

## THE YORUBA VERNACULAR AS A PARADIGM FOR LOW-INCOME HOUSING: LESSONS FROM OGBERE, IBADAN, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*Low-income housing is often studied in a top down approach by experts and researchers. The Ogbere case study in the outskirts of Ibadan represents housing built by low-income people and therefore a context to understand how the poor provides housing. It is evident from Ogbere that most of the housing producers earlier lived in Yoruba vernacular family houses where they acquired knowledge about the vernacular model they built. This knowledge contributed to their ability to attain housing contrary to their income level. In order to understand low-income housing production in the context of Ogbere, a comprehensive case study approach was adopted. The study examined the socio-economic characteristics and residential histories of the house owners, the characteristics of the houses and the resources they deployed in the housing production process. Multiple techniques of questionnaires, in depth interview and observation were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from one half ( $n = 926$ ) of the Ogbere house owners in the study area. The findings form a paradigm for low income housing in Nigeria and the developing world.*

**Keywords:** Yoruba vernacular; low-income housing; Vernacular model; knowledge

### INTRODUCTION

The poor are the most affected by the housing deficit that has been established in the developing world. While public policies on low-income housing provision have been ineffective, private housing production has thrived. This study posits that it is necessary to study housing from the viewpoint of the poor to inform housing policy. Studies of low-income housing traditionally focus independently on houses, the process of housing delivery or the financial and political obstacles in the process. These one-point and (at most) dual perspectives have led to the search for low-cost or appropriate materials and technology for housing the poor. The enabling policies also target the widely acknowledged lack of adequate income and savings of the poor.

This study was approached with insights gained from Henri Lefebvre's theory of space. It simultaneously examined the people, the process and the product, in the social context. The aim of this explorative study was to develop a holistic explanation for low-income housing production. To allow for intensive description and analysis, a case-study approach was adopted to study Ogbere in Ibadan, Nigeria. Ogbere is one of the areas with a large concentration of low-income houses on the outskirts of Ibadan. The study examined the socio-economic characteristics and residential histories of the low-income people in Ogbere, the characteristics of the housing they produced and the processes adopted. It further identified and assessed the resources deployed in the housing-production process.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies in low-income housing have focused broadly on either the product or the process. The initial focus on the product was towards a quantitative increase of housing to meet up with rapid

urbanization and natural disasters. The quantitative focus determined the approach to earlier studies, which emphasized mass-production techniques to eliminate housing shortage. The limited resource of governments and public authorities, the subsequent politico-economic arguments by social scientists coupled with the higher and more effective private housing production accounts for the later process studies (Walker, 2001).

Financial, economic and political obstacles with their remedies are the more common process studies (Ball, 2003; Knight and Gharipour, 2016; Ochieng, 2007). The social, economic and developmental problems of high technology also necessitated process studies in alternative technologies (e.g. Schumacher, 1973). Other process studies focus on the other related inputs to housing production like land, labor and the management process (Arimah, 1992).

Lefebvre's writings project the viewpoint that an explanation of any social reality (including low-income housing) necessitates broad-based theoretical studies that account for the totality of the issues involved. To search for the explanation of the reproduction of social relations, it is necessary to proceed from the total to the particular and over an extremely wide range of social phenomena (Lefebvre, 1991). Studies of any portion of space in the built environment (including low-income housing) should be in the context of the "social totality". Housing is important for the low-income group because of the limited choices available to them especially since they are excluded from the housing market. Also critics ask the question "who has the right, let alone the political will or the financial resources, to make and implement decisions necessary to meet the housing demand of the low-income?" (Oliver, 2000). Around the world, people have experiences passed on from generation to generation on how and what to build and negotiate with authorities. It is an "acquired behavior" with people borrowing idioms, fashions and behavioral styles that they see being used around them. People internalize housing values through the processes of daily life and produce houses in accordance with specific models where they exist (Walker, 2001). Also, housing construction all over the world is known to be a highly cultural activity. It would therefore be strange if low-income housing production were any different (Walker, 2001). Its form and organizations are influenced by the culture in which it develops and often reflect the relationship between culture and environment. Rapoport (1988), observed an implicit model or cognitive scheme shared by all the individuals making apparently independent decisions.

## METHODOLOGY

Quantitative and qualitative methods were employed for collecting primary data from housing producers in Ogbere who were owner-occupiers. Half of the 2005 owner-occupiers (1,003) were selected through random sampling for questionnaire-administration. The questionnaire was administered as an interview schedule by trained research assistants. Information obtained through the questionnaire included personal and family details, inputs and organization of the production process. Physical observation of the houses, materials and technology employed and available services were carried out. Qualitative data such as the motivation for housing production and problems encountered during the process were established through in-depth interviews of twenty-five (25) of the owner-occupiers selected through purposive sampling. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while the qualitative data were subjected to content analysis.

The findings show that the Yoruba vernacular model which was part of the residential history of many of the Ogbere owner-occupiers, affected the process adopted and the houses produced.

## The Study Context

The study area, Ogbere is one of the rapidly-developing residential areas on the outskirts of Ibadan. Ogbere, Olunloyo is on Akaran road (which leads to Ijebu-Igbo in Ogun State).



Figure 1: Location of Ogbere, off the Iwo Road – Challenge – Lagos expressway  
(Source: Sustainable Ibadan Project Office, Oyo State Government Secretariat, Ibadan).

It is also off the internalized Ring Road portion of the Lagos – Ibadan expressway, between Challenge and Iwo Road, as shown in Figure 1. It is on the Aperin – Olorunsogo flyover – Akanran – Ijebu-Igbo road, opposite Ogbere Grammar School and Ogbere police station. The area carved out is bounded by Ogbere River on the west, the portion of Akanran road between the river and Jegede road on the south, Jegede road on the east and the road from Itamerin junction to Babanla in the north.



