or even reflect national identity. For example, indigenous plants might symbolize heritage and sustainability, while certain tree species might be planted to honor specific individuals or achievements.

In African urban contexts, where indigenous flora holds deep cultural and medicinal significance, planting choices in university settings can carry potent symbolic weight related to heritage, resilience, and local identity (Akinola & Eze, 2021). Despite this potential, many contemporary campus landscapes, especially in rapidly developing cities, may prioritize ornamental exotic species, potentially overlooking the rich symbolic narratives embedded in native plant selections.

Research on environmental quality in residential estates has shown that well-maintained green spaces and landscaping directly influence user satisfaction and perceived quality of life (Adeyemi et al., 2024). Extending this logic to campus landscapes, the presence of thoughtfully designed indigenous planting schemes can symbolize not only cultural heritage but also an institution's dedication to creating environments that support comfort, health, and psychological restoration. This dual function—ecological and symbolic—positions vegetative design as a critical component of identity-driven campus planning.

Specifically in Nigerian university settings, documentation often describes planting schemes based on their visual appeal or functional benefits. There is limited scholarly evaluation of whether existing plant palettes are strategically chosen for their symbolic meanings or how these choices contribute to the institution's narrative and cultural identity within its landscape.

2.3. The Expressive Qualities of Landscape Materials

The materials employed in campus hardscapes, pavements, and architectural features contribute significantly to the symbolic language of a university environment. Beyond their functional properties, materials can convey messages about an institution's permanence, its commitment to sustainability, its heritage, or its modernity. The selection of specific materials can subtly influence how the campus is perceived and experienced by its diverse users.

For instance, locally sourced or traditional materials can symbolize an institution's grounding in its community and its respect for regional craftsmanship. Conversely, modern, technologically advanced materials might express innovation and a forward-looking vision. Sustainable material choices increasingly carry symbolic weight, signaling a university's dedication to environmental stewardship and future generations.

The connection between environmental quality and user outcomes has been established in various institutional contexts. Research has shown that environmental quality significantly impacts job performance among university staff, suggesting that material choices in campus landscapes—such as durable, well-maintained, and aesthetically coherent paving, seating, and structures—are not merely functional decisions but also symbolic statements about institutional care and professionalism (Ademakinwa et al., 2024). When universities invest in high-quality, locally sourced, or sustainably produced materials, they communicate values of permanence, respect for users, and commitment to excellence.

Despite global advancements in understanding the symbolic dimensions of material choice, their strategic application and analysis within Sub-Saharan African university contexts, particularly in Nigeria, are often under-researched. Many material decisions appear to be driven by economic factors or availability, rather than a conscious effort to align them with specific symbolic narratives, especially considering the region's climate and coastal challenges.

2.4. Spatial Organization as a Symbolic Framework

The way a campus landscape is spatially organized—including the alignment of pathways, the placement of plazas, and the orientation of key architectural elements—forms a powerful symbolic framework. This organization guides movement, establishes visual hierarchies, and creates specific atmospheres, thereby communicating core institutional values and narrative structures. Effective spatial planning can create memorable experiences and reinforce a university's identity through its physical layout.

Research shows that strategic spatial configurations profoundly impact how users engage with and interpret the institutional narratives embedded within a campus. A central plaza might symbolize community and gathering, while a monumental axis could represent academic excellence and aspiration. These arrangements contribute to a university's unique sense of place and its distinct character.

While Lagos's urban development and unique climate necessitate careful spatial planning, systematic evaluations of the symbolic logic behind the spatial organization of its contemporary university landscapes are notably scarce. Existing research tends to focus more on functional aspects of urban planning rather than a deep analysis of how spatial configurations contribute to a university's symbolic identity and meaning-making.

2.5. The Role of Art and Symbolism in Shaping Experience

Beyond vegetation, materials, and spatial layout, artistic installations and symbolic artworks play a significant role in shaping how people experience and interact with campus environments. Research on the effects of artworks in workplace settings has demonstrated that carefully curated visual environments—including sculptures, installations, and symbolic art—can significantly enhance creative output, mood, and overall satisfaction among users (Opaluwa et al., 2022). Applying this insight to university campuses, the monuments, sculptures, and artistic installations found within these environments can be understood not only as static symbols of institutional values but also as active environmental stimuli that potentially influence the creativity, inspiration, and emotional well-being of students and staff who interact with them.

This perspective adds interpretive depth to the analysis of symbolic elements, suggesting that they may have measurable psychological and behavioral impacts that warrant consideration in campus planning. When universities invest in meaningful public art and symbolic installations, they create environments that support not only institutional identity but also the creative and emotional lives of their communities.

