

## Chapter 2

# The Dimension of Public Housing in Nigeria

**Abstract** Culture sensitive communities particularly in developing communities are yet to come in terms of the provision strategies of public housing. Nigeria is faced with challenges in both quality and quantity of public housing delivery. Overwhelmed by users' persistent dissatisfaction of initial provisions, control levels are used to project 'ownership' as crucial in households' derivation of housing satisfaction in the process of housing transformation. The study identified unbroken link between urban migrants and their root and went further to identify the major ethnic groups in the study context. The study thereafter related the desire for indigeneness in urban public housing by inhabitants.

**Keywords** Culture integration • Housing dissatisfaction • Urban migrants

### 2.1 Introduction

In addressing design and culture integration strategies suggested for adoption in the production of public housing, it is noteworthy to understand that public housing residents in Nigeria usually belong to diverse cultural background. A situation that records exceptional inhabitation challenges with respect to the space provisions. The situation often ends with users' engagement in uncontrolled public housing transformation with remarkable unplanned scenes characterising the urban physical environment. Interestingly, the positive benefits derived from these transformations are usually ignored (Tipple 2000) and rather perceived as features of squalor settlements in the society. Thus, professionals and policy makers believe the scenario disrupts the cityscape and efforts towards urban development as well as undermine the scenery of the built environment. Meanwhile, stakeholders particularly architects are expected to resolve socio-spatial needs of the built environment rather than constrain social activities which determine the overall space configuration. In the light of these, this chapter identifies and amplifies public housing dimension with challenges that lead to the transformation as elements of housing dynamics providing background towards directing habitation and spatial satisfaction.

## 2.2    Optimising User Activity–Space Relations Through Control Levels

As the study seeks to explore user-initiated housing transformation experience of public housing dwellers, the broad built environment with wide range of areas was limited by identifying control levels in the built environment that support the framework of decisions by stakeholders in the industry. Accordingly, Wikberg and Ekholm (2009) classified control levels that relate man and the built environment as presented in Table 2.1. They related that users control activity space and the network of spaces within and around the building. Building managers or developers control the buildings while at constituency and city levels government agencies with higher authority are empowered to take charge. In the same way, the research scope was explicitly advanced by modifying Habraken’s five control levels of the built environment into space–element relationship which shows the interdependency of one level over another (Habraken 2000) shown in Table 2.2. At the end, this study lies within the *building control level* of public housing as a component of the built environment and *room to block space levels* based on these categorizations. These control levels are the most significant to users as it defines their control and transformation territory where their space use cultural attributes are expressed. Therefore, users’ space–activity relationship is optimised at the related control levels.

**Table 2.1** Control level, elements and actors in the system man-built environment

| Control actors             | Controlled built element               | Control level           |
|----------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| City authority             | Infrastructure (streets, sewer, etc.)  | City, neighbourhood     |
| Building management        | Building-related building elements     | Building                |
| Building user organisation | Organisation-related building elements | User organisation space |
| Building user              | Activity-related building elements     | Activity space          |

Source Wikberg and Ekholm (2009)

**Table 2.2** Control levels in the built environment

| Space   | Furniture | Room      | Building | Block    | Cluster | District | City     |
|---------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|---------|----------|----------|
| Element | Utensils  | Furniture | Room     | Building | Block   | Clusters | District |

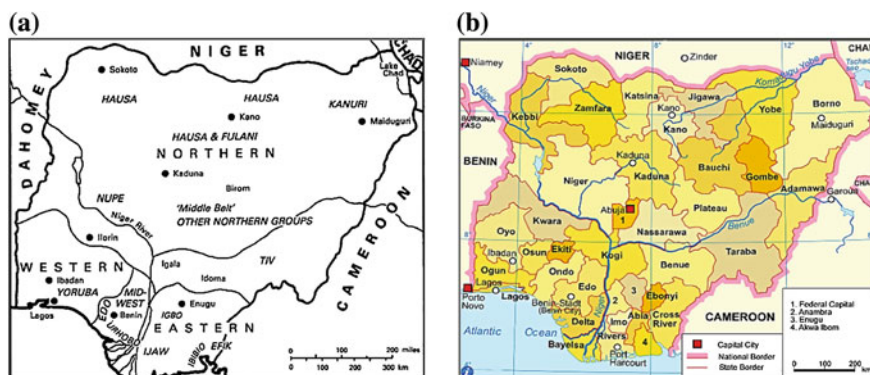
Items in the upper cells (spaces) are dependent on those of the lower cells (elements), as those of the preceding columns determine the next column