Figure 2: Roofscape of the study area (Source: Google Earth).

The area is between latitude 8.125N and 8.15N and longitude 6.035E and 6.045E, enclosing approximately 2005 buildings in a rectangular area of about one square kilometre (Figure 2). Ibadan is a historical city that was originally created as a war camp for traditional warriors, but which has continued to develop as a commercial centre because of its location as a distribution point of the major highway from the highly urbanized Lagos area to the other regions of Nigeria. It serves as a major transportation hub for people and goods to the northern region via Ilorin and Oshogbo, the eastern region via Benin City (through Akure, Ondo, Ore and Owo) and to the surrounding towns of the most urbanized western region of Nigeria (Figure 3).



Figure 3: The location of Ibadan in relation to surrounding towns and cities  
(Source: <http://www.google.com.ng/images>).

Ibadan was estimated to have a total area of 103.8 km<sup>2</sup> with 36.2 km<sup>2</sup> built up and the rest made up of forest reserves, farmlands, flood plains and water bodies (Areola, 1994). Farmlands gradually disappeared, from the 1960s, while an aerial photograph in 1973 showed the city had spread over 100km<sup>2</sup>. It was observed that in the 1980s, the city witnessed the greatest urban sprawl along the newly-constructed Ibadan-Lagos expressway (east and north of the city) and Eleiyele expressway (west of the city). The city also spread into surrounding local government areas, especially Akinyele and Egbeda (Fourchard, 2003). The land area increased from 136 km<sup>2</sup> in 1981 to 210-240 km<sup>2</sup> in 1988-89, and by the year 2000, the estimated coverage was 400 km<sup>2</sup>.

Three types of residential areas have been identified in Ibadan according to age, location and size (Fourchard, 2003). They are the ancient, pre-colonial inner city, the old, planned city and that at the outskirts, along major roads, to which Ogbere belongs. The oldest inner-city area consists of family-houses and Brazilian-style houses on one or two floors, generally made of mud plastered with cement, and have rusted corrugated iron roofs. Low- and medium-quality residential districts which were set up in the first half of the 20th century as government estates, European reservations with educational institutions and markets, with a substantial portion of

space in-between them and roads and railway lines, have rapidly grown as mixed-use developments, with a mélange of residential types (Fourchard, 2003). An interesting dimension to low-income settlements on the outskirts of Ibadan is that they do not constitute squatter settlements (as is commonly associated with low-income earners in urban areas), and they are built on 'legal' lands. These areas did not develop as a result of organized or unorganized land invasions, like a lot of the widely studied informal housing in Latin America. Ogbere is one of those agricultural areas on the outskirts of Ibadan city that the low-income class steadily took over. The rapid transformation of Ogbere from an agricultural/rural community and its amalgamation to Ibadan city started in 1970 when the Nigerian Civil War ended and the 'Oil Boom' era began. In the decade 1969 to 1978, as shown in Table 1, 31.3% of the owner-occupiers got their land, and 19% started housing production. Most of the land subdivision and house production took place between 1979 and 1988. Between 1979 and 1988, 37% of the owner-occupiers acquired their land with almost half of them (43.5%) starting construction.

Table 1: Rate of Spatial Development of Ogbere (Source: Authors).

YEAR	WHEN LAND WAS ACQUIRED	STARTED CONSTRUCTION	BEGAN TO LIVE IN OGBERE
Before 1919	4	2	2
1919-1928	8	10	5
1929-1938	11	8	9
1939-1948	-	-	-
1949-1958	3	1	2
1959-1968	21	9	15
1969-1978	260	151	97
1979-1988	309	346	306
1989-1998	166	197	255
1999-2008	50	71	175
Total	832	795	868

Thereafter, land acquisition and construction started to reduce. In fact, it became halved in the 1989-1998 decade and fell to one-third in the 1999-2008 decade. A quarter (24.8%) of the Ogbere housing producers started construction, while one-fifth (20%) acquired land between 1989 and 1998. House-production and land-acquisition activities were at the lowest ebb since 1968 (at 8.9% and 6% respectively) in the decade 1999-2008 preceding the study.

The largest group of housing producers in Ogbere (24.6%) had no education at all; only 10.2% completed primary school, 1.8% did not complete primary school while 14.6% completed secondary school. Another large group consisted of those that had vocational training (31.8%) either after primary school (16.3%) or after secondary school (15.5%) and yet another 2.9% with vocational training only. A minority of housing producers in Ogbere had some form of tertiary education – higher diploma and higher college of education (6.1%); lower diploma and lower college of education (5.1%) and university (2.7%). Larger proportions of these were heavy earners and were expectedly out of the low-income bracket.

The largest percentage of the housing producers (86.5%) was engaged in informal activities. About one-third (31.6%) had petty trading as primary occupation. Also, 13.4% of the 24.8% that had secondary occupation were petty traders. About twenty one per cent (20.9%) of household heads that responded to the question on income earned below N10, 000 (\$66.5 or £40) per month while about one third (35.1%) earned between N10,000 and N20,000 (\$133 or £80) per month. About 19% earned higher than N20, 000 but less than N30,000 (\$200 or £120) while 11.6% earned more than N30,000 but less than N50,000 (\$333 or £200) per month. Just 4.4% of respondents earned more than N50, 000 per month. The last two categories of earners were mostly those with tertiary education living in the midst of low-income people. The National

Minimum Wage (NMW) is N18,000 (\$120 or £72) per month (Jaiyeoba, 2011). The housing production process is therefore necessarily incremental.

