Forceful Eviction and Non-Inclusive Gentrification: The Post-Occupational Assessment of Maroko Area, Lagos, Nigeria

Iweka A. C. O
Department of Architecture, University of Lagos, Lagos
aiweka@unilag.edu.ng; tonyiweka@gmail.com

The option of induced eviction, dislocation or displacement of lower-income residents of decrepit inner-city neighbourhoods in order to achieve physical and socio-economic transformation oftentimes yields varied implications for the stakeholders. This study is about Maroko, a sprawling working-class settlement in highbrow area of Lagos where gentrification tactics of total eviction was deployed to exclude long-term residents from benefiting from the redevelopment initiatives. The aim was to evaluate the magnitude and impact of Maroko's forced eviction and associated gentrification on the near-environment and community demographics. Specifically, the research focuses on a sequential evaluation of the magnitude of specific existential situations before and after the eviction. A case study of Maroko that relied on retrospective and succession principles was used to collect data from observation, interviews, archival and historical secondary sources. The analysis was mainly through comparisons of past trends before eviction and current conditions after the eviction. Data were distilled and analysed based on three thematic areas of buildings, demographics, and social-mix. A major finding indicates that though the objective of physical upgrading was achieved, the total obliteration of erstwhile residents created a non-inclusive demographic stratum that did not encourage social mixing and relationship building in the day-to-day activities.

Keywords: Displacement; eviction; gentrification; higher-income; lower-income; Maroko

INTRODUCTION
The phenomenon of forceful eviction has attracted global attention over the years in both developing and developed nations. Dobson (2017), Munoz (2018) and Popoola et al. (2020) linked the occurrence to complexities surrounding urbanization, housing pressure issues and migration. Popoola et al. (2020) further averred that informal and vulnerable neighbourhoods are the most affected, leaving the urban poor households to experience increased existential difficulties. According to Amnesty International (2006), forced eviction has occurred in Lagos in ten locations among which are Ijora-Badiya, Makoko and Maroko. The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC, 2020) further identified Ilasan, Otodo Gbame and Agoegun in Bariga as victims. Most studies on eviction approach it from the perspectives of human rights, social equity and justice, and right to the city (Isokpan and Durojaiye, 2018; Lawanson, Odekunle and Albert, 2019; UNHRC, 2020).

The current research aims at evaluating the magnitude and impact of Maroko's forced eviction and associated gentrification from the near-environment and community demographics perspectives. The research output is expected to add to existing knowledge about the timeline exposition of experiences that occurred before-and-after the total eviction of Maroko neighbourhood

residents in July 1990. It will also be useful for urban policies and management towards regenerating human settlements that are liveable, equitable and inclusive.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Eviction and Gentrification

Scholars like Isokpan and Durojaiye (2018) acknowledge that even though forced eviction is seen as a violation of human rights, it can also pave way for development projects, urban renewal and city beautification. This view is corroborated by Lawanson, Odekunle and Albert (2019) who, while considering the circumstances surrounding the evictions that took place in Maroko, stressed that urban development most times manifests in gentrification.

Although there is widespread intuitive view that gentrification is the rehabilitation of decayed and impoverished low-income urban neighbourhoods, the modus operandi is different across districts and locations. Ernst and Doucet (2014) see gentrification as a big force that affects contemporary urban neighbourhoods. Typical concerns regarding gentrification revolve around the eviction, dislocation, or displacement of the economically less endowed residents from the areas and communities that had harboured them for a significant duration of their lifespan (Brown, 2014). According to Atkinson and Wulff (2009), this process involves the in-migration of higher-income group who are socio-economically well-off to poorer urban neighbourhoods or communities with the expectation that their investments can yield higher returns. Therefore, when a neighbourhood is gentrified, it experiences visible increase in social status, higher incomes, education and employment of the new residents.