Source Adapted from Habraken (2000)

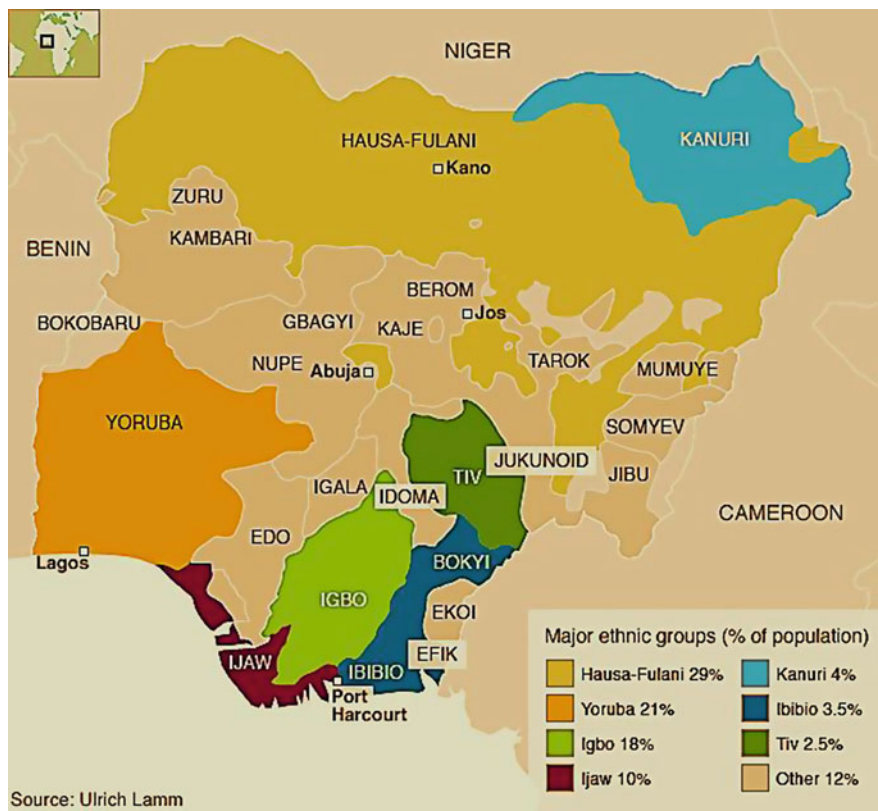
## 2.3 Historical Outlook of the Environmental Setting

Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa and ranks 6th in the world (Areas and Agglomerations 2012). Its urbanisation rate as at 2008 stood at 5.3 %, while in every 1000 inhabitants there are 0.25 % migrants and by 2011 urban and rural population stood at 49.6 and 51.4 %, respectively (Profile 2012). Furthermore, Nigeria comprises three major regions as shown in Fig. 2.1a, with three major language distributions each to a region. The political structure comprises 36 states across the country as presented in Fig. 2.1b, while the major ethnic groups are shown in Fig. 2.2.

Low-income public housings in urban environments located in certain states of northern Nigeria were surveyed in order to epitomise largely the sample population centred on ethnic consideration. Similarly, spatial cultural features from the country-side dwellings across the major ethnic groups were explored in order to establish traditional house pattern to be related with the transformed housing units. Although ethnic population census is usually contested due to political reasons, projection is based on the last ethnic census (Mustapha 2004), which shows five major ethnic groups located in northern Nigeria as presented in Table 2.1. These ethnic groups include Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri, Nupe and the Tiv; however, some texts add the Gbagyi ethnic group as the sixth among the major ethnic groups in the region. On the overall, the most dominant is Hausa with the language spoken across the region while its cultural features impact and reflect across the region (Table 2.3).



