

COLONIALISM AND GENTRIFICATION IN LAGOS, NIGERIA

By

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ABSTRACT

Gentrification and colonialism are two distinct yet similar urban phenomena. In this study, an attempt was made to establish not only the similarity of the two social phenomena but also the entrenchment of the former in the latter as well as their spill-over effects in postcolonial Nigeria. Previous studies have documented evidences of the existence of these phenomena independently but only few tend to focus on the nexus between gentrification and colonialism. Thus, drawing from a larger PhD empirical data, this paper triangulated Social Action Theory and Marxist Alienation Theory to provide cogent sociological analysis of the phenomenon under study. It also combined primary and secondary sources of data. The primary source entailed collection of data through six sessions of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and six participants in Life History (LH) techniques. Peer reviewed journal articles and archival records were the secondary sources used. The study found gentrification to be a progeny of colonialism because the earliest traces of gentrification were found to originate in British urban colonial policies. The post-independence processes of gentrification were merely a continuation of elitist colonial urban policy that is largely anti poor. This accounts for, not only the ever-widening gap of inequality between the urban elites and their poor counterparts, but also the increasing aggressive tendencies in the poor due to the alienating effects of gentrification. Recommendations are made for Lagos state government to make a deliberate effort at ensuring an all-inclusive urban policy that takes into consideration various interests in the state irrespective of their socioeconomic statuses.

Key words: *Gentrification, colonialism, displacement, alienation, action*

INTRODUCTION

The social history of gentrification in Lagos is as old as colonial occupation. It is true that the term gentrification was non-existent during colonialism in Nigeria, this paper is an attempt to establish the embeddedness of gentrification in colonial processes across various colonies in Africa. Even though gentrification as a term did not exist during colonialism in Nigeria, yet, its processes had been in existence. Gentrification is a process of displacement of low-income people by affluent individuals, corporate entities and public authorities (Ayuba, 2023). Several studies such as Rerat et al., (2009), Briney (2010), Thompson (2014), Nwanna (2012) and Ezema et al., (2016) have been conducted on various aspects of gentrification, yet very few tend to focus on the historical connections between colonialism and gentrification particularly in Africa.

More so, the link between colonialism and gentrification is deeply interrelated, as colonial-era urban planning established the foundations for modern spatial disparities across African colonies. Colonial administrators instituted planning regulations that predominantly favored European interests, frequently overlooking the necessities of indigenous communities, resulting in persistent socioeconomic inequalities (Njoh, 1999). The consequences of these colonial strategies are evident in contemporary major African cities such as Lagos, Abuja, Accra, Nairobi and Johannesburg where state-led demolitions and property rights frameworks disproportionately advantage the wealthy to the detriment of urban poor majority, thus exacerbating housing instability and displacement (LeVan & Olubowale, 2014). Moreover, the historical backdrop of slum clearances in Lagos (*Isale-eko*) exemplifies how colonial interpretations of urban environments contributed to the marginalization of local populations, as colonial administrations endeavored to transform urban landscapes without adequately addressing the fundamental residential requirements (Bigon, 2008). Thus, the current expressions of gentrification can be regarded as an extension of colonial practices that

favor certain demographic groups while marginalizing others, thereby sustaining cycles of inequality and exclusion (Alemika, 1993).

Even though gentrification processes have been widely documented particularly in developed cities, it is, nevertheless, one of the understudied urban phenomena especially in developing cities of Africa. Despite this paucity of studies in African context, notwithstanding the colonial experiences of its inhabitants, the continent is not an exception to gentrification processes. In fact, there is a growing interest in gentrification by academics, researchers and policy makers (Sibiya, 2012; Monare et al., 2014; Fitzgerald, 2017). Like in other African countries, few studies on gentrification such as Nwanna (2012), Ezema et al., (2016), among few others were conducted in Lagos state with fewer such as Godswill and Ukachukwu (2018) in other Nigerian cities. The focus of these studies, however, was mostly on the physical characteristics of gentrification with little or no focus on its social historical trajectory and connection with colonialism. This paper, thus, explored the entrenchment of gentrification processes in colonial Lagos and how it spilled-over to post-colonial Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gentrification was first coined by a British urban sociologist, Ruth Glass, in 1964 to explain how central areas of London were undergoing social and structural transformations as low-income residential areas were converted to spaces of the wealthy (Briney, 2010). Thus, it is not out of place to describe London as the birthplace of gentrification scholarship. It is worthy to note that, as a Marxist, Glass analysed class relations and societal conflicts through a materialist interpretation to study the social change taking place in London. Her belief in using sociological research to influence the British government's policies in bringing about social change was evident in her works (Baker, n.d). Glass' investigations into the transformations she noticed were occurring in London Borough of Islington, where a new high class made up of young wealthy professionals was acquiring and rehabilitating the Georgian terraces for residential use, led to the emergence of gentrification as a field of study (Thompson, 2014).