Many professionals and scholars acknowledge that gentrification, revitalization or transformation can be interpreted as distinct urban phenomena. However, some researchers like Brown (2014) and Loukaitau-Sideris et al. (2017) assert that the difference between them is rather blurry. This is probably why some other researchers contend that gentrification is an "open concept" and "quasi synonymous with urban regeneration and neighbourhood upgrading (Lagendijk et al., 2014; Maloutas, 2012; Kooij et al., 2012). Cohen and Pettit (2019) argue that multiple meanings can be ascribed to terms like gentrification, displacement and neighbourhood change and that they do not necessarily follow any standard definition.

From the perspective of gentrification, Brown (2014) contends that involuntary relocation is an experience whereby a community's long-term residents who have lived through the worst periods of a neighbourhood are potentially forced out before the arrival of new infrastructure and amenities. In this sense, forced urban eviction that results in physical involuntary displacement of original residents as was the case in Maroko can play out in the public eye as gentrification.

Maroko in Lagos, Nigeria was generally regarded as one of the urban slums that were characterized by large population of the urban poor and non-existent infrastructural services. Residents of Maroko were forced to leave their homes and communities to begin afresh in faraway locations, thereby suffering complete exclusion from the potential benefits of the new investment.

The characteristics of the resident population prior to gentrification and at the peak of gentrification can be described as two opposite extremes. Succinctly put in the present context, gentrification depicts a new spatial order for urban neighbourhoods that replaces the less-affluent occupants with a more-affluent class of residents, resulting in a complete change in the whole social character of the district (Cohen & Pettit, 2019)

This characteristics fits the situation in Maroko settlement (now transformed into Oniru Estate) in Lagos. Maroko was a densely populated low-income area with a mixture of people in both the formal and informal sectors who were employed in formal bureaucratic organizations as

domestic staff to bourgeoisie in the adjoining high-income areas of Ikoyi and Victoria Island. The close proximity of Maroko to Ikoyi and Victoria Island made the settlement very attractive for high-scale gentrification. Deobhakta (2015) identifies three patterns that displacements usually follow: (i) Direct or forcible or involuntary displacement through eviction; (ii) indirect displacement through rent increases; (iii) exclusionary displacement through skyrocketing of property prices to make them unaffordable to low-income households. In the gentrification of Maroko, the forced-eviction model of displacement was employed by the ruling elites through the assistance of the military government of the day.

This has led to unwelcome upward transformation of the area and significant shift in the status of later occupants. However, the role played by government has raised a major question that focuses on empirical proxy indicators that illustrate the situations in Maroko before and after the forceful eviction.

Gentrification Phenomenon and Pressure

Gentrification is seen as a worldwide phenomenon that has attracted the attention of researchers since 1964. Kennedy and Leonard (2001) highlight three crucial conditions that precedes gentrification. These are: (a) displacement of the original residents who *ipso facto* belong to the low-income group (b) physical transformation and upgrading of the housing stock in the area, and, (c) change in the socio-economic and demographic character of the neighborhood.

Prior to the late 1970s, gentrification had an interpretation that was restricted to the rehabilitation of decaying low-income districts by higher-income class (Minkyu 2018). British Sociologist Glass (1964) coined the term gentrification to represent a process where the middle and upper classes invaded the working class neighborhoods of East London, in such a manner that the original residents were displaced. Minkyu (2018) acknowledges that the study by Glass provided researchers with a fundamental concept of gentrification that has a specific sequence: Upper and middle income groups move into low-income housing units, prompting the displacement of the low-income groups.

Minkyu (2018) further noted that the emphasis of the gentrification concept enunciated by Glass was characterized by an intricate process of physical upliftment of the neighborhood housing stock, tenure change from renter to owner and price increases. A well-acknowledged gentrification theory called consumption-based theory is claimed to have emanated from the conceptual order of Glass's gentrification.
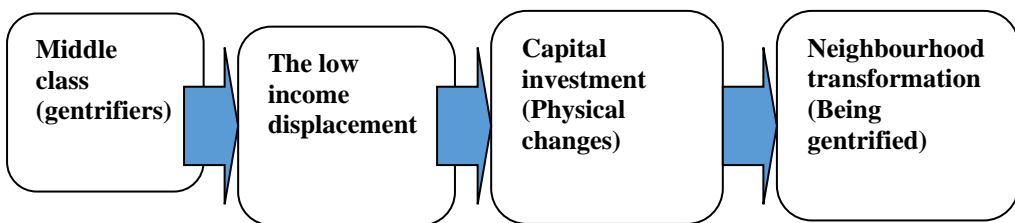
Figure 1: Gentrification process of consumption-based approach. Source: Minkyu

