

Tenants in Their Personal Houses: A Product of Mass Housing Design Process in Kwara State, Nigeria

Adedayo Olatunde Folaranmi¹

¹ School of Environmental Technology, Federal University of Technology, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria

Correspondence: Adedayo Olatunde Folaranmi, School of Environmental Technology, Federal University of Technology, P. O. Box 2563, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria. E-mail: arcadedayo@gmail.com or arcadedayo@yahoo.com

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Abstract

An examination of the mass housing schemes/estates in Nigeria will reveal that many housing providers put up restrictions on what modifications house owners can carry out on their personal houses (homes). If this were a rented house one can perhaps understand the needs for these limitations but for a personal house paid for by the house owner, this becomes untenable and seeks to make the house owner a permanent tenant. This paper examines how the mass housing provision process in Kwara state, Nigeria encourages this trend, in addition the reasons for setting some of these limitations would also be examined. It is part of a PhD research in the area of housing customization. In undertaking this research, mass housing schemes in Kwara state were selected and examined in relation to the aim of the paper. The data generated was analyzed using the SPSS and MS-Excel packages and the result is presented in charts and plates. The research concludes that prospective house owners have a valid right on their houses and should not be made to adhere to restrictions that make them appear as tenants. Architects working on mass housing schemes should be made to collaborate with the prospective house owners. The research concludes by proffering strategies which architects working on the provision of mass housing schemes can collaborate upon with the prospective house owners towards the provision of a satisfactory house.

Keywords: architects, mass housing, modifications, prospective owners, tenants

1. Introduction

The importance of shelter (house) to man is widely known to all regardless of their field of endeavour and that is why it is ranked in the top three needs of man. In an attempt to meet this need two category of people can found in the housing sector with regards to ownership they are the Landlords or the tenants. The desire of majority of tenants is to become a house owner someday, it is this desire that many state governments in Nigeria try to meet when they provide mass housing schemes targeted at the middle and low-income group of the society. In trying to meet this need the state governments also try to reduce the housing shortage in the country which has been put at about sixteen million units by several researchers in the field of housing (see: Kabir & Bustani, 2009, Ademilluyi & Raji, 2008, Akeju, 2007, Adedeji, 2005). The Federal and state governments have tried to meet this housing need to no avail also the private sector through private individuals' contribution of houses for rental purposes this did not meet the challenges in the housing sector.

In an attempt to reduce the housing shortage the Federal government has gone in to collaboration with the private sector and this trend is replicated by majority of the state governments in Nigeria. A key driver of this collaboration is the high cost of building a house of which the wages of the middle and low-income earners cannot achieve. It is the assumption of these governments that instalment payments would enable those who did not own house to become house owners, however; the houses being provided for the these people often come with restrictions on what changes could be effected on these houses. It has been established by some researchers that the houses provided by government and the private sectors particularly with the mass housing schemes do not meet the needs of the house owners (see: Adedayo, 2012, Adedayo, 2011a, Aribigbola, 2008, Tipple & Ameen, 1999, Natakun & O'Brien, 2008). In placing these restrictions, the housing providers sought to ensure that the house that were provided remained the same after occupation hence these restrictions made the

house owners to become or appear as tenants. In order to understand the creation of these tenants there is the need to examine the housing process by the housing providers involved in mass housing schemes in Kwara state.

1.1 Mass Housing Process in Kwara State

Kwara State like many other States within the country adopted the principle of mass production in the provision of mass housing where the government or the housing provider is treated as the client in the housing process and the prospective house owners get involved towards the end of the process. According to Benros and Duarte (2009) the designs for the individual housing units are standardized and replicated all over the housing estate site in many mass housing schemes. The designs for the housing units often vary based only on the number of the bedrooms within each estate. The determination of the number of bedrooms is not a function of the household size. According to Adedayo (2011b), Figure 1 shows mass housing process that reflects the process of mass housing schemes in Kwara state and Nigeria as a whole.