However, this historical account of gentrification in London only reveals when the scholarship of gentrification started but it does not indicate when the process that was later named gentrification by Glass had actually begun as an urban phenomenon. As a matter of fact, researches have indicated numerous instances of gentrification long before the coinage of the term by Glass in 1964. One of the well-documented instances was the destruction of residential areas belonging to low-income people in Central Paris from 1853 and 1870. As far back as then, the low-income residential areas of the central Paris were destroyed by a member of Napoleon III's Court, in person of Baron Haussmann, thereby displacing the residents to make room for the city's now famous tree-lined streets, which display the well-known memorials of the city (Fleites, n.d). In agreement with this view, Gallagher (2014) also argues that elements of gentrification had been noticed and even published some years before Glass. He further states that the process was documented by activist Jane Jacob in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, exposing the insensitive decisions and destructive approaches public authorities adopted in planning modern cities where aesthetics and revitalisation were prioritised over human lives.

Barnsbury in London provides another historical account of gentrification process in the post-World War II era. Barnsbury was reported to have experienced a huge population deficit due to the relocation of wealthy residents to the suburbs of the London Central Business District (CBD) shortly after the World War II (Monare et al., 2014). This flight led to a sharp decline in rental prices and eventually attracted a pool of low-income working class but whose poor maintenance culture led to the decay of the overcrowded houses. This decay was regarded as a factor responsible for the eventual back-to-the city

movement of the young and wealthy professionals in the late 1950s, marking the beginning of gentrification process in the inner city of London (Monare et al., 2014).

Park Slope of the New York City in the U.S. is another site where early forces of gentrification were observed in the dawn of the 20th century due to the suburbanisation of the high-income residents. The deterioration of Park Slope attributed to the flight of the upper class from the area and its subsequent occupation by the low-income households culminated into its official classification as a slum in the 1930s following the great depression. Thus, by early 1970s, gentrification had already set in the Park Slope and was facilitated by the U.S. government's intervention through legislations supporting the 'pioneer gentrifiers' to reinvest in the run-down areas (Rerat et al., 2009). Gentrification processes have since then continued to surge, yielding positive and negative results for the upper class and low-income households respectively.

It has also been argued that the role played by governments through housing legislations such as tax credit is one of the key factors that promoted gentrification processes over the years (Buntin, 2015). These policies are often formulated in the guise of promoting urban renewal projects but they have, over the years, been a source of marginalisation and untoward hardships to the low-income households. The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit was an American law enacted to encourage real estate agents to apply to the government for a tax credit equivalent to 10% of the cost of rehabilitation of the dilapidated structures. Through this programme, the renovation of old industrial structures was not only made possible but also lucrative for developers (The Next City, 2018). Another legislation that historically gave gentrification expression in the U.S. was the Ellis Act 1985 which is a Californian law that permits landlords to force their tenants out of their rented apartments and then either destroy the buildings or rehabilitate them into condominiums. Explicitly, the Act was meant to favour landlords who were tired of the pressure of owning apartment buildings, sell their properties to earn little more profits without fear of being sued by their tenants. However, the Act was criticised for being a major force behind mass evictions in gentrifying San Francisco as developers were buying solely to evict tenants and turn their buildings into condominiums.

Furthermore, in accounting for the social historical forces of gentrification, the New York City State legislators were reported to have passed into law a bill that promotes gentrification in the city. The laws made it possible for landlords to systematically evict their tenants from their houses through gradual increment in the cost of the rent whenever a tenant quits until the rent reaches some limit when the building fails rent-stabilised status (The Next City, 2018). It was argued that this systematic eviction led to loss of over 152,000 rent-stabilised buildings in just a fifteen-year period (The Next City, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on the Weberian Social Action Theory (SAT) and the Marxist Alienation Theory (MAT). The primary focus of Weber's conception of Sociology was on the subjective meanings that human actors attach to their actions in their mutual orientations within specific socio-historical contexts. In Weberian Sociology, therefore, 'action' and 'meaning' constitute the focal points of sociological analysis. More so, action is *social* only when it takes the behaviours of others into account by virtue of the subjective meaning they attached to it and in so doing oriented in its course. This implies that social action can be oriented to the past, present or expected future of one's behaviour. This supposes that gentrification was influenced by actions of the past, present or future. The past actions in this context refer to the various residential and commercial displacements of low-income people carried out by the British colonial authority. The present is a reference to current crop of political actors who succeeded the British colonial masters and followed their footsteps in displacement of low-income individuals and businesses