**Fig. 2.1** Maps of Nigeria showing. **a** The three main regions of northern, western and eastern Nigeria. Source Diamond (1988). **b** The states distribution. Source [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)



**Fig. 2.2** Map of Nigeria showing major ethnic distribution. *Note* This map considers Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups as one due to their distribution across the region. *Source* [www.nigerianmuseum.com](http://www.nigerianmuseum.com)

**Table 2.3** Ethnic distribution of Nigerian population: 1952/53–63

| Ethnic group | % 1952/53 Census | % 1963 Census |
|--------------|------------------|---------------|
| Edo          | 1.5              | 1.7           |
| Fulani       | 9.76             | 9.9           |
| Hausa        | 17.81            | 18.2          |
| Ibibio       | 0.25             | 0.28          |
| Igbo         | 17.60            | 16.6          |
| Kanuri       | 4.18             | 4.1           |
| Nupe         | 1.15             | 1.2           |
| Tiv          | 2.54             | 2.5           |
| Yoruba       | 16.2             | 20.3          |

*Source* Mustapha (2004) [Compiled from Government of Nigeria's 1952 and 1953 census of Northern, Western and Eastern Nigeria as provided by Government Statistician in Lagos]

## **2.4 Impact of Language Distribution in Nigerian Regional Relations**

Nigeria nation is multi-ethnic consisting of 350 ethnic groups and multi-linguae speaking nearly 250 languages. These ethnic groups are spatially distributed across rural and urban settlements. Although the official language for formal activities is English, regional languages dominate political, economic and administrative scenes due to conveniences. Hausa is common in the northern region while Yoruba exists in the south-west and Igbo in the south-east, respectively. Moreover, Nigeria national language policy formally identifies these dominant regional languages even though it mostly remains a principle (Adegbija 2004). According to Gijsberts and Dagevos (2007), smaller ethnic groups habitually sense segregation in the presence of larger groups leading to adeptness of dominant language as mechanism for communal integration. High English illiteracy among the large number of inhabitants therefore favoured the use of these languages in informal relations, hence unifying diverse minority ethnic groups in the regions. Significantly, minority groups are integrated and their house forms overshadowed by the dominant ethnic groups in the regions. Therefore, focusing on shared cultural constituents prevailing in public housing transformation becomes essential and easier to tackle by focusing on the transformation philosophy and process.

## **2.5 Public Housing Situation in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, public housing design has been impacted by the Western styles (Ukoha and Beamish 1996). The English-patterned Western style housing forms characterise Government Reserve Areas used to accommodate the colonialists (Olayiwola et al. 2005). Equally, until recent times the delivery has been highly monopolised by government at both state and federal levels, with design standards determined solely by the relevant government agencies (Ikejiofor 1999). Initially, the units provided were managed by the authorities; however, recent policies transferred both ownership and management controls to the inhabitants. Thus, at the first instance government policies made it remain provider oriented with authorities in charge of design, construction and management of public housing. Thereafter, overburdened by the task of maintenance, ownership was transferred to occupants and government was limited only to the design and construction stages. Likewise, during these periods government was unable to pace up with supply and meet the demand both in quantity and in quality; hence, the failure of existing provisions remains a subject of debate among indigenous scholars. According to Ogu and Ogbuozobe (2001), such failures are credited to the lack of strategies that would expedite private housing

growth. Also, Olayiwola et al. (2005) related these challenges of Nigerian housing to have appeared in congestion, poor conditions, over population and poor planning.