2.6. Identified Research Gap

Three critical gaps emerge from the reviewed literature concerning symbolism in campus landscape design:

- Limited integrated evaluation of planting design, material selection, and spatial orientation within a single analytical framework focused on symbolic meaning.
- Insufficient performance-based assessment of symbolic landscape elements in tropical West African megacities, particularly within university contexts.

- Lack of scholarly analysis of prominent Nigerian university campuses, such as the University of Lagos, as empirical case studies to inform context-specific symbolic design models

These gaps justify the present study's focus on providing a systematic documentation and interpretation of symbolic landscape features at UNILAG, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of how Nigerian universities express identity and heritage through their physical environments.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative, interpretivist research design, utilizing a case study approach to comprehensively investigate the use of symbolism in the campus landscape design of the University of Lagos (UNILAG). The case study approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of how symbolic elements are embedded within a specific institutional context.

3.2. Study Area

The research was conducted at the main campus of the University of Lagos (UNILAG), located in Akoka, Lagos State, Nigeria. UNILAG, a federal university established in 1962, is recognized for its strategic waterfront position along the Lagos Lagoon and its significant contribution to national development. The campus, with its mix of historical buildings, modern structures, and diverse green spaces, represents a complex urban environment typical of a prominent Nigerian higher education institution. Lagos State experiences a tropical climate with distinct wet and dry seasons. As one of Africa's largest and most dynamic cities, Lagos's urban fabric is dense and continuously expanding, making UNILAG an ideal site to study how symbolism in landscape design addresses rapid urbanization while retaining cultural significance.

3.3. Sampling Techniques

This study adopted a purposive sampling approach in the selection of case study areas within the University of Lagos campus. Specific locations were deliberately chosen based on the presence of identifiable landscape features such as monuments, sculptures, open spaces, and spatial arrangements that exhibited symbolic significance. The sampling focused on areas that are visually prominent, frequently used, or culturally relevant within the campus, ensuring that the selected sites adequately represented the range of symbolic landscape elements present. A total of twelve key sites were selected for detailed observation, including the Senate Building, the J.F. Ade Ajayi Auditorium, the Main Gate, the "Culture & Justice" statue, the Professor Adetokunbo Babatunde Sofoluwe Cenotaph, the Central Mosque, the Chapel of Christ Our Light Church, the Love Garden, the Professor Sofoluwe Park, the lagoon front, the Faculty of Arts building, and the Femi Gbajabiamila Hall of Residence.

3.4. Data Collection Methods

Data for this study was collected using a multi-method qualitative approach to ensure comprehensive coverage and triangulation of findings.

Content Analysis of University Documents: Relevant university documents, including historical records, campus master plans, architectural briefs, official university publications, and online information, were analyzed to identify explicit statements regarding the intended symbolism of landscape features and institutional values. Key documents included the University of Lagos Master Plan, the university's website, and published historical accounts of the institution's development.

Site Observation: Direct observations were carried out across the selected areas within the University of Lagos campus to identify and examine landscape elements such as monuments, sculptures, open spaces, and spatial arrangements. These observations were used to assess their physical characteristics, placement, and potential symbolic meanings within the campus environment. Observations were conducted during weekdays and weekends to capture variations in usage and interaction patterns.

Photographic Documentation: Systematic photographic documentation of the University of Lagos campus landscape was carried out. This involved taking photographs to provide visual data for analysis. Photographs served as objective records, documenting specific elements including monuments, plantings, spatial layouts, and sculptural installations.

This method helped capture how people and things relate to each other within the landscape. A total of 150 photographs were taken across the selected sites.

3.5. Data Analysis

The data collected from site observation and photographic documentation was analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis followed several steps. First, all visual and descriptive data was organized by site. Second, recurring themes related to symbolism, identity, and meaning were identified. Third, these themes were interpreted in relation to the research questions and the theoretical framework. Fourth, spatial relationships between symbolic elements and circulation networks were examined using the documented layouts. Finally, findings were synthesized to develop a comprehensive understanding of how symbolic landscape features contribute to institutional identity at UNILAG.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Prominent Symbolic Elements at UNILAG

The first research question sought to identify the prominent architectural structures, natural features, and artistic installations that serve as symbolic elements within the University of Lagos campus landscape. The investigation revealed a rich array of symbolic features spanning architectural landmarks, monuments, green spaces, and water features.

- **Architectural Landmarks:** The Senate Building emerged as the most prominent symbolic structure on campus. Completed in 1985, this 14-story tower features an asymmetrical design with brise soleil and double-skin motifs clad in mosaic tiles. The concrete formwork reveals timber grain patterns, and the horizontal soffits frame views across the campus. The building's imposing presence and distinctive design have made it the iconic symbol of UNILAG, representing the institution's aspirations for academic excellence and modernity.

