



**HUMAN SETTLEMENTS ARE MUCH MORE THAN HOUSING: TOWARDS A
TRANSFORMATIVE THEORY AND PRACTICE FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURES.**

INAUGURAL LECTURE

By

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Abstract

While housing is not just about houses, human settlements are much more than housing. For, over many centuries, from the origin of things, human settlements have continued to define people's existence. They are places where people live, learn, work, and recreate. However, the lack of integration of professional concerns of various disciplines, in the making and remaking of spaces and places, has been the source of enduring maladies that confront cities of today. These urban maladies have increasingly become amplified and sophisticated due to the constantly shifting nature and character of settlement patterns. On the other hand, scholars, policymakers, and professionals have been at pain, attempting to yield coherent analytical models that aid explain the causes and effects of perpetually changing human settlements, including identifying the forces that drive change in the histories of human settlements across the local, national, and regional landscapes. Some of the major contributing factors to settlement pattern changes, as cited by various scholars, in different times, include colonialisation, war and conflicts, natural disasters, land (re)production, social and economic policy choices of states, and formal government systems that execute choices that have been made. The cumulative effect of the factors that result in changing human settlement patterns have manifested by population movements, and many a times, with negative impact on the environment and the overall well-being of citizens.

While countries are seemingly concerned with the challenges faced by cities and towns, who can no longer cope with the floodtide of migrants that arrive in them daily, in search of better economic opportunities and livelihoods, there appears to be a limited understanding of the structure and behaviour of human settlement systems, including the processes that underlie the changing patterns of human settlements. It is the primary purpose of this paper to trigger a national, regional, and global agenda for developing a coherent view of the theory and practice of human settlement development and management, for societies in transition. In so doing, the paper commences by a brief exploration of the origins and evolution of human settlements, followed by an attempt to examine the key theories and models that have, over time, influenced the understanding of human settlement forms. The paper proceeds to interrogate the types and functions of human settlements, and thereafter uncover the key contemporary challenges that face human settlements today, as described in the paper.

One conceptual and methodological dilemma, you may call it normative, that faced the author in concluding this paper has been an urge to depart from the conventional scholarly practice of proffering some suggested solutions for a selected few, amongst a myriad of, complex urban deficiencies that are identified in the paper. The difficulty to prescribing a cure to each identified human settlement development challenge arises due to that, firstly, the urban development challenges are interrelated and interdependent, and secondly, the challenges in sight of all are but symptoms of much deeper and networked structural, economic, political, social and technological causes, in a fluid global landscape, porous country borders and behaviourally undefinable city boundaries. The paper, thus, concludes by throwing insights on some of the key issues for consideration, you may call them provocations, to be taken forward by all those who are committed to the global agenda of the pursuit of habitable, equitable, resilient human settlements within, between and across the nations of the world.

Key Words: Human Settlements, Transformative Theory and Practice, People, Planet, Prosperity, Sustainability, Urbanisation, Rurality, Governance, Equity, Resilience.