However, in compliance with UN Agenda 21 a paradigm shift in strategy limited government's role to enabling private-sector housing delivery (Daramola et al. 2005). Although private developers have since participated in provision in the last two decades through public-private partnership (PPP) initiatives, design and production challenges prevail. Public-private partnership housing development policy allows for cooperation in public housing delivery, an intervention aimed at meeting the housing requirements of the populace. Absurdly, the policy could not meet the demand both in quality and in quantity (Daramola 2006) as a result of commercialisation and commoditisation which has persisted in Nigerian housing policies. To this end, public housing delivery is usually contracted to developers who in turn prioritise profit-making. The outcome has remained inadequate urban housing, hence exposing government's inability to meet up with the growing demand. Better still the latest challenge is the inconsistency of provisions with users' demand that results in spontaneous transformation upon occupation.

Public housing styles in major cities such as Abuja and Lagos include high-rise condominiums and duplexes; however, most state capitals particularly the settings of this study have public housing in the form of bungalows and row housing. Invariably, typologies of public housing in Nigeria include high-rise condominiums, duplexes, bungalows and row of flats. Lately, it appears disturbing that upon return to democracy in 1999, state governments embarked on public housing schemes, yet adopting the same old designs. Illustrations are presented in Figs. 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, and 2.9 showing various kinds of low-income public housing in particular the bungalow units commonly found in the study setting.

Nigerian housing policies have for long remained insensitive to indigenous cultural lifestyle and housing preferences. The effect appears in the densely



Typical high rise public housing of 6no two bwdroom flats in Abuja, Nigeria

**Fig. 2.3** High-rise public housing with sets of flats in blocks Nigeria



Block of 4 number Duplex public housing in Abuja Nigeria.

**Fig. 2.4** Typical duplex public housing in Nigeria



A row of one bedroom typical public housing unit in a block of four units located in Markudi, Nigeria

**Fig. 2.5** Typical Terrace one bedroom public housing units in Nigeria





**Fig. 2.6** Typical bungalow public housing Katsina, Nigeria

populated environment with friction in social relations of diverse ethnic and sociocultural background (Boyowa 2005). In the existing circumstance, housing is considered as a onetime finished product ignoring the process which changes with household life cycle. The delivery scheme focuses on providing affordable shelter for the low-income group (Ajanlekoko 2001). Yet, there is a lack of clarity on the kind of shelter needed by this group. So, detailed knowledge of household would guide the size, standard and kinds of provisions to be made (Ikejiofor 1999) enabling choices for potential users. Existing users' experience surely provides necessary direction of perceiving housing as dynamic process, thus considering residents subjective ideas in solving planning and design challenges (Muoghalu 1984).

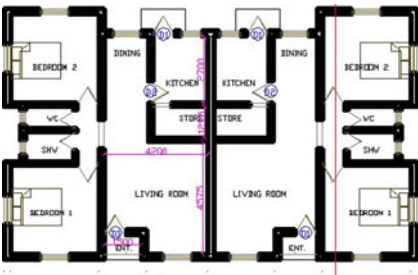
Significantly, public housing in Nigeria is predominantly targeted at low- and middle-income earners who constitute the majority of urban inhabitants (Aduwo 2011). Statistically, 70 % of the citizens within the low-income bracket cannot access finance to build a house particularly in urban communities. In addition, the Nigerian national housing policy (1991) projected 700,000 housing per annum, with 437,000 needed in the urban areas and a projection range of 4.8 million to 5.9 million by the year 2000 (Ogu and Ogbuozobe 2001) to meet the growing population. Till date, the rate of production and demand remains distant from one another with the inability of providers to pace up with demand in both quantity and quality.

Aside these challenges, government's response to urban housing is at slow pace and the ones provided are devoid of users' requirement, thus incurring users' dissatisfaction. Confused in this situation, professionals in the built environment require a direction towards sustainable housing provision with culture sensitive design consideration (Table 2.4).





Typical low income public housing scheme in Markurdi, Nigeria



M I Wushishi semi detached two bedroom public housing in Minna, Nigeria.