The basic argument of the consumption-based theory is that gentrifiers are the driving forces that induce low-income group displacement, and that this paves the way for real estate businesses to thrive in the form of capital investment (See Figure 1). US Department of Housing and Urban Development (2018) reports that those who are displaced face terrible outcomes, and that path-ways of those who moved are difficult to trace.

In the case of Maroko, the gentrification heightened the affordability crisis and left the poor inhabitants without credible alternatives to adequate accommodation. It is highly probable that the displaced households could be faced with disruptions of social and relational cohesion. They may also be exposed to overcrowding which can adversely affect the health and safety of households.

Neighbourhood Transformation and Displacements

The nuance of displacement has been affirmed by some earlier researchers as an essential indicator of gentrification process that contributes to the upgrading and transformation of socioeconomic status of affected neighbourhoods (Clark 2005; Lees 2008; Minkyu 2018). The dynamics surrounding displacements and population shifts in gentrified neighbourhoods is considered to be a problem that sometimes sparks up political wrangling.

Ponder (2016), for example, stresses that lack of proper consideration of those being dislocated is regarded as inhumane and a violation of their right to housing. This is a worrisome social and urban crisis in the case of Maroko area, where gentrification has been described as a local phenomenon with unique neighbourhood nuances. It did not follow a gradual and admixture of in-migration and out-migration, rather, forceful eviction approach that displaced all low-income residents by fiat was witnessed.

Social Effects and Consequences

Atkinson *et al*. (2011) draw attention to certain outcomes that could emanate from displacements occasioned by gentrification. Among these are: (a) loss of housing options particularly for the vulnerable members of the community (b) loss of demographic and social mix that are associated with tenure and diversity (c) downcast psychological effects especially on the health and support networks of those who are compelled to make involuntary housing choices as a result of displacements (d) spatial dissonance resulting to loss of work opportunities for displaced persons that found themselves located further away from their initial locus of operation (e) decline in economic growth and businesses due to relocation strain.

METHODOLOGY

Essentially, this is a case study research that compares the situation in former Maroko, before and after eviction. In other words, it can be described as a before-and-after study of eviction and gentrification phenomena in Maroko, to establish the magnitude and impact of specific aspects like housing and shifts in demography. Since this is an evaluation research, retrospective principles were largely adopted in collecting information from secondary sources on the socio-demographic and housing issues that happened in the past.

Therefore, the study relied primarily on literature review, photographs, blogs, and video footages to understand the broader archival historical contents pertaining to demographic and housing data over a period in time. Archives of Google Maps helped to draw information about changes over time in the social and physical aspects of Maroko neighbourhood.

Typically, the study used a combination of stroll-by surveillance, direct observations, interviews, and built-environment analysis to contextualize useful heterogeneous range of circumstances that were related to eviction and gentrification in Maroko (now Oniru Estate). Former residents were dispersed, so it was difficult to gather them for any focused interview. The first set of victims of forced eviction to be interviewed were contacted

through the assistance of a human rights group. This first contact was used as a springboard to link up with other fellow victims that were interviewed. For ethical reasons and need to protect the identity of those interviewed a condition of anonymity was maintained in reporting this study.