through some sugar-coated terms such as urban renewal or urban redevelopment. The future refers to the plans of private individuals, corporate entities or public authorities backed by various urban planning/renewal agencies which have direct or indirect bearing on the displacements of low-income households and businesses thereby altering urban social organisation and distorting patterns of social relations among interacting members of the gentrifying communities. Therefore, SAT was interpretively used to probe in-depth understanding of social history of gentrification in Lagos state.

However, the inadequacy of SAT to explain the two objectives of the study led to the triangulation of the theory with MAT. Marxist theoretical orientation begins from the premise that the mode of ownership of means of production tends to stratify human society into two polar antagonistic social classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Inequality and injustice are the major contradictions characterising social relations of production in the capitalist system and they bring about a feeling of what Marx called alienation, that is, estrangement or separation of the workers from the product of their labour. Marx (1844) described alienation as a reality which occurs when one feels they have lost control of their lives. In line with this, subsequent researchers contend that the central idea of alienation is a sense of separation in relation to some other elements in the environment. An object is alienated from another object when it is seen as separate from that other object; one is alienated when they are seen as being separate from things or people that naturally surround them. In essence, therefore, alienation refers to how people see and recognize themselves and their environment (Seeman, 1959).

By application, therefore, the colonial occupation of low-income territories in Lagos created a deep sense of alienation for particularly the indigenous urban poor. They felt alienated because apart from the change brought about by this 'invasion' in the social character of their environment, they deeply felt so estranged from their territory – a territory they believed was their birth right for it was where lived their forefathers. Also, the fact that the gentry were a category of people with whom they shared nothing in common apart from humanity engenders in them a strong feeling of being systematically invaded and displaced by total strangers. This feeling of alienation was the genesis of normlessness in the gentrifying colony of Lagos, hence the few incidences of resistance to the colonial policies by the indigenous natives. As the process of gentrification nosedived into postcolonial Lagos, so also alienation resulting from displacement of low income urban poor by the new local elites continued to grow and culminate into the feelings of dejection, powerlessness, meaninglessness and ultimately a feeling of depression.

METHODOLOGY

The paper adopted a cross sectional and exploratory research. Lagos state, Nigeria was the location of the study. The choice of Lagos was informed by the fact that it has the highest number of gentrifying neighbourhoods with several low-income households and businesses being displaced by more affluent classes thereby bringing about socio-spatial and demographic changes in the affected areas. Also, being a coastal area, Lagos is regarded as the first point of contact with the European voyagers hence its being the first administrative headquarters of Nigeria. However, this coastal location of Lagos poses a threat to its capacity for physical expansion and this makes it more prone to gentrification. The study was retrospective, in that it allowed for documentation of past experiences of gentrifying households and businesses. Thus, qualitative method of social inquiry was used to draw insights on the social reality of gentrification-induced displacements across the selected areas, using Life History (LH), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Observation techniques.

To explore the social historical context of gentrification in Lagos, six (6) LGAs were mapped out and selected as representatives of the entire state. The justification for the selection was due to the observed processes of gentrification in the areas through a pilot study earlier conducted. The selected LGAs include Agege, Alimosho, Oshodi, Eti-Osa, Lagos Mainland and Lagos Island LGAs. The geographical spread of these areas was presented in Fig. 1.1:

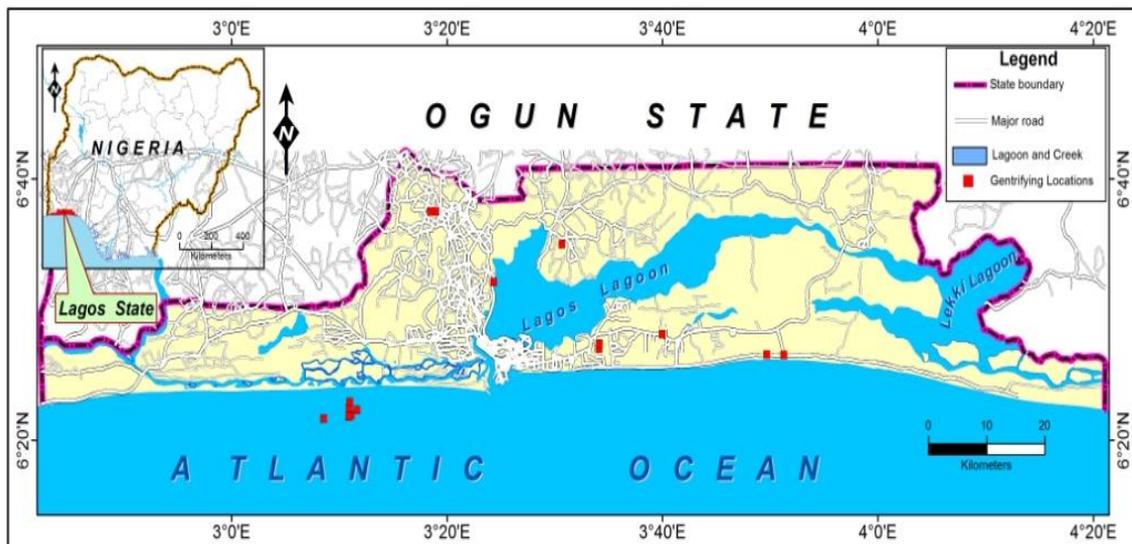


Fig. 1.1: Flow map for gentrifying areas
 Source: Field Survey, 2023.

The target population of the study was long-time residents (gentrifiers) in Agege, Oshodi, Eti-Osa, Lagos Mainland, Lagos Island and Alimosho LGAs. These demographics were chosen because they were directly affected by gentrification as victims and perpetrators respectively. The sample size selection of the study involves a purposive selection of six (6) Life Histories (LH) and six (6) sessions of Focus Group Discussions (FGD).

Table 1.1: Summary of participants and discussants

Participants/discussants	FGD	LH
Religious leaders	3	
Community leaders	3	
Long-time displaced tenants		2
Involuntarily displaced landlords		2
Voluntarily displaced landlords		2

Source: Field Survey (2023).

In terms of the Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) six (6) sessions were organised with religious leaders in the gentrifying areas. The FGDs were made up of 6-12 members in order to ensure robust discussions and fruitful interactions.

Concerning the Life History, six (6) oral historians spread across three categories: two (2) long-time displaced tenants; two (2) involuntarily displaced landlords and two (2)

voluntarily displaced landlords were purposively selected for the interview. These categories were engaged in order to get some social historical backgrounds of the sociocultural forces that shaped the selected gentrifying communities over time. The decision to adopt these techniques of data collection was informed by the desire to obtain rich data from the participants who were not only familiar with the issues under study but also have been affected by it in one way or the other. Thus, as anticipated, their wealth of experience had come to bear on the findings of the study.

With regard to methods of data analysis, thematic analysis was used. Ethnographic summaries and content analysis were adopted. Similarly, participants were informed of the objectives, methods and anticipated benefits of the study and verbal consent was also sought from them.

Findings

Colonialism as a Precursor of Gentrification in Lagos

Prior to colonial occupation of the area called Lagos, it was predominantly occupied by *Awori* people of the Yoruba ethnic group. It was a small fishing community that could not be compared with the neighbouring towns of Oyo and Benin in terms of economic and political powers. However, it subsequently became an outpost of the Benin Empire which was one of the most powerful colonies in the West African region (Olukoju, 2004). The arrival of the Portuguese by the 18th century in Lagos Island brought about tremendous changes in various aspects of life such as trade, social organisation and building designs of its inhabitants. Similarly, a Portuguese explorer called *Rui de Sequeirs* was historically associated with naming the area “Lago de Curamo” in 1472. Thus, Lagos is derived from the Portuguese word which means ‘lakes’, although it was and is still popularly being recognised by the native Yorubas as *Eko*.

The termination of slave trade in Lagos by the British military intervention in 1851, paved way for migration of people – missionaries and freed slaves – into Lagos and further set the ground for British colonisation of Nigeria. In 1861, Lagos was annexed by the British government and this had an implication on the powers of the Oba of Lagos who was hitherto the absolute monarch who wielded absolute power and authority. Thus, the power and authority of the Oba was usurped and conferred on the newly appointed British governor thereby reducing the Oba to a mere puppet of the British administrators. This incident signifies the beginning of gentrification processes through the displacement of the powers and authority of the Oba. Thus, the consequence of the annexation and usurpation of the power and authority of the Lagos paramount traditional ruler was too glaring in alterations of some aspects of indigenous cultural norms, values and traditions as well as a systematic reversal from the originally predefined paths to development of the natives. An elder community leader in An FGD revealed that:

The history of British occupation in Lagos is both negative and positive. This is because the British brought about an end to slavery which was a major problem at that time. However, their imposition of lifestyles and introduction of certain material cultures have debilitated the indigenous ways of life. Is it the political structure, social or economic that was not affected? The powers of the Oba were reduced; many cultural practices interfered with and people’s lifestyles ultimately changed. Thus, our people began to think and behave like the westerners; they eat like them; they dressed like them; and do so many things in line with the ways of the Europeans FGD/**Community Leader/Male/87/Yoruba/Agege/2020**).