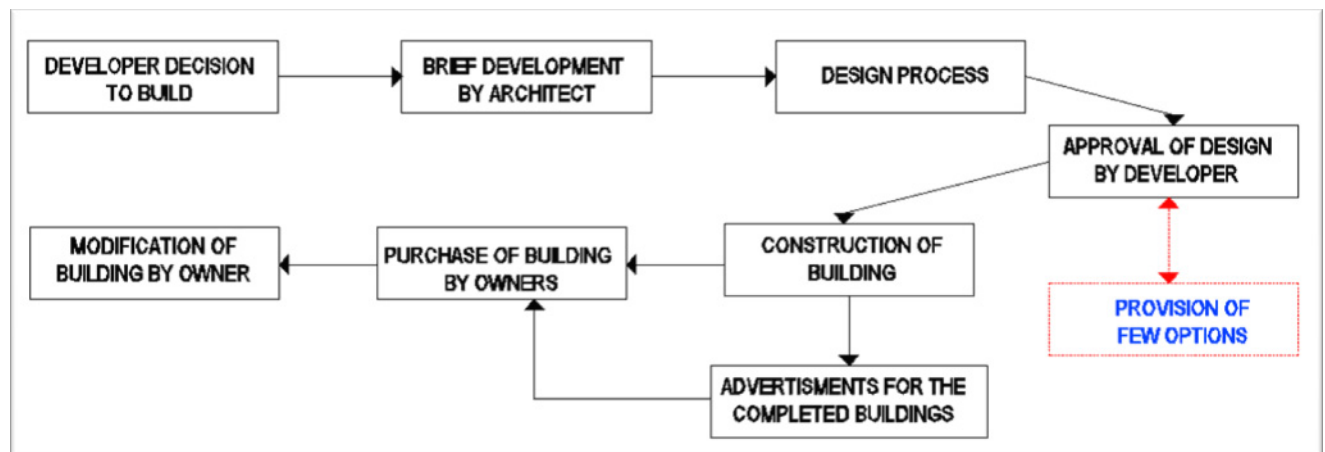


Figure 1. Schematic representation of mass housing process provision in Nigeria

Source: Adedayo, 2011b

It can be observed from the figure that the house owner as stated earlier is involved at the later stage of the housing process which is the purchase of the house by the house owner and housing modification or transformation. It is the last stage in mass housing schemes that housing providers have sought to stop through the placement of restriction on the house owners. In order to understand the basis for modification in mass housing there is a need to examine this trend briefly.

1.2 Housing Modification in Mass Housing

Housing modification in mass housing schemes becomes a necessary event when house owners occupy their houses because either at the point of occupation or after a period of occupation they discover that their personal needs cannot be met by the house. A good explanation for this trend could be extracted from the view of Martinez, Montoiro, Nunez, Balaguer, Navarro, Bosch & Barcena's (2007), which stated that in the actual building market, the user is out of important stages of the construction process and he/she cannot decide about many aspects of his/her future dwelling. In the study of eight mass housing schemes in Kwara state, Adedayo (2011c) observed three major categories under which housing modifications by house owners could be grouped namely;

- Physical changes
- Decorative changes
- Conversion of space use

In the case of physical changes it included changes that had to do with the changes on the building structure such as changes in the window type and size, extension of building envelope, provision of pre-sit areas, relocation of doors and provision of lobbies. These are few examples of some of the changes that were observable from the examination of these estates and they were expressed in different forms by the house owners. In the case of

decorative changes this was basically more of aesthetics which can be examined under user's aspiration in housing design. The decorative changes are largely different from each other and these changes cannot be predicted because the people involved are quite different, this view is supported by Phil, Andrew & Kemper (2008), when they stated that no two consumers are identical and that there are typically differences in personal preference even if they are subtle. These differences are easily observable in the decorative changes carried out on these houses in mass housing schemes because they are often carried out on the outer part of a building envelope.

The conversion of space use had to do with the conversion of courtyards to bedrooms, dining space to bedrooms, stores to toilets. A probable reason for this conversion is the need to cater for increased family size which could be as a result of number of wives, children or dependents. A common factor with all these changes is that they are carried out by house owners and not tenants; it was also observed that some of these changes affected the physical appearance of the housing schemes permanently. It can be concluded that these changes were only effected because they considered it their right and also felt it was a way of expressing their individuality.