### **Building Delivery Process in Ogbere**

The incremental process of house building by the low-income group started with the search for land through the 'family and friends' social network. For low-income people, 'knowing' about land is part of the everyday activity and 'knowing' is through all kinds of people that they have ties with. Information is passed on from 'man to man' in informal discussion in the neighbourhood (in the workplace, shop, place of worship, market, club and meeting rooms) about availability of land in particular locations and the means/conditions by which plots could be accessed. Even for people who are entitled to family land by inheritance, discussions take place in the family-house with elders tracing the transition of inheritance back to the fourth generation. Sometimes, the family may have shared their land, seemingly forgetting a lineage or not considering the female children of the lineage. It is also possible for them to have ceded part of the land as barter for professional fees of lawyers who helped resolve a conflict or land surveyors who surveyed and subdivided large tracts of land, or town planners who carved out the land into affordable small plots. An earlier generation of family-heads may also have leased out portions of family land for farming or other uses, and may opt for outright sale in times of need, while part may have been acquired by government for the 'common good'. Therefore, not all entitled to ancestral land can have land in the family portion. For those that got large portions of land as 'professional fees', for those that leased large portions from families that own land or those that bought large portions, as land value rises, they employ the services of land agents to act as intermediaries between the land owner and the final user. Those that are entitled to ancestral land ('son of the soil') but cannot have it have to deal with the intermediary but may use the factor of ancestry to have a better bargain than an outsider.

The chain between the family owners and the final user may sometimes be long, when plots are passed from one buyer to another before the eventual housing producers acquire them (with added costs of land agents who take commission from the two parties involved in the transaction, apart from 'revaluing' the land based on prevailing prices). One Ogbere owner-occupier an indigene remembers buying his land from one 'Baba' who was a chief land agent who controlled a number of other agents, at Three Hundred Naira (N300) in 1973. Ogbere was then a farm (Okogira, a tobacco farm); a similar parcel of land cost about Two Hundred Thousand Naira (N200,000; \$1333) in 2008. The man got a good bargain because he is an indigene. When other housing producers were asked how they obtained their land, some more of them (13.3%) similarly responded that it is their inheritance/ family land (though they bought it). For example, when one housing producer was asked how he got the land, he replied:

*"I called an elder in my family and informed him about my intention to purchase land. One of my uncles took me to an old man – Alasa – who people confirmed as an honest land-speculator. He was the man who sold me the land".*

The largest group (42.5%) bought land through a network of friends, with another 5.1% actually buying from 'a friend'. Almost one-third (30.3%) purchased through informal land agents; 4.1% believe they purchased through registered Estate agents. Less than three per cent (2.5%) bought their plot through hometown associations; two residents (0.2%) purchased through the employee union while three residents (0.3%) claim they purchased from government (though there is no evidence of a government layout in the area). The remaining 2.6% got the land gratis.

Many of the house-builders believe that getting a building permit from the local government planning authority is a step in legalizing the process.

### **Duration of Housing Construction**

Past studies established that low income housing production is usually long-term because of the meager financial capital earned and generated by low-income people. A range of between 0 and 15 years is said to be usual (Sheuya, 2007). What is not defined is whether the duration of production starts with the acquisition of the land or the actual start of construction activities. In the Ogbere case-study, both were studied: the period between land-acquisition and actual start of construction, and the duration between starting construction and moving in (which for the low-income group signifies 'completion'). The modal group in Ogbere (29.8%) actually commenced construction the same year they bought the land. Though there was a wide range of 0 to 51 years for the time-lag between buying land and starting construction, the mean time-lag was 3.03 years, with a median of 1 year. The 25 and 75 percentile was 0 and 4 years respectively; 22.5% had a time lag of 1 year, 12.4% (2 years), 8.6% (3 years), 4.4% (4 years), 4.5% (5 years) and 3.2% (6 years). In fact, less than ten percent (9.4%) had a time-lag of more than 8 years after buying the land, before starting construction.

A considerable percentage of the Ogbere housing producers (61.5%) moved in within three years of commencing construction; 12.1% in the same year, 19% after a year, 18.2% after two years and 12.3% after three years. The mean duration was 4.62 years, with a 25 and 75 percentile of one and six years respectively, in a wide range of between 0 and 37 years. However 4 out of 5 (79.1%) housing producers had moved in by six years of commencing construction and less than ten percent (8.9%) had not moved in by the 13th year.

### **Resources for Housing Construction**

A variety of resources that belies their social grouping are utilized in the housing production process of low-income people. These include formal and informal knowledge and human, social and economic capital.

### **Knowledge of Housing Production**

Low-income people are sometimes known to acquire building knowledge through casual labor or some form of engagement in the construction industry, on arrival in cities. However, only about two per cent of the Ogbere housing producers had had any employment in the building industry.

More than a quarter (27.4%) of the housing producers in Ogbere had no formal education; 10.0% completed primary education and 14.6% completed secondary education. Those into vocational training, with no formal education after primary and secondary schooling, constituted 28.1% of the producers. In all, 34.5% concurred to having any knowledge of building. Out of these, 8.5% acquired the knowledge through formal education and 24.6% through informal means. Overall, about six percent (5.7%) of the housing producers got their formal training in school while 7.7% got theirs through traditional instruction/apprenticeship.

The breakdown of different percentages that acquired building-production knowledge by informal means, included participation in communal building (1.9%), observation of building activity (13.5%), oral tradition (1.8%), family-lineage know-how (1.4%), related/unrelated employment in building (2.2%) and earlier house-building experience (1.5%). For example, an informant was asked to state some of the steps he took before building the house. He replied:

*"I have an uncle who is a bricklayer; he supplied me with useful hints on how to build at my pace"*

### **Participants/ Human Capital**

The Ogbere low-income people identified the professionals (including skilled and unskilled workers) that took part in the house-production process, the level of importance of their role at different stages of the process, and their own involvement in the process.