It has been argued that measurement of gentrification is debatable and that one method of assessment will not be sufficient for different dimensions of gentrification process (Firth *et al*., 2021; Freeman 2005). However, many gentrification studies have focused on analysing neighbourhood demographic changes or variables as the most comprehensive and comparable source of data. Following this line of thought, this study adopts Maroko neighbourhood as the basic unit of analysis in the form of a case study. This is consistent with earlier studies that focused on qualitative and quantitative analyses of specific neighbourhoods and specific contexts. In some countries, census data from census tracts were used as proxies for neighbourhoods.
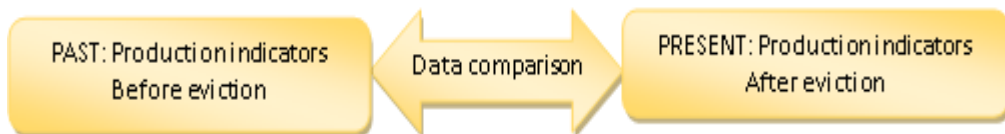
Figure 2: General comparison method

The conditions in Maroko before and after eviction were grouped thematically and further subjected to situation analyses in order to obtain the variances over time. Data were first broken down into discrete parts and grouped thematically. Eventually, these themes brought out categories under which the emerging data were clustered. The data extracted were then synthesized and pulled together before being closely examined further and compared.

An approach adopted here was to track relevant indicators of the magnitude of neighbourhood change over the time span under reference (Figure 2). Indicators deployed in measuring neighbourhood change include income, housing values, physical and socio-demographic variables that affected the essential character and flavour 0f Maroko settlement over time (Atkinson et al. 2011; Minkyu 2018. The descriptive case study approach permits an in-depth analysis of episodes of nuances and sequences of happenings in Maroko. It can also be called observational case study and is applied to utilize both quantitative and qualitative data gathering methods.

The present study deals with the experience of eviction and gentrification in Maroko, focusing on key demographic indicators. Data for this study include narrative records of observations that captured housing and demographic aspects of the neighbourhood transformations that took place as a result of these phenomena. Photographs provided clarity and further insight into the intensity of gentrification in the study area. Content analysis of archival materials and audio tape of evictees' 25th year anniversary available online, revealed some latent historical facts before and after eviction.

The Study Area

Located in Eti-Osa local Government Area of Lagos State, Maroko emerged sporadically as a slum impoverished settlement (Figures 3a and 3b). The place later grew to be known as one of the major slums in Lagos at the time it existed. In terms of adjacency, Maroko was located very close to the opulent residential and commercial districts of Victoria Island and Ikoyi. One of the attractions of Maroko is that it provided easy access to Victoria Island and Ikoyi where majority of its residents were employed, either as domestic staff to bureaucrats or in formal organizations.

Figure 3a: Map showing the five geographical divisions of Lagos. Source: https://www.lagosat50.org.ng/history/history-of-lagos
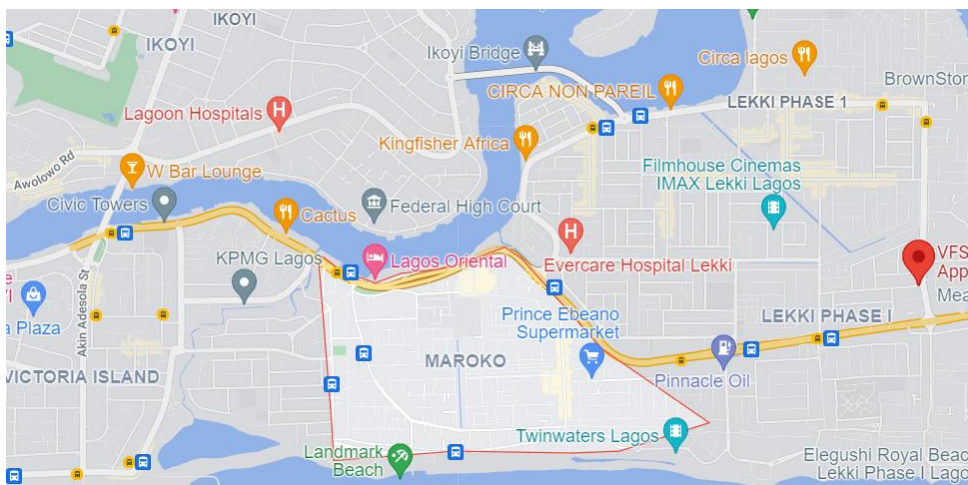
Figure 3b: Maroko location in Lagos, showing proximity to Victoria Island and Ikoyi. Source: Author's modified Google Map data

The area occupied by Maroko was said to be just 1.50 Metres above sea level, hence liable to flooding with high likelihood of being completely submerged. Moreover, the government raised alarm that the total environment was filthy and hazardous, with high public health risks of disease epidemics. Furthermore, the government claimed that Maroko was government land that was acquired since 1972 and that all inhabitants were squatters. All these factors provided a justifiable argument for the government to embark on total clearance of Maroko in "over-riding public interest" (Roberts & Okanya 2018). The last phase of the demolition took place on Saturday July 14, 1990.