1.3 Housing Personalisation Factors

A house owner regardless of the location of the house whether it is in mass housing schemes or individual personally built house, certain needs and aspirations are individual specific and should be met in the design of the housing unit. In mass housing generally the houses are usually the same in design and appearance which often gives the impression that the house owners are the same Adedayo (2011a) argued that house owners always seek to personalise their house so as to establish an identity. The mass housing process in Kwara state which made for standardized housing unit did not take into account that the house owners cannot be standardized. A few factors that aid the personalization of housing units in mass housing schemes in Kwara state are;

- Privacy needs: This particular need by house owners is often a function of religion, culture or occupation. In an attempt to achieving this some house owners in the housing estates provide a gate and perimeter fence made of sandcrete blocks. In some housing units part of the veranda is converted to an entrance lobby so as to ensure that the entrance door no longer opens directly to the access road as initially built.
- Security challenges: Owning to the same design of the housing units in the housing schemes some of the house owners feel that the internal arrangement of the spaces within house does not suit them in case of house burglary. The open nature of the housing estates ensures that houses owners cannot allow house activities to spill over outside of the house and those items left outside were not secure.
- Household size: The varying household size is a factor that ensures that house owners seek to personalize their house; this is a critical factor because these houses were not designed to meet individual family size.
- Identity need: The issue of identity is closely related to individuality and the housing units in the mass housing schemes do not account for this need, this is probably why majority of the house owners carry out decorative changes that are reflected on the outside of the building. The need to create identity was emphasised by Demchak (2000), when he stated that the need to assert identity is fundamental to human existence, and influences how they shape their public and private environments of which a house is a major part.

It was observed from the study of these estates that these factors were either not known or considered important by the housing providers. In an attempt to cover up this lapses housing providers now put in place restriction on modifications that could be made on a house and where they could be carried out. These restrictions are considered by this paper as being out of place because the house owner has paid for the house and should be allowed to make the house comfortable for his living. The only person that can manage to make do with whatever is available in a house is a tenant simply because his tenure in the house is for a given period and he does not consider himself as house owner.

1.4. Tenants and Housing Modification Limitations

In simple terms a tenant in Nigeria is often considered as someone who pays an agreed fee for a house he wishes to live in for a period of time and abides by the agreement that stipulates his responsibilities within the house amongst which is the activities he can carry out within and on the house and its premises. It would therefore not be wrong when restrictions are placed by the house owners on the tenants and the tenants abiding by them because the tenancy is often for a given period of time and most tenants aspire to own a house. It is common to find that the modifications carried out by tenants is usually in the form providing air conditioner for the house and this done with the permission of the landlord (house owner). In case where the house does not meet the need of the tenant the option available for him is to look for another house that meets his need, this is supported by Durmisevic (n.d) study of housing corporations in Amsterdam. Restrictions on modifications on rented housing

units do not affect the tenants rather they adapt to the house; the same however cannot be said of the house owner because the house owner would rather have the house adapted to him.

Limitations that are placed on housing units in mass housing schemes in Kwara State range from;

- The provision of fence
- Change of roof type and material
- The appearance of the house
- Extensions to the house.

In cases where some house owners went ahead to make some of these changes the housing authority or housing provider marked such alterations for demolition. According to Adedayo (2011b) these restrictions have not stopped the house owners from undertaking these changes as shown in figure 2;

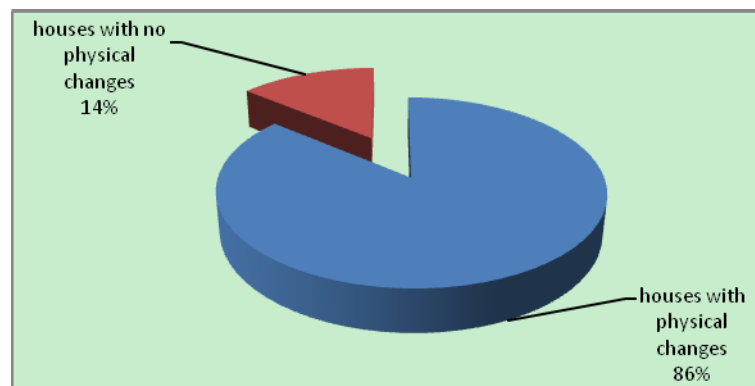


Figure 2. Percentage of Physical changes and No Physical changes
Source: Adedayo, 2011b