In the actual construction process, the draughtsman and the 'architect' became transformed to 'engineer'. Anyone that possesses more knowledge than the ordinary mason or 'bricklayer' and is

able to supervise workmen with an ability to 'read' or understand drawings and interpret them is an 'engineer'. In this regard, 34.5% used an 'engineer' in the production process. Similarly, the first skilled workman contacted by a low-income house producer is a mason (popularly referred to as 'bricklayer' – even if what he is working on is earth, or mud/sandcrete blocks – and if an elderly or very experienced one, may be referred to as 'contractor'). Less than a quarter (23.1%) of the owner-occupiers took active part in the production process. 'Active part' goes beyond the usual sourcing and buying of materials, occasional visits and other financial transactions. They participated as workmen ('labor'), with personal involvement beyond occasional site visits, either alone, with family or friends. The other participants mentioned were carpenters (31.2%); the man who works in metal of various forms – rods, sheets, plates – 'iron bender' (31.2%); the 'plumber' (29.2%) and the 'electrician' (57.8%). The ratio of the involvement of the electrician to the plumber is a reflection of the relative importance of their general need for electricity, compared to complex water and sewage disposal issues that could require the skill of a plumber. The 'bricklayer' had the highest 'important' rating of 76.9%, indicating how central a role they play in the housing production process, and perhaps the 13.6% 'not important at all' rating is a reflection of how disappointed their employers were about some of them. Generally speaking, low-income people do not fully entrust building to any of the participants. One housing producer, while sharing his experience on house-building, said:

*"Take nobody as your friend or entrust any role into their care, because they will disappoint you, and will not help you to buy quality materials to build your house".*

### **Social Capital**

The relationships that the owner-occupiers have with the participants in the housing production process were also examined. The professionals and skilled workmen that took part in the housing production process in Ogbere met the owner-occupiers in several ways: through their past work done for persons in the social network of house-owners; in places where they frequent, formally or informally; have family or other relationships with the head or other member(s) of the household; were neighbors, or worked in their neighborhood, or have 'stations' or offices in their present or past neighborhood. More than half of the participants (56.8%) got the job through their past work; in 10.8% of the cases they met the house-owner in their own 'office'; at their site (9.0%), or in the Church/Mosque (8.6%); in the clubhouse (8.1%); in the office (3.6%) or in the house-producer's former house (3.2%). Similar statistics are common with respect to the 'architect', 'engineer', 'bricklayer', contractor, plumber and electrician. Social capital also involves group-action to achieve the desire of being an owner-occupier. The owner-occupiers in Ogbere enjoyed some group participation in their housing production. Almost a quarter (23.8%) of the housing producers belongs to one or more indigenous/social organization(s). Almost a third (32%) signified belonging to an employee-worker's association, with 26.2% belonging to a religious association; apparently, many believe these last two groups are not indigenous/ social organizations. More than twenty percent (21.5%) belong to hometown associations, 15.3% to skilled-workers' associations and 13.1% to a cooperative society/organization. These organizations/associations participated to varying degrees in the housing-production process. A quarter (25.5%) of the producers enjoyed the participation of religious associations, while 23.8% enjoyed the participation of workers' associations. Hometown associations and cooperative societies had 9.7% and 9.6% participation, respectively.

Traditional norms that are expected from family, extended family and friends are a resource to the production process of the low-income people in Ogbere. The extended family and friends contributed to 12.1% and 12.2% respectively, of the cases in the Ogbere case-study, while the owner-occupiers' immediate family (nuclear) contributed to 12.6% of the cases.

### **Economic Capital**

The owner-occupiers were asked about the source of the money spent in housing production. These money sources are however not mutually exclusive since the housing producers utilize multiple sources in their struggle to be a house-owner. Almost one third (30.2%) responded that cash gifts were a source of finance for house-building; 29.7% benefited from their children's contribution, while 29.3% utilized one credit facility or another. About twenty-eight percent (28.4%) cited personal income/savings as contributing to their house-building, while a quarter (25.2%) cited family contribution. Less than three percent (2.3%) made use of their retirement benefits in housing production. Earlier studies (e.g., Macoloo, 1994; Edwards, 1995 and Datta & Jones, 1999) overrated the importance of personal savings as the main source of finance for low-income housing production with some highlighting low propensities to save in the poorest countries, and in the poorest households in all countries. The role of savings is apparent in Ogbere, but it is fourth in position, in terms of source of finance utilized by the housing producers in the study area. Gifts from other people or groups around them also show that the low-income people in Ogbere are active in their social interactions. Their social interactions go beyond their neighborhood, income and education level, which makes one question the insinuation that low-income people in low-income areas lack the useful social resource in their personal networks that are necessary to get ahead in life, or escape their marginalized situation (cited in Pinkster, 2007). The different credit sources rated include credit from relatives, friends, hometown associations, religious associations, workers' associations, employers, commercial institutions, cooperatives and material-sellers and labor credit. It appears that while some of the low-income people in Ogbere utilized sources of credit in their housing production, they are not willing to acknowledge the importance of these credit facilities to the process. This is perhaps so as not to lower their self-esteem, because they considered such not too critical to achieving their objective, or because the experience of using credit was not palatable, interesting or encouraging.

### **RESIDENTIAL HISTORY OF OGBERE HOUSE OWNERS**

The housing producers were asked about where they lived before becoming residents in Ogbere. As shown in Table 2, three quarters (75.4%) had earlier lived in the old or ancient core of the city. They lived in places around Oje, Alafara, Beere, Kobomoje, Irefin and Ojaoba.

Table 2: Previous Residential Location of Ogbere Housing Producers (Source: Jaiyeoba, 2011).