Therefore, the history of dramatic physical changes in Lagos urban landscape can be traced to the era of British occupation. Prior to this occupation, the aborigines of Lagos

had their own edifices designed largely in accordance with their lifestyles, beliefs and cultural practices based on their indigenous architectural skills and experiences. However, in the course of the occupation, the British colonial administrators implanted their socio-political and architectural apparatuses which influenced the centuries-old, indigenous patterns of social and physical organisation. These physical changes were manifested in the British desire to construct roads, bridges, and infrastructure and widen streets, hence the promulgation of the Ordinance No. 17 of 1863 which empowered the Governor to demolish low income houses or any structure that could hinder street construction/widening. However, with the formulation of Public Land Acquisition Act 1917, due compensation was made compulsory on the government for any form of expropriation (Olukoju, 2004). This implies that the colonial administrators had designed the colony of Lagos to suit their expectations and aspirations in line with the British socio-political and architectural designs. In an FGD, an elder community leader shared his experiences under colonial rule that:

When the White men came they changed so many things about social organisation in the land. They did not only destroy our traditional political structure but they also made sure that the physical environment was equally altered to suit their preferences and life styles. For instance, a number of people lost their houses; some lost their lands to the British projects such as construction of roads and administrative building structures. At the end of the day the victims in all these were the native residents who lost to the White men without being compensated **(FGD/Community leader/Male/81/Yoruba/Lagos Island/2020)**.

It can be inferred from the excerpt that as far back as the colonial time, displacement of low income urban households and businesses was implicative in the processes of production and reproduction of urban space.

Thus, in as much as colonialism is largely regarded as a necessary evil because it halted slave trade in Nigeria, yet it equally brought about some degree of social and physical displacements. Gentrification was thus traced to the displacements of poor local indigenous inhabitants of Lagos colony through British occupation of Lagos. This entails gentrification of the social, political and economic structures of the colony. For instance, in terms of political structure, the reduction of the powers of the Oba, who was prior to British occupation the overall symbol of authority, to a mere puppet of the British administrators was an instance of gentrification as the powers and authority of the Oba were usurped by superior British powers and authority.

Prior to the British occupation, the Oba wielded so much influence across the land. The traditional authority was the symbol of power and it was a legitimate one as people obeyed the monarch and observe all the customs and traditions of the land. The British actually displaced our traditional leaders by usurping their powers and placing them under the control of their subjects occupying administrative positions under the British colonial administration. This was the beginning of disrespecting the traditional authorities and the trend continued up till independence when their local successors took over power and maintained the status quo set by the British authorities **(FGD/Religious Leader/Male/90/Yoruba/Lagos Mainland/2020)**.

Similarly, in terms of the economic structure of colonial Lagos, it was gentrified by the British with the introduction of cash crops as indigenous farmers were lured into producing large quantity of crops that the British needed to feed their industries. This was done at the detriment of conventional staples grown by the indigenous farmers thereby displacing the traditional form or type of staples grown in the country. Even though there were no

large farms or farmers in Lagos relative to other parts of Nigeria, the population of the city was supported by the food grown from the hinterlands. An old long time displaced tenant had this to say in an LH:

People actually were induced to engage in the production of cash crops to meet the economic needs of the British colonialists of feeding their industries. The impact of this was not immediately felt at that time but the traces of the damage it did in the mentality of an average Nigerian farmer could still be seen or felt (**LH/Long time displaced tenant/Male/90/Yoruba/Lagos Mainland/2020**).

From this excerpt, it can be inferred that the colonial policy that encouraged growing cash crops had far reaching implications especially on the urban poor residents in Lagos. This is because it shifted attention from production for consumption to farming to export which by implications reduced the quantity of crops grown for local consumption.