It can be abstracted from the pie chart that despite the restrictions by housing providers that house owners still went ahead with the changes they required for their houses to suit them. It goes to show therefore that the restrictions sought and put in place by housing providers on house owners in mass housing schemes in Kwara State is ineffective and it is an attempt at making house owners tenants in their own houses. This assumption was what examined when the interest in participation in housing unit design by house owners was analyzed and the results are presented.

2. Research Method

This paper is part of a PhD research on housing customization in mass housing schemes in Nigeria, the author discusses part of the research findings from the fieldwork which was conducted in Kwara state over a period of four months. The aspect of the findings that are being discussed in this paper deals with the house owner interest in participation in housing design hence; showing that they do not wish to be treated as tenants. Questionnaire survey was administered to occupants of selected eight mass housing schemes in Kwara State. The use of questionnaire allowed respondents to freely participate in the research and the housing estates are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Surveyed estates and locations

Housing Estate	Estate Location
Irewolede estate	Along Yidi road, Ilorin
Mandate III	Along Yidi road, Ilorin
Harmony estate	Along Shao road, Akarebiata, Ilorin
Royal valley estate	Sango, Ilorin
Mandate I	Along Hajj camp road, Ilorin

Mandate II	Along Hajj camp road, Ilorin
Kulende estate	Sango, Ilorin
Adewole estate	Adewole Street, Ilorin

Source: Adedayo, 2011b

The data from the field was collated and entered into a computer system from where it was analysed by the author. The unit of analysis was based on household with each housing unit representing a household which was represented by the house occupant. The selected results are presented in chart form using percentages for discussion.

3. Results

The results from the data showed that if the interests in participating in housing unit by prospective house owners are not considered during the housing provision then house owners would always make changes on their houses. When they are not allowed to carry out these changes with the imposition of restrictions by mass housing scheme managers or providers it is equivalent to making the house owners, becoming tenants as suggested by the title of the paper.

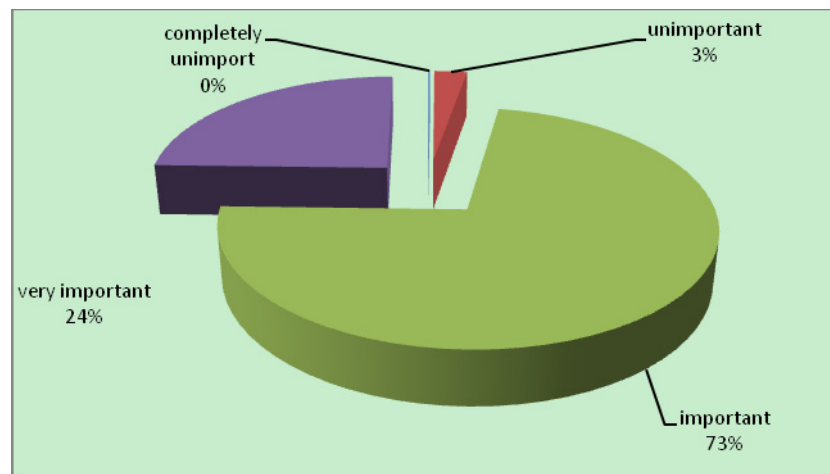


Figure 3. Participation in sizes of rooms

Source: Author's field work, 2011

This option of participating in sizes of room is one that majority of the respondents consider as being either important or very important as can be observed from figure 3 where only 3% of the respondents do not consider it as being important. The sizes of rooms often affect the number of people who could occupy the space, it therefore implies that if the rooms are small and there is room for expansion or conversion of another space the prospective house owner might seize the opportunity. Age range within the household is another factor that affects the sizes of the room because the older the children become the larger the space they require. This shows that placing restrictions on house owners so as not to extend their rooms will be a wrong decision when 97% of them felt they should have been consulted.