Where they came from	Percentage
Old or Ancient core of Ibadan	75.4%
Later neighborhoods in Ibadan	9.4%
Outskirts of Ibadan	5.8%
Ogbere and environs	2.6%
Migrants from Lagos	3.7%
Migrants from other parts of Western Nigeria	2.1%
Migrants from outside Western Nigeria	1.0%

About nine percent (9.4%) lived in the later neighborhood/areas within the city. These areas include Agbowo and other areas around the University of Ibadan, Bodija, Sango, Mokola, Orita Bashorun, Total Gardens, around the University College Hospital (UCH), Oke-Ado, Oke-Bola and Felele, amongst others. Places on the outskirts with similar characteristics to Ogbere like Olorunsogo, Olomi, Oremeji, Odo-Ona-Elewe, Sawmill, Moniya, Egbeda and others, had provided residence to 5.8% of the housing producers. Ogbere and environs like Ogbere-ti-o-ya and Adeyalooogbere has always been the residence of only 2.6%. This means that almost all Ogbere low-income housing producers (90.6%) moved there from elsewhere in the city, compared to 50% in metro Manila (Shatkin, 2004). Migrants from other places in Nigeria

constitute only 6.8%; 3.7% down-migrated from Lagos; less than 1% from places outside the western states of Nigeria (like Port Harcourt, Maiduguri, Kano, Enugu, Bauchi and the Federal Capital, Abuja), and the remaining 2.1% of migrants, from the surrounding towns within the western States (like Shagamu, Abeokuta, Akure, Ogbomoso and Osogbo).

### Former Residence and Status of Housing Producers

Most of the owner-occupiers in Ogbere (67.2%) had earlier lived in family-houses as children, with 43.4% living free and 22.9% claiming ownership of the family house. Less than one per cent (0.9%) paid any rent in the family-house.

Table 3: Residential History of Housing Producers (Source: Jaiyeoba, 2011).

		TENURE STATUS				TOTAL
		Living free	Paying rent alone	Sharing rent	Owner	
Type of house lived in as a child with parents						
Family house	384	7	1	203	595	
Flats	0	7	0	9	16	
Face-me-i-face-you	57	55	1	86	199	
Personal house	14	0	0	58	72	
Official Quarters	0	0	0	1	1	
Others	2	0	0	0	2	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>885</b>	
Type of house lived in as an adult						
Family house	219	6	1	22	248	
Flats	4	61	1	12	78	
Face-me-i-face-you	120	346	17	28	512	
Personal house	10	0	0	25	35	
Official Quarters	6	2	0	0	8	
Others	2	1	0	0	3	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>884</b>	

In Table 3, even as adults, 28.1% stayed in the family-house with 24.8% living free, 2.5% claiming ownership and 0.8% paying rent. Less than a quarter (22.5%) lived in a rooming house (locally known as face-me-i-face-you) with their parents, and about six per cent each living free (6.4%), or paying rent (6.2%). Less than ten per cent (8.1%) lived in a personal house with their parents. It is, therefore, not in all cases that children of house-owners (or 'landlords') will be the only ones becoming 'landlords' (Boehm and Schlottmann, 1999). However, the high proportion that had lived with elders in family-houses supports the view that children who lived with grandparents or elderly people, irrespective of whether they also lived with their own parents, would eventually live in their own houses (Mutchler, 1998).

Most of the original occupants of family-houses transited to renters in rooming houses as adults (i.e. 41% of the 57.9%). The other prominent renters as adults (7%) were the housing producers that had earlier lived in flats (8.8%). Only 4% had lived in a personal house with their parents in adulthood. Housing producers that lived in official quarters either as children (0.1%) or

adults (0.9%) were very few. Those that lived in flats with their own parents were also very few (1.8%).

### HOUSES BUILT IN OGBERE

The typical house in Ogbere, such as in Figure 4, was a one-level rectangular building (90.1%); two-level buildings constituted 9.6%, while the remaining 0.4% represents buildings (presently) on one level, but with a concrete roof structure (or uncompleted upper level), as shown in Figure 5.

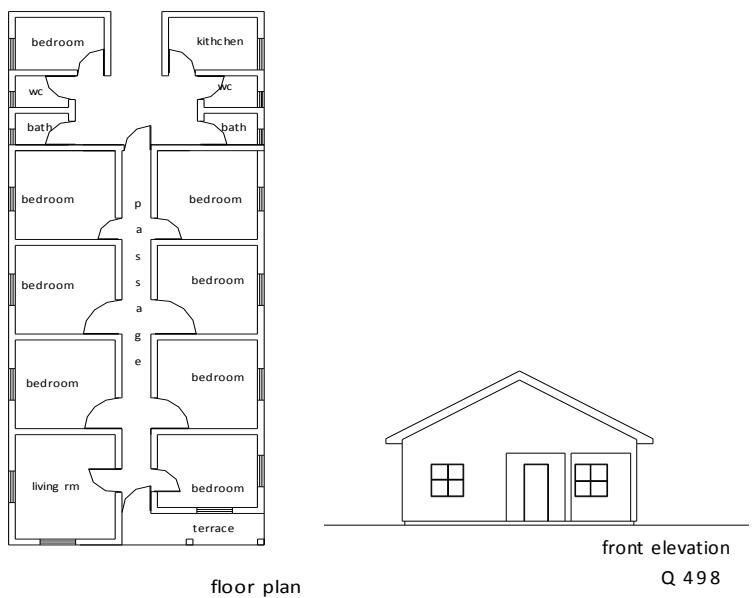


Figure 4: A Typical Rooming-Bungalow in Ogbere (Source: Authors).