Gentrification incidents in colonial Lagos

One of the earliest incidents of gentrification-induced displacements manifested in demolitions of low income residential and commercial settlements during the colonial epoch which occurred in the 1920s in response to the outbreak of bubonic plague. The demolition was carried out by the Lagos Executive Development Board (LEDB) in the guise of 'slum clearance'. This was succeeded by the 1955 slum clearances where over 20,000 low income dwellers were forcefully evicted in order to create a central business district in Lagos Island. By 1957, the pre-independence demolition which resulted in the celebrated *Isale-Eko* slum clearance was carried out by the LEDB with the view of creating a pleasing view for the visiting Queen of England.

It should be noted that while the colonialists were in charge of administration of the country at the time of these urban displacements, they were, nevertheless, carried out in conjunction with the locals who served as their instruments. Thus, the history of Lagos city was characterised by series of demolitions both during and after British colonial occupation. What qualify such demolitions as gentrification were their underlying motives. While the pre-independence cases of demolitions were carried out to create conducive environments for the colonial masters, the post-independence demolitions were done to serve the interests of the ruling elites who took over from their European masters.

Gentrification in Post-Colonial Lagos

At independence, the colonial urban policies which relate to social relations between government and the governed did not significantly change. For instance, the policy of colonial segregation was simply replaced with class segregation where the political elite assumed the position of ex-colonial masters. Consequently, the areas which had huge presence of government were jealously protected so as to ensure maintenance of status quo through suppression of the urban poor. Thus, marginalization, segregation and the eventual displacements of the urban poor did not get any better after independence. In fact, many participants believed that it only got messier. A participant had this to say:

The story of Lagos to me is all about evictions of urban poor from either their residences or markets. Almost every government has demolitions of structures belonging to urban poor on its agenda. Since 70s, during military regimes there has been one form of urban displacements or the other. Thousands of people have been rendered homeless or jobless due to government demolitions. One would think when the military junta left the stage the situation would improve but it only gets worst by the day. The Maroko demolitions which rendered over 300,000 people homeless and jobless is still fresh in our minds because that marked the downfall of most,

if not all, of the displaced persons. And it is the main reason why slums will never cease to be in Lagos. You cannot evict someone without any proper resettlement arrangement and expect things to get better. Where do you expect them to move to? They have no options but to populate other areas that are already slums or even create new ones. Yet, the government will be complaining and justifying their actions for the rising insecurity or contamination of the environment (**LH/Long-time involuntarily displaced landlord/Male/78/Yoruba/Eti-Osa/2020**).

While this account shows a preponderance of incidents of gentrification, it equally points to issues surrounding the persistence of slums proliferation in Lagos. Also, the excerpt points out the reason for the growing rate of insecurity in the city. In similar vein a participant in an LH stated that:

Most of the criminal activities carried out in Lagos are perpetrated by criminal syndicates resident in various slums across the state. Cases of kidnapping, rape, armed robbery and petty theft among others are common features of slums in Lagos city. What do you expect from an economically and socially displaced people who are left without any support from any quarters? Yet, they have families and dependants to cater for. So, the only survival way is to engage in criminality (**LH/Voluntarily displaced landlord/Male/85/Yoruba/Alimosho/2020**).

This further implies that the phenomenon of gentrification has been an age-long urban social problem which predated the coinage of the term itself.

Furthermore, the relocation of the capital of Nigeria to Abuja in 1991 by the then military Head of State did not change the political, economic and social relevance of Lagos. As the commercial nerve centre of Nigeria, Lagos is also officially known as the nation's centre of excellence. The favourable climatic condition of the city due to its coastal advantage and commercial potentials makes it a destination for both local and international migrants. These among other factors account for its current position as the second largest mega city in Africa; and also a reason why it experiences gentrification at a degree higher than most African cities. An older Lagosian adult, in a Life History, opined that:

Lagos is the only Nigerian city with so many potentials. It is a coastal area; and this makes it more attractive to foreigners. Not only foreigners but people from within the country migrate in large number to Lagos in order to take advantage of its rich potentials as far back as during colonial era. However, this influx of migrants into Lagos has over the years posed serious challenges to the city because as a coastal area Lagos cannot expand beyond its limits. As a result, government and the people have to utilize the limited space and this often results into confrontations and agitations due to displacement and its associated consequences (**LH/Voluntarily displaced landlord/Male/78/Yoruba/Lagos Island/2020**).

Implicitly, this excerpt points to the fact that gentrification-induced displacements have found expression in the struggle for limited space and the desire of the policy makers of public officials to transform the city into a mega city by uprooting any structure or sight considered to be an eyesore.