The J.F. Ade Ajayi Auditorium, named after a former Vice-Chancellor, stands as another significant architectural landmark. Constructed with concrete and clad in a combination of tiles, metals, and emulsion paint, the building's monumental scale and distinctive Rococo-influenced style communicate the importance of academic gatherings and intellectual discourse within the university community.

The Main Gate, renovated in 2023, serves as an emblematic image of the institution. Its walls and pillars are clad in light orange and reddish-brown, with the university logo displayed in white, green, blue, and black pigments. The gate's imagery suggests a bird in motion and a burning torch, symbolizing intellectual capability and the pursuit of knowledge.

Religious structures also carry symbolic weight. The Central Mosque features minarets and domes in green hues, representing Islamic architectural traditions, while the Chapel of Christ Our Light Church utilizes silver aluminum sheets and features a Crucifix projectile as a symbol of life, death, and resurrection.

- **Monuments and Sculptures:** The "Culture & Justice" statue at the Faculty of Law stands out as a significant artistic installation. This bronze sculpture, donated by Prince Yemisi Shyllon, represents Justice using Nigerian indigenous cultures rather than conventional Greek-based symbols. Elements such as the "EBEN" and "Irukere" in the statue symbolize cultural authority in dispensing justice, removing the need for a scale or blindfold. The sculpture also incorporates Nigerian cultural attire, effectively acculturating the symbol of justice within the Nigerian context.

The Professor Adetokunbo Babatunde Sofoluwe Cenotaph serves as a memorial to a former Vice-Chancellor. Adorned with tile cladding and a portrait, the monument's varying dimensions are said to symbolize the Yoruba time series concept, representing the different scales of time in human experience.

Green Spaces: The campus incorporates several significant green spaces with symbolic dimensions. The Love Garden provides a space for relaxation and social interaction, while the Professor Sofoluwe Park offers shaded areas for rest and reflection. The university's Botanical Garden and Senate Garden form part of what is described as the recreation district, contributing to the campus's environmental quality and providing spaces for restoration. Wetlands comprising approximately 10% of the total land area add to the ecological diversity of the campus.

- **Water Features:** The Lagos Lagoon, which surrounds much of the campus, represents a defining natural feature. The lagoon front offers views across the water toward the Third Mainland Bridge and provides

opportunities for recreation and contemplation. The university's strategic waterfront location is integrated into campus planning, with the Main Library featuring a rising stair terrace overlooking the lagoon, creating a memorable outdoor space that enhances the student experience.

4.2. Intended Symbolic Meanings

The second research question examined the officially intended symbolic meanings behind the design and placement of these elements. Analysis of university documents and architectural records revealed several layers of intended meaning.

- **Academic Excellence and Modernity:** The Senate Building was designed to convey a sense of academic achievement and forward-looking vision. Its asymmetrical design, described in architectural records as intentionally breaking from conventional symmetrical forms, was meant to represent the university's innovative spirit. The use of brise soleil and double-skin motifs reflected contemporary architectural thinking of the 1980s, positioning UNILAG as a modern institution keeping pace with global architectural trends.
- **Cultural Representation:** The "Culture & Justice" statue explicitly intends to decolonize the symbol of justice. The sculptor's deliberate choice to replace the conventional blindfold and scales with Yoruba cultural symbols communicates the message that justice systems need not be modeled exclusively on Western traditions. This intentional cultural grounding aligns with broader post-independence efforts to assert Nigerian cultural identity within institutional settings.
- **Institutional Pride and Welcome:** The Main Gate's design and the prominent display of the university logo and colors aim to create a strong first impression for visitors while reinforcing institutional pride among returning students and staff. The bird and torch imagery was specifically chosen to communicate ideas of intellectual flight and enlightenment.
- **Spiritual and Moral Values:** The Central Mosque and Chapel of Christ Our Light were designed not only as places of worship but also as visual reminders of the university's commitment to spiritual and moral development. Their prominent locations and distinctive architectural styles ensure they serve as constant visual references within the campus landscape.
- **Memory and Commemoration:** The Sofoluwe Cenotaph and other memorial elements on campus are intended to preserve institutional memory and honor individuals who contributed significantly to the university's development. The incorporation of Yoruba time symbolism in the cenotaph's design represents a conscious effort to ground commemoration in local cultural frameworks.

4.3 Contribution to Institutional Identity

The third research question examined how these symbolic elements contribute to shaping a unique and recognizable campus identity for the University of Lagos.