This action made many citizens to harbour the impression that government played a powerful role in aiding the gentrification process in Maroko. The resultant displacement of the inhabitants who were low-income and vulnerable was not optional. Rather, it was a forced eviction that saw the exodus of an estimated population of 300,000 persons to diverse locations. The displacement action triggered a lot of changes and experiences of varying intensity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The evidence from the research revealed three main categories or areas of emphasis (i) characteristics of buildings and infrastructure (ii) demographics and class status characteristics (iii) social mix and social interactive characteristics.

Characteristics of Buildings and Infrastructure

This was based on scoping literature review. Maroko largely consisted of buildings erected with non-resilient materials like weak block walls, plastic sheets, tin sheets, cardboards or make shift timber structures. They were hence susceptible to damage by storm or rains and fire. From the historical accounts by Kehinde (2003), the settlement was interspersed with few brick buildings owned by some well-to-do landlords many of whom resided outside Maroko.

There was absence of statutory developmental control. The neighbourhood faced some risks associated with crowding and public health concerns. The physical quality of the dwellings made them less attractive and less expensive for the predominantly low-income in-migrants to this fast-growing lower-quality settlement. Infrastructural amenities were completely lacking (Figure 4). These included pipe-borne water, electric power supply, roads, drainage and sewage. Instead, residents resorted to self-help. Open-field defecation,

use of bucket toilets and burning and burying of waste were the options adopted.

The roads were more like winding paths enmeshed with pools of stagnant dirty fluids and waste dumps. These provided escape routes for criminals as they were not easily accessible to security agencies.

Faced with these challenges, the government spontaneously evicted the residents and bulldozed the entire neighborhood under the guise of urban renewal, neighbourhood upgrading and transformation, for improved quality of life. The land space was 11,425 Hectares.

Households were not given the option to add, alter, extend, remodel or modify their original buildings or immediate environment to satisfy a new need. Instead, the displacement was total and comprehensive, with far-reaching implications. For example, Agbola and Jinadu (1997) state that about 41,776 landlords were displaced from Maroko. Of this number, only 2,933 were said to be qualified for relocation by the government of the day. Similarly, the report by the Amnesty International (2006) contends that about 2,000 house-owners were resettled, out of over 10,000. Although there were disparities in the actual number of landlords, there seems to be some agreement that those identified for resettlement stood between 2,000 and 3,000 landlords.

Figure 4: buildings and infrastructure before eviction.   Source SERAC

The interviews with some evictees confirmed that they were displaced to state-owned low-cost housing estates located far away at Ikota and Ilasan. Some were compelled to relocate to private

neighbourhoods at Aja and Maroko-Beach in Eti-Osa Local Government Area, while others moved to private neighbourhoods at Okokmaiko in Ojo Local Government Area (Agbola and Jinadu, 2006). Consistent with

findings by Agbola and Jinadu (1997), relocating was considered by the evictees to be expensive, both financially and emotionally. Accommodation and transport were cheaper in Maroko. Similarly, business climate and cost of living were far better.

As for the land, some parts of the land were relinquished to the Oniru and Elegushi

Chieftaincy families of Lagos, while the government sold out the rest. Today, Maroko has been transformed into Oniru Private Housing Estate following the victory of Oniru Family over Elegushi Family in an earlier lawsuit.