At this point a timeline of series of gentrification-induced displacements of low-income households and businesses would provide some historical sense of the phenomenon under study.



S/N	Location	Date	Victims	Reason	Agent	Resettlement/compensation
1	Agege motor road	Aug. 1973	500	Road construction	Federal govt.	N.A
2	Adeniji Adele street	Oct. 1975	5,000	Urban renovation	State govt.	No compensation
3	Oba Akran, Ikeja	Apr. 1976	N.A	Road construction	State govt	No compensation
4	Central Lagos	Sept. 1976	10,000	Urban renovation	Federal govt.	Resettled
5	Apogbon, Lagos	Nov. 1976	N.A	Road construction	State govt.	Not resettled
6	Ketu, Lagos	1976	10,000	City clean up	State govt.	Not resettled
7	Iponri, Lagos	Dec. 1976	5,000	Urban development	LSDPC Lagos	No alternative site
8	Alaba market	Aug. 1977	20,000	Illegal occupation	State govt.	No compensation
9	Shasha village, Lagos	Jun. 1979	5000	Illegal occupation	N.A	N.A
10	Onilekere, Lagos	Jun. 1979	N.A	Land dispute	Owner/Authorities	No resettlement
11	Oworonshoki, Lagos	Apr. 1980	10,000	Urban development	State govt	N.A
12	Shomolu/Bariga, Lagos	Jan. 1981	N.A	Channelization programme	State govt.	N.A
13	Maroko, Lagos	1982	N.A	Road construction	State govt.	N.A
14	Maroko, Lagos	1983	60,000	Setback for lagoon	State govt.	No compensation
15	Agboju/Amuwo Osofin	Dec. 1984	N.A	Illegal occupation	State govt.	N.A
16	Ebute-Meta, Lagos	Jul. 1985	10,000	Illegal occupation	State govt.	No compensation
17	Along Badagry express	Aug. 1985	N.A	Illegal occupation; structures under NEPA high extension cable	State govt.	No resettlement
18	Iponri, Lagos	Sep. 1985	5,000	Urban renewal	State govt.	Only 1,000 resettled
19	Shomolu, Lagos	Mar. 1986	10,000	Urban beautification	State govt.	N.A
20	Igbo-Erin, Lagos	Aug. 1986	N.A	Illegal occupation	State govt.	N.A
21	Oworoshoki, Lagos	Feb. 1988	3,000	Bridge construction	Federal govt.	No alternative site
22	Maroko, Lagos	Jul. 1990	300,000	Illegal occupation	State/fed. govt.	No compensation
23	Central Lagos	Nov. 1990	N.A	Urban sanitation	State govt	No compensation
24	Mushin, Lagos	Mar. 1991	N.A	Illegal occupation	State govt.	No compensation
25	Abom village, Lagos	May 1994	N.A	N.A	Federal govt.	N.A
26	Bamisore, Lagos Island	Feb. 1995	N.A	Illegal occupation	State govt.	No compensation
27	Badia East, Lagos	1997	2,000	Drainage and sanitation project	State govt.	No compensation
28	Badia East, Lagos	2003	N.A	Urban project	Lagos State Environmental	Stopped the process due to protest by the residents



					and Special Offences Enforcement Unit	
29	Badia East, Lagos	2012	300	Construction of a canal	State govt.	A resettlement was paid to 124
30	Badia East, Lagos	2013&2015	19,200	Urban development	State govt.	No compensation
31	Ilubirin, Lagos	Mar. 2016	823	Modern luxury residential and commercial apartments	State govt.	No compensation
32	Otodo Gbame, Lagos	2016&2017	30,000	Security factor	State govt.	No compensation

Source: Adapted from Agbola & Jinadu (1997) and updated by the author (2020).

A cursory examination of the timeline in table 2 shows a consistent pattern in demolitions and displacements of low-income urban dwellers by public authorities - a pattern and legacy inherited from colonial administrators. This also goes further to reveal a causal link between governmental demolitions and slums generation in Lagos as the displacement of one slum invariably leads to the emergence of another, thus, creating a cyclic movement of slum dwellers. This failure to holistically address the problem of urban poverty in an equitable is the aftermath of successive governments to take holistic approach on the phenomenon of urban poverty. Similarly, the timeline indicates that irrespective of the number of times the government forcefully evicted the poor, they had always resurfaced either by moving into other existing slums as in the case of evicted Maroko residents or they would disappear a while and re-emerge in the same place as in the case of Badia East and Ilubirin poor communities. These demolitions are clear instances of residential displacements of low income people even though for some displaced persons, their residences were quite inseparable with their businesses, particularly the fishing communities.