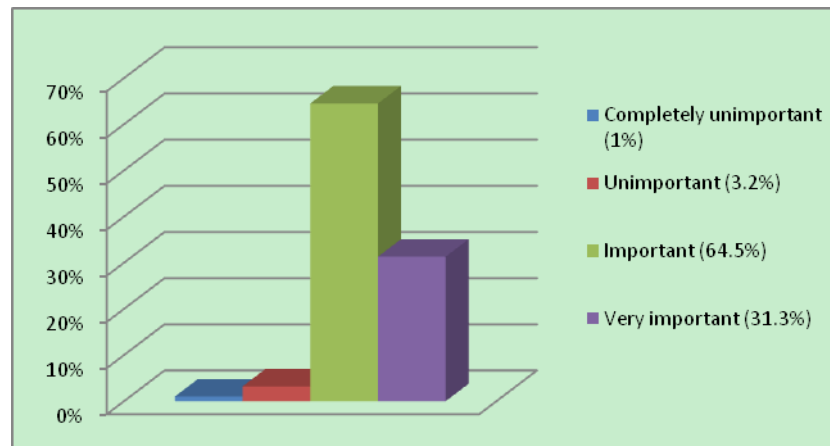


Figure 4. Participation in number of rooms within estates

Source: Author's field work, 2011

The number of rooms is a key factor in the choice of a house to live in and this is directly related to the family size. In the design of mass housing schemes in Kwara state, the number of bedrooms per housing unit ranged from two to four bedrooms. In cases where the house owner has more than one wife it implies that the bedrooms would not serve their needs hence the conversion of dining areas, garages and courtyards to bedrooms. The respondents from figure 4 show that 95.8% of them consider the option as being important. In cases where house owners need to provide additional rooms they often provide boys quarters within the premises. It implies therefore that any restriction restraining the house owner from constructing additional structures to cater for the household size is also an attempt at creating a tenant of the house owner.

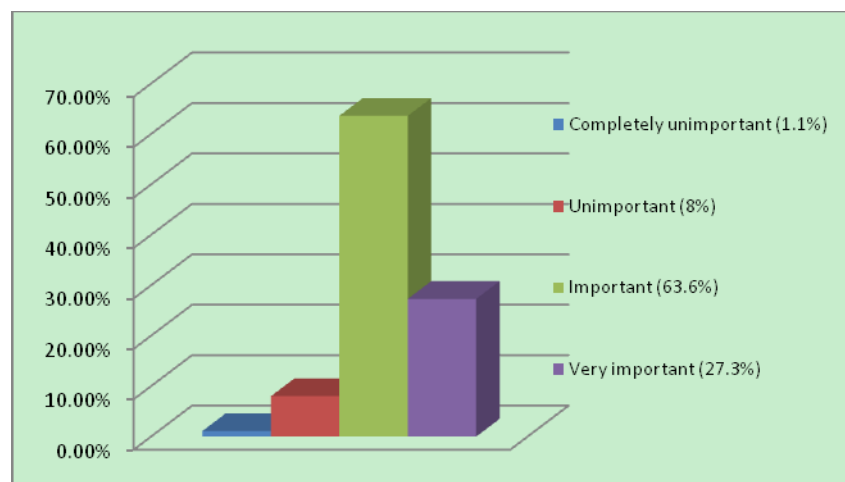


Figure 5. Participation in building inside beauty within estates

Source: Author's field work, 2011

This is perhaps one aspect in mass housing that is very personal to the house owners and many housing providers hardly place any restriction on the house owner, however; certain decision taken by the housing providers affects the type of modifications that the house owners can make. Figure 5.0 show that 90.9% of the respondents consider participation in the internal beauty of the house as being important, because this is the place where house owners can show their status freely.