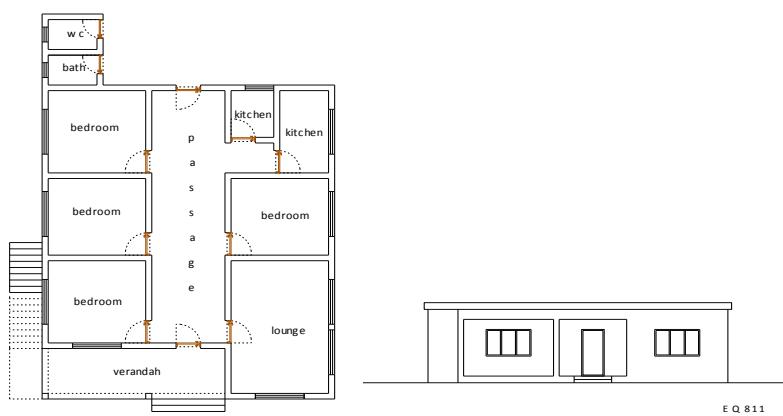


Figure 5: Rooming-House with stairs and concrete roof/floor slab in expectation of another level of rooms (Source: Authors).

The buildings were mostly rooming-houses (87.9%), commonly referred to as ‘face-me-I-face-you’ because of the arrangement of rooms directly on opposite sides of a central corridor. The entrance to the house was usually an open balcony/verandah (Figure 6) from which the corridor leads to the attached/detached service spaces (when provided) at the back of the house.



Figure 6: The Typical Building Typology in Ogbere (Source: Authors).

The first room that prevents the verandah from extending all along the frontage was usually the biggest in size, and was locally referred to as the 'parlor'. It was the living-room/reception of the owner-occupier, if there were renters in the house, or the family space if the household was made up of only the nuclear or extended family.

The dimensions of spaces – the verandah, the rooms, parlor and service spaces – were usually in multiples of the imperial unit of 2 feet (0.6m), with room dimensions typically 10 feet (3m) by 12 feet (3.6m), with increments of 2 feet (0.6m) when larger. The verandah and corridor were typically 6 feet- (1.8m) to 8 feet- (2.4m) wide, while the 'parlor' was between 10 feet- (3m) and 14 feet- (4.2m) wide by 16 feet (4.8m) to 22 feet (6.6m) in length.

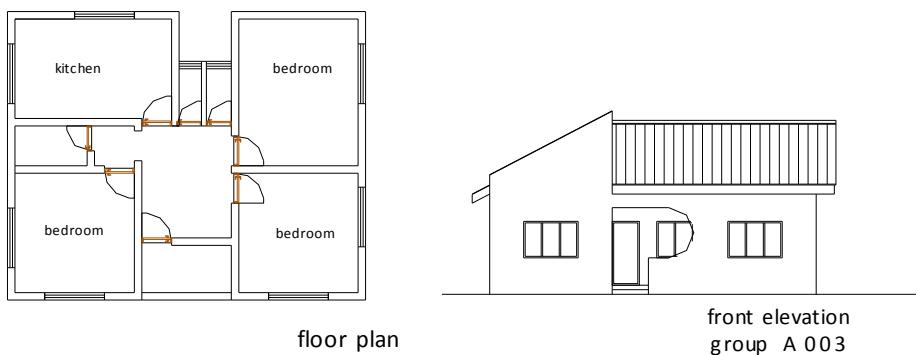


Figure 7: A Single-family 'Flat' Typology (Source: Authors).

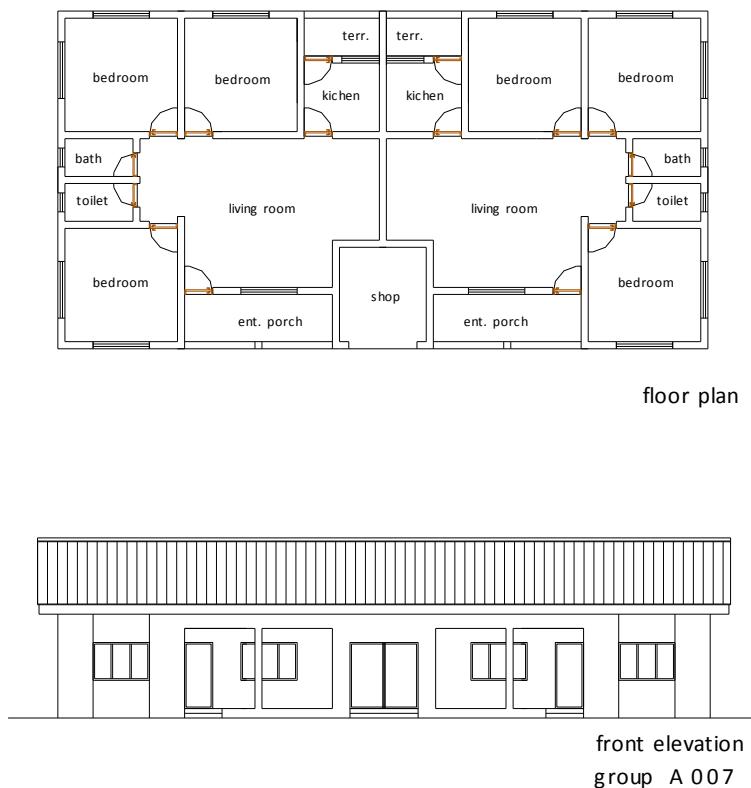


Figure 8: A Twin 'Flat' Typology (Source: Authors).

The other typology was the single-family residence with inclusive services shown in Figures 7 and 8, known as 'flat' which may be unitary or in multiples. About eleven per cent (11.3%) of the housing produced in the study area was 'flats'. About half of these (48.7%) were unit flats; about a third (30.4%) had two flats, while 17.4% had four flats. The remaining few had either three flats (2.6%) or six flats (0.9%). There were very few other buildings that were not residential (mostly religious), and incomplete or abandoned buildings that fell out of the classification of rooming-houses and flats.