Discussion of findings

Gentrification-induced displacement was traced to Lagos colony in Nigeria. Some of the earliest manifestations of gentrification were observed in the 1920s in central Lagos. These incidents were characterised by varying degrees of demolitions of low-income residences and market places. Thus, the British colonial authority was found to be the major driver of gentrification, and this was made possible through their colonial policy of segregation. This finding neither supports nor contradicts previous studies as there were little or no empirical gentrification studies on colonial Lagos. This may not be unconnected to the fact that the coinage of the term gentrification by Ruth Glass in 1964 was relatively recent. Hence the phenomenon only attracts the attention of academics or researchers a couple of decades ago. However, this study confirms that the urban processes known today as gentrification had actually predated its coinage by Glass in 1964. This finding is in tandem with a previous study by Fleites (n.d) who maintained that the destruction of low-income residential areas to make room for the famous tree-lined streets in central Paris by Baron Haussmann, a member of Napoleon III's Court, as far back as 1853 and 1870, was an instance of gentrification. Similarly, early historical accounts of gentrification were documented by activist Jane Jacob in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* where she exposed the insensitive decisions and destructive approaches adopted by government in beautifying urban areas at the expense of human lives (Gallagher, 2014).

The study also found that the current gentrification processes being experienced in Lagos megacity have historical roots and that it was an off-shoot of colonial experience of slum clearance. This was evident in the clearing up of the *Isale Eko* areas – areas inhabited largely by the urban poor – in the late 1950s by the colonial government in order to create a pleasing view for the visiting British Queen as preparatory to Nigeria's independence celebrations. Consequently, upon independence successive political leaders beginning from the first republic leaders who took over from the colonial government have always targeted rundown areas heavily populated by urban poor for demolitions. The biggest underlying motive behind these displacements has always been the governments' desire to beautify the city and make life more comfortable for the upper class city residents. This is evident in a number of slum locations where the inhabitants were forcefully evicted to make way for wealthy individuals or corporate entities. Theoretically, the paper established that the social history of gentrification in Lagos is traced to colonialism and can be bifurcated into colonial and postcolonial phases. Both phases have similar features as they were characterised by conscious attempt to create elitist residential and administrative areas through demolition of low-income residential and business structures. These actions were considered rational purposeful by the colonialists and the postcolonial political elites

due to their expediency in achieving the desired goals of development. However, just as the rational actions of the colonial authorities favoured the colonial elites at the detriment of the urban poor, so also the purposeful actions of the successive political elites in Nigeria have over the years subjected the urban poor to alienation thereby creating in them a strong feeling of dejection, powerlessness and meaninglessness thus culminating into depression. Therefore, the history of gentrification in Lagos cannot be complete without tracing its ancestral root to colonial subjugation.

Conclusion and policy recommendations

Colonialism and gentrification in Nigeria are interconnected and date back to colonial era. Gentrification manifested through processes of spatial reorganization, social displacement, and economic inequality. While colonialism imposed top-down control over land, resources, and populations, gentrification represents a contemporary form of this power dynamic within urban milieu. Both processes have privileged elites, whether colonial rulers or high-income modern investors, while marginalizing indigenous and low-income populations. Thus, gentrification had manifested in different forms including displacement of low-income residential and commercial occupants in central Lagos. The process continued to grow even after independence as the Nigerian political leaders took over from the colonial masters. The paper establishes that gentrification is a progeny of colonialism because the earliest traces of gentrification were traced to the British colonial urban policies. The post-independence processes of gentrification were merely a continuation of elitist urban design that is largely anti poor. This accounts for, not only the ever-widening gap of inequality between the urban elites and their poor counterparts, but also an increasing aggressive tendencies in the poor due to the alienating effects they suffer from gentrification. More so, for every single benefit of gentrification, there are several social costs associated with it which are often borne by the urban poor. The gentrification of Lagos can thus be seen as a continuation of colonial patterns of exploitation and exclusion, reshaping urban landscapes in ways that perpetuate socioeconomic disparities, spatial inequality and environmental injustice.

The study, therefore, recommends the need for an inclusive urban policy that will take into account various interests irrespective of their socioeconomic statuses. Lagos state government needs to re-assess its 'disguised' urban renewal policies which target locations inhabited by vulnerable poor residents such as the waterfront communities. This is because the policies undermine the principles of sustainable city and environmental justice as they seek to erode the fabric of informal settlements which are the abode for the vulnerable poor majority.

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