



# FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY MINNA

## HOUSING FOR THE NIGERIAN URBAN POOR: A REALITY OR A MIRAGE?

*By*

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*B.Sc., MURP (Ibadan), PhD (Minna); MNITP, RTP*  
*Professor of Urban and Regional Planning*

**INAUGURAL LECTURE SERIES 51**

**18<sup>TH</sup> MAY, 2017**



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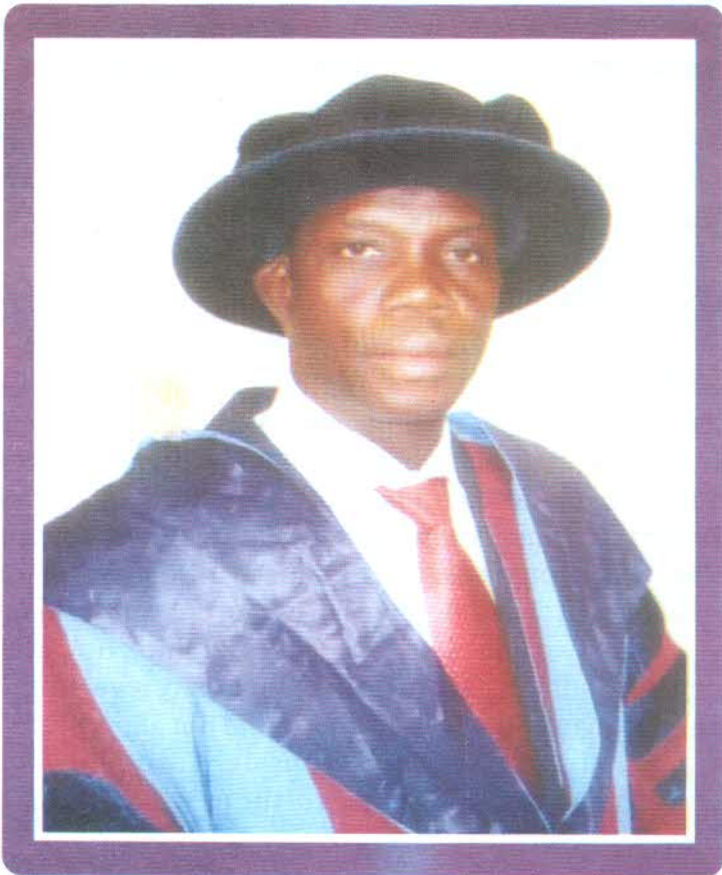
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## Preamble

In the name of ALLAH, the beneficent, the most merciful. In the beginning, there was housing and the housing was for mankind. Human beings are conceived and created in a house – the womb. They are born inside the physical houses. The creatures of Almighty Allah continue to live in houses throughout their life time. At the end of life, they are preserved in their final houses – the graves. I give glory to Almighty Allah who created the house in the beginning and created human beings to live in the house. I thank Almighty God who created me in a house, nurtured me in the house and provided me the opportunity to stand before you this afternoon, in this particular house, to deliver the 51<sup>st</sup> Inaugural Lecture of the Federal University of Technology, Minna on this glorious day.

The Vice Chancellor Sir, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I considered this lecture a significant landmark in the history of my academic career. When I became a Professor in 2011, I was considered the youngest professor in the University and by extension, the youngest in Oke-Ogun (Oyo North) area of Oyo State in Nigeria. At that time, my plan was to deliver the inaugural lecture within two years of my Professorship. However, my engagement in administration at the University level from 2008 to date and so many other engagements did not allow me to fulfill that dream until now. Therefore, I consider the event of today, a fulfilment of my academic yearnings of the past 6 years. To God be the glory.

The Vice Chancellor and distinguished audience, I am here to deliver a lecture on the central role which housing plays in the life of man and the plight of the Nigerian urban poor. In specific terms, the title of my lecture is: “Housing for the Nigerian Urban Poor: A Reality or a Mirage?” I would like to commence this lecture by presenting a holistic view of the concept of housing and its evolution over time.

## **1.0 Introduction**

### **1.1 The Concept of Housing**

The conception of housing is broad depending on the elements or issues of concern. There is housing for everything. For non-living things such as manufactured products, housing is used to describe any covering material or casing that protects, shields or contains the component part(s) of any product. Thus, there is housing for your computers, handsets, cooking gas, reading glass and even the sachet of pure water to mention a few.

Housing for living organisms is conceptualized as any enclosure, shelter, dwelling or building in which human beings and animals live. The basic meaning of housing is shelter, which is referred to as a dwelling or a house that features enclosing walls and a roof to protect man against precipitation, wind, heat, cold and external attack (Jinadu, 2007). For animals, housing is simply an enclosed structure where they are sheltered to protect them from elements of weather. Housing for human beings are however complex in structure and often include different compartments such as living room, bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, toilets etc.