### Number of Rooms Built

It is common for governments and institutions to build houses while it seems low-income people actually need rooms. The prevalent number of rooms in the minority building type ('flat') was three rooms, at 61.3%. A quarter was either four room flats (14.3%) or five room flats (10.1%). Almost the same percentage had six rooms (6.7%) or two rooms (5.9%), with less than one percent (0.8%) each having one or seven rooms. The prevalent numbers of rooms in the rooming-house with even numbers was 6 (41.1%) and 8 rooms (38.2%). The other even-numbered rooms were 10 (5.1%), and 3.8% each of 4-room and 12-room houses, and 2.5% of 16 rooms. The more common odd-number rooming-houses were the 3-room (1.0%) and the 1-room (0.8%) variants; there were also 9-room (0.6%) and 7-room (0.5%) rooming-houses. Only 4% of houses in Ogbere had more than 12 rooms (in the range of between 1 and 20 rooms) in the study area.

A synthesis of the Ogbere case-study showed that more than half (54.7%) of the owner-occupiers were in the age-range of 56 to 70 years, with only a quarter (28.7%) between 45 and 55 years. Low-income housing producers were mostly employed in the informal sector (86.5%),

especially vocations and petty trading, with little or no formal education. Those that had formal education rarely had more than primary education (12%) or secondary education (15.5%), though they had living in their midst a few people that had some form of tertiary education. Most of them paid for the land, with 76.1% paying once to avoid disputes. Most also believe having a building permit means the process is legalized. The majority started construction not more than four years after buying the land; in fact 29.8% started construction in the same year. Also, a majority also moved into the house on or before three years of construction. Most gained indigenous knowledge and extra social capital from family-houses where they had lived earlier. This knowledge and social network was reinforced in informal activities in which most are engaged. This increased individual and group participation in the building delivery process in terms of gifts, credit and other forms of social support. Interviews confirmed that the most problematic stages in the building process were land-acquisition and roofing because they usually require a once-and-for-all expenditure.

The roofing stage requires more expenditure for its cultural importance and the associated ceremonial entertainment expenses. It was seen by most of the low-income people as the 'completion' of housing production since after then the house became habitable. For the low-income group, the idea of presenting the house as fully complete by painting it is considered a luxury. Similarly, having strong landed property perimeter definition is not a priority of low-income people. In the building and site layout, spaces provided were a reflection of the residential activities recognized by the low-income people. These are sleeping, social interaction and guest entertainment with cooking, toileting and bathing as back-of-the-house activities. In terms of the location of services, the low-income house producers saw the bathroom space as more internal than the cooking space with the toileting space being the most external. The most affordable and least problematic toilet type, they believed is the pit latrine. Sharing of these facilities is not considered an initial problem in housing conception, since the houses rarely had more than 1 (or at most 2) of these facilities. Providing an alternative water-supply source through the digging of a well is considered a naturally affordable action, while providing alternative electric power supply seemed the most difficult.

The Ogbere low-income people, though not too formally educated, had informal knowledge through their everyday experiences in the family-house, their vocations, or the handed-down 'tradition' of living in family-houses as the additional motivation for housing production. The holistic examination of the people, the building process and the houses they built, suggests salient issues that policy-makers should address in low-income housing policy in Yoruba-land.

### **THE OGBERE HOUSE AND THE YORUBA VERNACULAR HOUSE**

A cursory examination of the house-types in Ogbere suggests that the model used for the designs of the houses is the Yoruba vernacular house, which has been described very well by several authors including Crooke (1966); Schwerdtfeger (1982) and Okpako and Amole (2012).

Crooke's description of the Yoruba vernacular house presents two types (i.e. the courtyard and the corridor types). Obviously, the more popular that has been adopted by the Ogbere people was the 'corridor type', sometimes referred to as 'face-me-I-face-you', in the local parlance (Figure 9 and 10). In this type, families lived in rooms or suites of rooms and shared a common corridor and services at the rear end of the house. It is also quite instructive that Schwerdtfeger's documentation reveals that the courtyard house in different stages of transformation approaches the 'corridor type', suggesting that residents lived in rooms and suites of rooms.