- **Visual Coherence and Landmarking:** The combination of distinctive architectural landmarks creates a visually coherent campus identity. The Senate Building's tower serves as a visual anchor visible from multiple points across the campus, helping users orient themselves within the environment. This landmarking function supports environmental legibility and contributes to a sense of place.
- **Cultural Distinctiveness:** The "Culture & Justice" statue and other culturally grounded symbolic elements set UNILAG apart from universities that rely on generic or imported symbolic frameworks. By asserting Nigerian cultural identity within the campus landscape, these elements communicate that UNILAG is not merely a transplanted Western institution but a Nigerian university engaging with local cultural traditions.
- **Layered Meanings:** The presence of multiple symbolic elements—architectural, sculptural, natural, and spatial—creates layered meanings that enrich the campus experience. Students and visitors encounter these elements at different scales and in different contexts, building a cumulative understanding of what the university represents.
- **Psychological and Creative Impact:** Drawing on research about the effects of artworks on creativity and well-being (Opaluwa et al., 2022), the symbolic elements at UNILAG may contribute to more than just institutional identity. They potentially influence the creative thinking, emotional states, and sense of belonging among students and staff who interact with them. The thoughtfully designed environment communicates institutional care and attention to user experience, which research has linked to improved satisfaction and performance (Ademakinwa et al., 2024; Adeyemi et al., 2024).
- **Heritage and Continuity:** The preservation and maintenance of symbolic elements from different periods of the university's history—from the 1960s buildings through the 1980s Senate Building to contemporary

additions—creates a sense of continuity and heritage. This layering of historical periods within the landscape tells the story of the institution's evolution and reinforces its enduring presence.

5. Conclusion

This study set out to examine the use of symbolism in the campus landscape of the University of Lagos. Through systematic observation and analysis, the research identified a rich array of symbolic elements including architectural landmarks, monuments, green spaces, and water features. The study documented the intended meanings behind these elements, revealing efforts to express academic excellence, cultural identity, spiritual values, and institutional memory through landscape design.

The findings demonstrate that the University of Lagos campus functions as more than a collection of buildings and open spaces. It serves as a carefully composed symbolic environment where institutional values and cultural narratives are embedded in physical form. The integration of indigenous cultural symbols, modernist architectural expressions, and natural features creates layered meanings that contribute to a distinctive institutional identity.

However, the study also revealed gaps in documentation and interpretation. While the symbolic elements are present and visually prominent, their meanings are not always explicitly communicated to campus users. Many students and visitors may experience these elements without fully understanding the intended symbolism behind them. This represents both a limitation of the current study—which relied on researcher interpretation and documentary analysis rather than user perception data—and an opportunity for future research.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are offered:

- **Enhance Interpretation and Communication:** The university should consider developing interpretive materials—such as signage, digital tours, or mobile applications—that explain the symbolic meanings of key landscape elements to students, staff, and visitors. This would enhance the educational value of the campus landscape and deepen users' connection to institutional identity.
- **Integrate Symbolic Considerations into Campus Planning:** Future campus development should explicitly consider the symbolic dimensions of new buildings, landscapes, and installations. Design briefs should articulate how proposed elements will contribute to the university's symbolic language and institutional identity.
- **Strengthen Cultural Representation:** Given the success of culturally grounded symbols such as the "Culture & Justice" statue, the university should explore opportunities to integrate additional elements that reflect Nigeria's diverse cultural heritage. This could include commissioning artworks from Nigerian artists, incorporating indigenous planting schemes, and designing spaces that reflect local architectural traditions.
- **Preserve Heritage Elements:** The university should develop a heritage conservation strategy that identifies and protects symbolic elements of historical significance. This includes maintaining the original character of buildings from the 1960s and 1980s periods while ensuring they remain functional for contemporary use.
- **Support Further Research:** Future studies should investigate how students and staff perceive and interact with symbolic landscape elements, incorporating user surveys, interviews, and behavioral observation. Comparative studies across Nigerian universities would also contribute to a broader understanding of how symbolism functions in higher education landscapes.

5.1. Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, it relied primarily on researcher observation and documentary analysis rather than direct engagement with campus users about their perceptions of symbolic elements. Second, access to certain archival documents was limited, constraining the depth of historical analysis. Third, the study focused on a single institution, so findings may not be directly generalizable to other Nigerian universities. Fourth, the interpretation of symbolic meaning is inherently interpretive and may not fully capture the range of meanings different users derive from these elements.

5.2. Contribution to Knowledge

Despite these limitations, this study contributes to the limited body of research on symbolism in Nigerian university landscapes. It provides a systematic documentation of symbolic elements at UNILAG that can serve as a foundation for future research and conservation efforts. By situating the case study within broader discussions of institutional identity,

cultural representation, and place-making, the study demonstrates the importance of considering symbolic dimensions in campus planning and design.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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