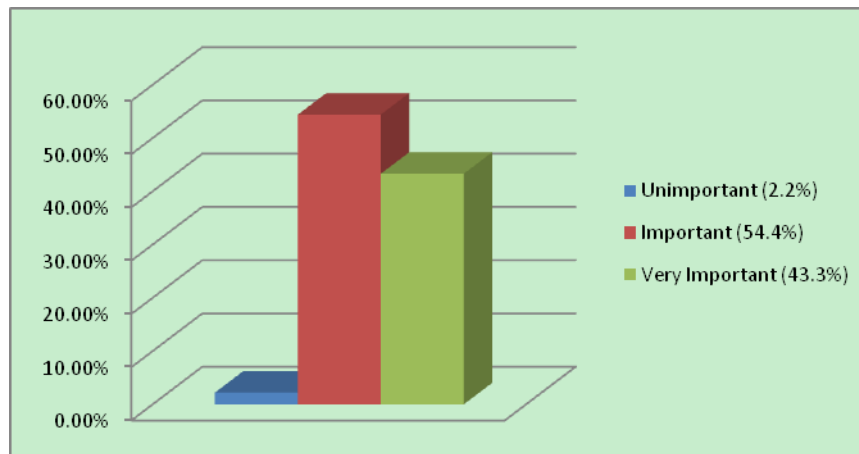


Figure 6. Participation in building outside beauty within estates

Source: Author's field work, 2011

The outside beauty of a house is often a place where house owners seek to create individuality through the creation of identity; it is therefore a true position when 97.8% of the respondents in figure 6 consider their participation as being important. The problem therefore is that this is the area where housing provider place significant restriction on what the house owners could do. This could be viewed as the conflict zone in the creation of tenants from house owners as housing providers seek to maintain the identity they created of the housing scheme while the house owner push towards individuality.

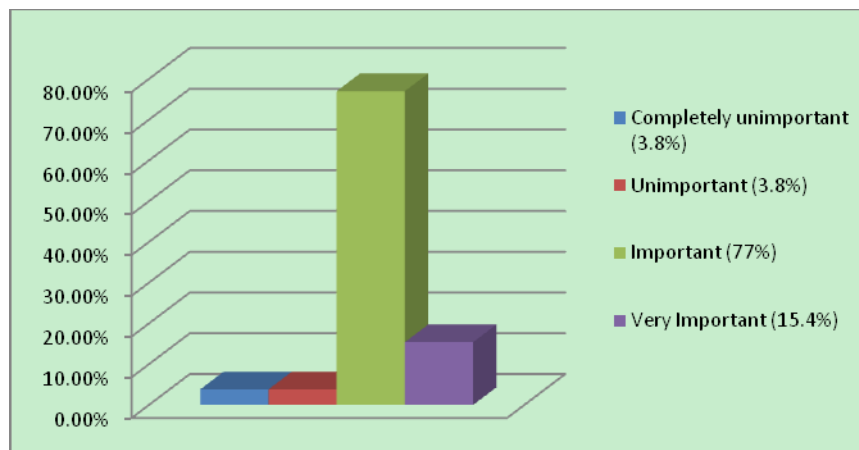


Figure 7. Participation in fence and gate provision within estates

Source: Author's field work, 2011

This option seeks to address the issue of security and privacy of the client and many housing providers also place significant amount of restriction especially in cases where the entire housing estate has a perimeter fence and gate. The use of fence and gate by house owners in some cases is to demarcate the boundaries of individual housing unit which is a display of territoriality by the house owners. Figure 7 show that 92.4% of respondents considered this participation option as being important, which implies that they would to have it included in the housing unit being provided. It is common to find in most of the estates where perimeter fences by individual house owners are marked for demolition, this can also be viewed as a visible attempt at making house owners become tenants.

4. Conclusion

The level of interest in participating in the housing units of mass housing schemes in Kwara State showed that the house owners in mass housing schemes are not different from those who could afford to build their personal

houses in terms of their desire. It is therefore wrong to place restrictions on what house owners can do their houses because they have paid for it hence the house is logically no longer the property of the housing providers. In order to ensure that house owner do not become tenants in the house they have paid for, housing providers must seek ways of getting the house owners involved in the housing provision. There are several ways of getting the house owners involved in mass housing process however it would be proper to get them involved at the design stage through the principle of customization. The choice of collaboration with house owners by housing providers will ensure that the needs of the house are incorporated into the housing design and there would be no need to place restrictions on the house owners which seeks to make them tenant.

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