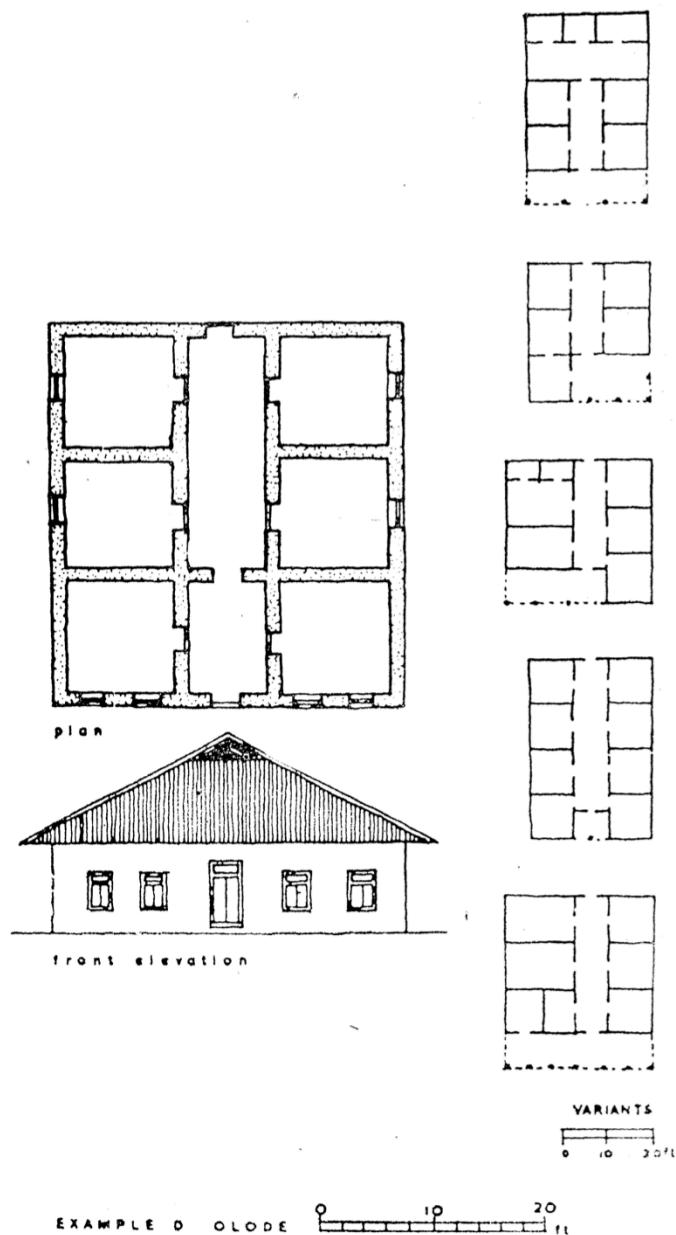


Figure 9: Transformations of the Yoruba Vernacular house  
(Source: Schwerdtfeger 1982).

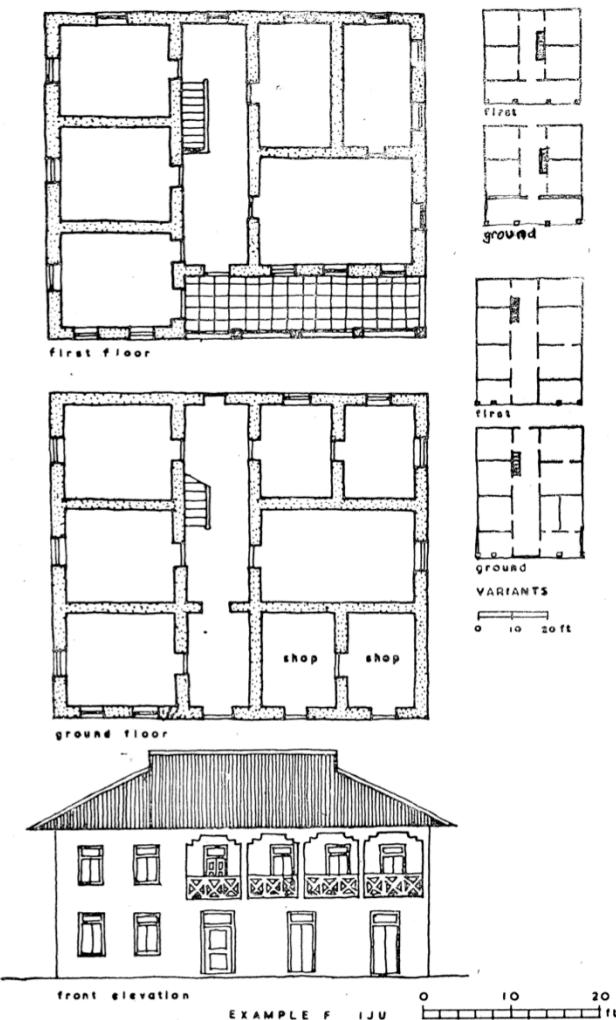


Figure 10: Transformations of the Yoruba Vernacular house  
(Source: Schwerdtfeger 1982).

This further suggests that the most important element in the Yoruba vernacular house is the room or suites of rooms. Indeed, Amole (2000) in analyzing the characteristics of the Yoruba vernacular house, pointed attention to the importance of the room as the building block of the vernacular house. The room is referred to as 'ojule' meaning 'the eye of the house', thus emphasizing its relative importance. It is this attribute of the vernacular house that makes it most attractive as a paradigm for low-income housing design among the Yoruba. It seems that while public housing designs on the one hand provide 'apartments' for the poor, they on the other hand – taking a cue from the vernacular – provide rooms for themselves. In addition, flexibility and open-endedness are the attributes which Amole (2000) suggests as defining characteristics of the vernacular.

### **CONCLUSION AND INFERENCES FOR LOW-INCOME HOUSING POLICY**

The Yoruba vernacular house remains the preferred typology for low-income people. The 'ojule' – that is, the number of rooms – is critical to accommodating not only the nuclear family, but also the extended family. Service spaces are regarded as back-of-the-house spaces and poor people

do not mind sharing services. Rooms are also easily shared among the children for later use or even for rent when the owner dies.

The house-building process is necessarily incremental. Policy should recognize this incremental approach through indigenous organizations that poor people usually belong to. These organizations include hometown organizations, skilled-workers' associations, cooperative and religious societies. This form of recognition will allow the groups to; for example, borrow money from formal financial institutions. Family lineage of indigenes of towns and cities could form the basis for organizing financial aid and mortgage to prospective house builders especially for the most critical stages of the house-construction process. This mortgage could be made payable in amounts based on the earnings and flow of 'gifts' of the poor people. The building in progress then becomes the collateral for subsequent disbursements.

The process of land-acquisition and building of the house should be controlled by the poor people. Managing the process, maximizing their investment and other resources (such as indigenous knowledge and contributions of family and friends), become easier. The costs of institutional involvement and the lack of trust of others is a hindrance to the supply of housing for low-income earners. The painted, finished product labeled 'low-income'; 'low-cost' or 'affordable housing' is definitely not for the poor.

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