Figure 5: Residential provisions in former Maroko after eviction

This estate has no trace or record of the presence of any of the previous landlords displaced from Maroko. As it stands presently, Oniru Private Housing Estate is one of the top luxury estates in Lagos Megacity (Figure 5). In sharp contrast to Maroko which was a low-income settlement, Oniru Private Housing Estate is purely for the upper echelon of the society in terms of .

financial buoyancy. As shown in Figures 5 and 6, the estate is a well-planned residential neighbourhood with essentially three categories of housing types viz: terrace houses, fully detached houses and semi-detached houses. Unlike what obtained in the old Maroko, the new area is served with electricity, good roads, drainages, waste, sewage disposal systems and other amenities

Figure 6: Roads and other infrastructure in former Maroko, after eviction

Demographics and Class Status Characteristics
Maroko was a densely populated settlement of about 300,000 inhabitants inhabiting a space of 11,425 hectares adjacent to low-density areas of Victoria Island and Ikoyi (Amnesty International, 2006). A large percentage of the people who resided in Maroko were in the age bracket of 30-49 years. They can therefore be classified as middle-aged. The interview reports of former residents revealed that they were mostly fishermen, semi-skilled self-employed men such as motor mechanics and technicians.

Majority of the women were either full-time house wives or traders, or both. The Yorubas were the dominant ethnic group, comprising of migrants from Ibadan, Ondo, Ilado and Egba. There were also people from Igbo extraction, Togo and Ghana.

After eviction and transformation, the population reduced, though there is no official estimate of the number of inhabitants till date. The age range of Oniru Private housing estate residents still depicts a young and middle-age cluster.

When inquiries were made about household structure and family types, the residents of Oniru Private Housing Estate revealed that they were predominantly nuclear families of 4-6 members. This contrasted sharply with the structure in the old Maroko which had large families in polygamous settings dominated by semi-skilled, unskilled and petty traders, the Oniru private housing estate harbours highly educated executives, senior bureaucrats and upwardly mobile executives.

Social Mix and Social Interactive Characteristics
The eviction (displacement) put a great threat on the social cohesion and inclusiveness of original Maroko residents. There was brutal social transformation because the current inhabitants of the space are completely new strangers without any level of interactions what so ever with the previous residents.

The main question hanging over the issue of displacement intensity was revealed from three areas (i) characteristics of buildings

Prior to eviction, Maroko residents heavily relied on "place-based platforms" for support and advancement. The social fabric provided opportunities for social-mixing in the day-to-day activities. However, displacement of the residents occasioned by the State led forceful eviction not only resulted in loss of "place" but equally translated to total decimation of the social structure built over the years. An otherwise inclusive Maroko community suffered substantial social gap in the face of disintegrative forces that did not promote relationship building. The eviction did not provide any chance for Maroko community residents to remain in their homes or in the neighbourhoods. One of the major consequences of the displacement was increase in the number of homeless persons among those with meagre financial resources to fund new accommodation. This kind of experience further exacerbated family or generational separation. On the other hand, this new Oniru Private Housing Estate is strictly a well-planned gated community of highly placed households. There has been complete change in the local amenities, services, shops and lifestyle.

Although there is pervasive peace and social order, the atmosphere appears formal. There is visible absence of communal living and commonality that was reminiscent of the situation in Maroko of the days of yore.

CONCLUSION
The forceful evictions of residents of Maroko in the early 1990s, and subsequent gentrification of the neighbourhoods has remained one of the biggest forces that affected the way working class group perceive urban transformation practices in contemporary Lagos. The resultant displacements that occurred were due to involuntary compulsory response to conditions imposed by the government. The intensity of the displacements examined in this study revealed a range of outcomes.

and infrastructure (ii) demographics and class status, characteristics (iii) social mix and social interactive characteristics.

In the case of Maroko, the gentrification aggravated urban housing accessibility and affordability crisis plaguing the vulnerable group of lower-income dwellers. No reasonable consideration or provision was made for rehousing the original inhabitants. Consequently, households suffered untold disruptions in their psychological, social, commercial and emotional lives.

The transformation of the location now known as Oniru Private Housing Estate is exquisite, but lacks some sense of place and demographic dynamics that engenders social-mix and inclusiveness. Moreover, the total obliteration of erstwhile residents created a non-inclusive demographic stratum that did not encourage social mixing and relationship building in the day-to-day activities.

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