

# Managing traditional cities: understanding indigenous building regulations, urban planning and development control in northern Nigeria

BY

**Aliyu Kawu**

In addition to working with inappropriate building standards and regulations, the dilemma of managing fast growing cities of developing countries is further exacerbated in their burgeoning traditional settlements that lack any documented standards to guide both the land developers and the planning agencies that are supposed to guide and control sustainable urban development. This work is an assessment and documentation of the inherent development control measures used in guiding structural and urban growth in indigenous cities of Nigeria. In addition to enlisting its advantages over the present adopted building codes influenced by the colonial masters, it also emphasized other areas people-oriented traditional processes and procedures of building regulations can be adapted in confronting present socio-economic and environmental challenges threatening productive living and livelihood opportunities in sub-Saharan africa including climate change and global warming.

Building regulations, Cities, Development control, Indigenous buildings, Land use, Northern Nigeria, Planning, Traditional areas, Urban management, Urban planning

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my late father Alhaji Muhammad Kawu for being a role model and for his understanding and encouragement even at the last moment of his life.

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I give the glory of this work to Almighty Allah The Ultimate Creator, Giver and Sustainer of life.

**Aliyu Mohammed Kawu.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is not only described as a century of cities, it has brought out the challenges of global sustainability in the light of responsive urban management as humankind becomes more urban than never before. In cities of developing countries, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa, the task of ensuring the needed coordinated modern urban development is not only lacking but at best rudimentary in many instances where there had been any attempt. Although there often appear to be hope in the newly created large settlements, centuries old dominant enclaves of traditional housing have continue to draw attention regarding their peculiar nature and the desire to instil guided land uses development. Traditional settlements are growing. They are experiencing further building and rebuilding of structures. This calls for appropriate coordination and control of land uses to guide against negative consequences of unplanned expansion. But legal constraints and the absence of suitable standards has hindered the introduction of the much needed formal development control system in these areas. A study of the indigenous development control system practiced in these areas and, an examination of the housing structures and their various dimensions would help derive a unique and effective approach to development control in these parts of bourgeoning settlements in developing countries. This work highlights the functional development control standards and procedures in traditional settlements of West Africa, particularly Northern Nigeria, using Zaria city as a case study. This is with the aim of establishing basis and a yardstick for formal planning intervention and control of land use and development in these areas. Physical socio-economic and opinion surveys were used to bring out the inherent building dimensions as well as appropriate procedures for development control in this area. It also highlighted on the indigenous development control procedures in the area; thereby establishing acceptable and people oriented mechanisms for effective development control and the increasingly complex processes and procedures of environmental management. Findings reveal that in most cases, traditional measures are far and above modern planning specifications; suggesting that, with the increasing weather variability characteristics of global warming, assessment of these traditional building dimensions can bring out elements of the built environment whose appropriate adjustment can help to check unfavourable weather conditions at all times. Appropriate standards and procedures for effective development control were given base on peculiarities of traditional settlements and the need to appropriately face the challenges of increasingly uncertain weather variability and global climate change phenomenon.

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