The conception of housing transcends the conservative view of four walls and a roof structure meant to protect man from the elements of weather (Jinadu, 1995). In broad terms, housing is defined as the totality of human biological, cultural and physical environments. The view of housing as a composite entity is reflected in the definition of Borne (1984) who considered housing as a packaged bundle of services. In this sense, housing is viewed as a bundle of services or a basket of goods which include the physical structure itself, the ancillary facilities and services within the house as well as the general environmental qualities and amenities that surround the building (Jinadu, 2007). Thus, Agbola and Alabi (2000) opined that the occupancy of housing involves the consumption of neighbourhood services (e.g parks, schools and hospitals); a location (e.g. accessibility to jobs and

amenities) and the proximity of certain neighbours (social environment). The different ramifications of the conception of housing could be streamlined into three basic themes that define housing. These include:

- i. **Housing as the creation of special environment where human beings are created, into which people are born, live and grow.** Under this thematic view of housing, the female wombs of humans and mammals are regarded as houses where babies are conceived and nurtured. In Quran chapter 77 verses 20 and 21, Almighty ALLAH said "did we not create you from a despised water (semen)? Then we placed it in a place of safety (womb)." After the birth of a baby, Igwe (1987) argued that housing represents an extended womb during the formative years of a child's physical, psychological, educational and emotional development. In this sense, housing is a shelter, a place of safety where human beings are created, a comforter of the occupants and a molder of human identity because socialization takes place in the house.
- ii. **Housing as a social symbol.** Here, housing is seen as a symbol of human dignity and respect. The concept of housing as a social symbol expresses the importance attached to housing as a cultural or social asset that every member of the society desires to own. It is a source of prestige, self-recognition, self-respect and self-satisfaction. Grigsby and Rosenburg (1975) viewed housing as a symbol of man's status, an extension of his personality, a part of his identity and a determination of many societal benefits and disadvantages that will come to him and his family. In this context, housing could be defined as a valuable cultural asset that bestows dignity, respect and psychological satisfaction on the home owners.
- iii. **Housing as an economic process and product.** As an

economic process, housing is seen as the systemization of series of connected activities that produce an object of economic value. It is the ways and means by which housing goods and services are produced through the interactive production processes of land acquisition, housing finance, mobilization and assemblage of materials and labour as well as the actual construction of houses (Turner, 1976). As an economic product, housing is seen as the final commodity produced through the construction process. It has a market value and can be traded in the market. Housing, in this sense is an investment product and a means of income generation (Jinadu, 2007).

The different conceptions of housing discussed above show that housing is everything about human existence. Housing plays a central role in human life and it is the dominant element of the cultural landscape and the most cherished heritage in all human settlements.

## 1.2 Evolution of Housing

The history of housing predates human creations and the evolution of housing could be traced back to the creation of the Heavens and the Earth by Almighty Allah. Perhaps, the first heavenly house is the Paradise where the first humans lived before their sojourn to the earth planet. In the Holy books, God created the Paradise (*Aljanatul Firdaus*) as the first house for Adam and Eve and the last (eternal) house for the righteous beings who lived according to the commandments of Almighty God. The creation of heavenly houses is reflected in the following verses of the Holy Quran and the Bible:

“– and for **Paradise** as wide as the heavens and the earth, prepared for the pious.” (Quran chapter 3, verse 133) ..... “but for those who fear their Lord, are **Gardens** under which rivers flow (in **Paradise**); therein are they to dwell (forever)” – Quran chapter 3 verse 198.



“And Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground ...” (Genesis 2, verse 7). The Lord God planted a **garden** eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed” (Genesis 2, verse 8).

The Almighty Allah also created the Hell Fire (*Jahanama*) as the abode for the devil (*Shaitan*) and all his followers who disobeyed God, their creator. Allah said in the Holy Quran; “Truly, **Hell** is a place of ambush – a dwelling place for those who transgressed the boundary limit set by Allah” (Quran chapter 78 verses 21 – 22).

The Paradise and the Hell are the earliest forms of housing created by God in the world beyond. On the earth's surface, shelters became personal expressions of humankind, possessing socio-cultural, architectural, aesthetic and psychological meanings (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2001). The earliest earthly homes were caves, trees and mobile tents (Plates I, II and III) used by the hunter-gatherers of the Stone Age who moved around in search of fruits and edible roots (Jinadu, 2007). Before man acquired the skill of house building in the Stone Age, the natural environment was used as shelters. Thereafter, man began to build houses and the history of housing construction dates back to the Agricultural Revolution of the 10,000BC (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2001) when the early men domesticated plants and animals in the Neolithic period and erected temporary huts with stones, bones, tree branches, leaves and animal hides.

The ancient civilization saw the evolution of more permanent housing structures around 3100BC when the ancient Egyptians and Greek built flat-topped and slanted roof houses with stones, mud, clay bricks and wood (HubPages, 2011). The Romans also adopted part of the Greek building technology and build houses with central court yards. Some of these houses of the ancient period developed into the fortified castles of the Middle Ages, with thick stonewalls. (HubPages, 2011). In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans began the building