Typical low income housing comprising of three bedroom units of flatin Katsina, Nigeria



Public housing Markurdi, Nigeria

Two bedroom, Bosso low cost housing Minna, Nigeria

Fig. 2.7 Bungalow public housing in Nigeria



Bungalow public housing unit undergoing first stage of transformation (Securing territorial border)

**Fig. 2.8** Boundary fencing of public housing unit in Nigeria



Typical two bedroom low income public housing scheme under construction in Sokoto, Nigeria

**Fig. 2.9** Typical public housing units under construction in Nigeria

**Table 2.4** Housing development strategy by Federal Government of Nigeria 1970–2015

| Housing policy  | Period    | Income group    | Number proposed | Success rate  |
|---|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| First National housing programme (Second developmental plan period) | 1970–1974 | Middle and high | 59,000 units    | 12 %          |
| Second Housing programme (Third developmental plan period)          | 1975–1980 |                 | 202,000 units   | 19 %          |
| Third National Housing programme (Fourth developmental plan period) | 1981–1985 |                 | 200,000 units   | 20 %          |
| New Public Housing Scheme   | 1994–2015 |                 |                 | Insignificant |

Source Ogu and Ogbuozobe (2001)

## 2.6 Urban Migrants and Housing Impulse in Nigeria

Significantly, urban migrations remain a tool for spatial reorganisation in Nigerian urban built environments with a consequential desire in providing mass housing with cultural ideals. Because urban migrants across generation remain associated with their roots (Mberu 2005) with a spatial split of families, some residing in the countryside while others are in the cities and connected by activities unique to their communities (Tacoli 1998). Urban population upsurge results in internal population rise, reduction in growth rate, and the rapid rate of urbanisation which are evident in recent African census of the twenty-first century.

Furthermore, they impact on urban household equilibrium as families struggle to accommodate migrating relatives, hence safeguarding ties and operating extended family lifestyle. Social instability then occurs, housing stress is experienced as they adapt to changing household structure leading to unguided housing transformation. As a result, leaving the urban built environment unhygienic with poor housing quality (Olayiwola et al. 2005). In the early 1960s and 1970s, long-term and permanent migration was common, whereas later across the 1980s short- and medium-term migration became apparent.

In order to achieve effective physical and fiscal planning of the built environment, strategies on internal migration control and their related sociocultural mind set becomes essential as it impacts on urban growth (Afolayan 2009). Meanwhile, delay in the endorsement of the draft national migration policy affects strategic housing development. Thus, the need for continuous research in users' preference for housing features towards projecting design and space arrangement of relevant space use demand by groups and communities.

## 2.7 Persistent Dissatisfaction of Public Housing Residents with Provisions

Relevant studies on public housing have proved users' dissatisfaction with provisions made available due to perceived absence of sociocultural values that would ensure adequate habitable and non-habitable spaces for their social liveability, hence the persistence of social-related challenges in urban housing districts. As a result of this situation, developing countries face similar related challenges in skills and planning practices of sustainable public housing design knowledge due to imitation of Western concepts (Bruen et al. 2013). In Nigeria, inhabitants have shown overriding dissatisfaction with inconsistency of facilities with societal norms (Ukoha and Beamish 1997); dissatisfaction with dwelling spaces (Awotona 1990; Salau 1992); space and shared facilities (Ukoha and Beamish 1996); dissatisfaction

with design, configuration of internal spaces, territory and facilities (Muoghalu 1984). Household structure and family sizes are observed to have outgrown initial space provisions. This necessitates the involvement of households in design delivery process between policy, planning, design and provision phases. It equally outlines the need to consider indigenous values in housing development across culture sensitive settings. On the overall, building features considerably define users' satisfaction (Ilesanmi 2010).

## 2.8 Summary

Nigerian urban built environment is characterised with inhabitants of diverse ethnic and cultural background hence culture sensitive. Provision of houses for the citizenry has been characterised with a homogenous concept aimed at unifying and qualifying the inhabitants perhaps by income grouping. However, disparity between the provision and the desire of the inhabitants revealed a gap that disconnects the providers and the users. Urban migration facilitated by the cultural integration of regional languages defined the social habitation pattern. This tends to be the direction public housing provision should be tailored. In contrast, the adoption of alien concepts has made quantitative and qualitative decline in housing provision as indicated in the persistent dissatisfaction of the initial provisions as shown by previous studies and affirmed by this research.

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