

GENTRIFICATION PATTERNS, TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS OF THE BAMENDA METROPOLIS FROM 1972-2022

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ABSTRACT

Rapid socio-economic changes are an issue of pressing concern for many urban residents and local governments in urban areas of third world cities. This arises as a result of changing urban lifestyles, technology and population increase. This paper describes how gentrification patterns and trends manifest socio-economically across the metropolis of Bamenda. The study employs the survey, historical and comparative research designs, making use of qualitative methods using SPSS version 20 and Microsoft Excel 2016 version to analyze and verify the stated hypothesis. Findings reveal that neighbourhood revitalization within the high-density residential zones predominantly take the form of rehabilitation (renovation and refurbishment) of decrepit housing and socio-economic facilities, while the low-density residential zones are transformed mostly through newly built-up structures. The study concludes that significant differences prevail in the gentrification patterns across the metropolis, which are not monitored, non-harmonious and unsustainable to uphold the aesthetics of the metropolis. Suggestions verge on the premise that the patterns be monitored and sustainably guided by the city planners to harmonize urban development in the metropolis.

Keywords: Gentrification, Bamenda metropolis, Revitalization, Patterns, Property value.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Gentrification is an incredibly complex and hotly debated phenomenon that has been affecting urban areas for decades and is increasingly impacting neighbourhoods around the globe (Getty, 2020). Cities are traditionally engines of social modernization and economic growth and at the same time theatres in which globalization stage its actions. Over the past two decades, gentrification has become undeniable in the "return to the cities," with redevelopment and investment in many central cities across the globe. Gentrification is a problem that can only be manifested where vast wealth inequality already exists," (Waldek, 2020). Gentrification is a slippery and divisive word, vilified by many for the displacement of the poor, the influx of speculative investors, the proliferation of chain stores, the destruction of neighbourhood authenticity; the fall in crime rates, the arrival of bike lanes, street markets and better parks (Wainwright, 2016). For years, gentrification boosters such as Richard Florida argue that it is the surefire formula for urban regeneration. While gentrification increases the value of properties in areas that suffered from prolonged disinvestment, it also results in rising rents, home and property values.

Two key features of gentrification are displacement and change in social and urban character including rehabilitation of old or under-used buildings, changing the original fabric of the neighbourhood (Mela Social Enterprise, 2020). Urban transformation is most rapid in the developing world where cities gain an average of about five million residents or inhabitants monthly (UN-Habitat, 2008, in Akhere and Kimengsi, 2020). Urban transformation and revitalization is not a new phenomenon in urban Africa. Decades after gaining independence many African cities have experienced an unprecedented urban transformation associated with the displacement of low-income citizens, which tears apart the community's social fabric. Maputo the capital of Mozambique, offers a perfect example of rapid urban transformation in the last ten years, (Inguane, 2019).

Bamenda is the socio-economic, political and commercial hub of the North West Region and connected with other towns, cities and neighbouring Nigeria. It has witnessed a resurgence of investments and increased private market interest accompanied by unprecedented emergence of socio-economic institutions and activities which supersede the infrastructures that accommodate them. Regardless of its functional growth, the metropolis has inadequate infrastructure, old dilapidated housing stock in decrepit state, constituting 66.67% (Council Development Plan Bamenda II, 2020). To accommodate these functional dynamics, there has been rapid unauthorized, non-harmonious and unspecified patterns of neighbourhood transformation across the metropolis that are not well monitored and controlled. This blurs the aesthetic of the metropolis, altering the urban fabric and its morphology.

This study describes how gentrification patterns and trends differ socio-economically across the residential areas and sub-divisions of the Bamenda metropolis and examine the implications thereof. This is anchored on the premise that gentrification patterns in the northeast of Bamenda is socio-economically more intensive than in the southeast and northwest as well as within residential areas.

2.0 CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNING

The term gentrification coined by the urban sociologist Ruth Glass in 1964, has no agreed-upon empirical definition among scholars, which makes it difficult to talk about with any certainty. The term is ideologically laden and difficult to conceptually separate and measure the various aspects of the gentrification process (Slater, 2006, Freeman, 2011 & Rayle, 2015 in Adam and Yudhim, 2018). Ruth Glass, in her book on aspects of change in London, considered gentrification to mean demographic shifts within an urban community. This has subsequently spawned an extensive and ever-growing field of urban research and debate. Freeman, (2005) in Zuk et al., (2017) defines gentrification as the transformation of neighborhoods from low value to high value. In general, gentrification is thought to occur when formerly lower socio-economic status neighbourhoods transition to higher socio-economic status (Hamnett, 1991 & Slater, 2006 in Adam and Yudhim, 2018). Gentrification is an enigmatic process and an outcome of many interrelated factors, including housing demand and price, employment patterns, government regulation and funding, class, racial dynamics and local city-planning initiatives (Cheng, 2022).

This study views gentrification in Bamenda as an inherently spatio-temporal process of social and economic transition of neighbourhoods by diverse stakeholders whose policies and

activities transforms the metropolis resulting in heightened property and displacement of urban dwellers from the core to the peripheries. It involves the process of neighbourhood change within the high, medium and low residential zones involving rehabilitation, newly-built residential and non-residential developments and redevelopments. The concept of gentrification is imbedded in the model of neighbourhood change by Grigsby et al., (1987) wherein neighbourhood change starts with changes in social and/or economic variables, such as the number of households or the relative cost of housing.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study employed the survey, historical and comparative research designs. Primary data was obtained from municipal council reports, Council Development Plans, the Bamenda City Council building/implantation permit records, reports from MINHDU and other regional delegations in Bamenda. Diverse literature from international scientific journals, environmental progress reports, information from websites were invaluable for this study. 130 questionnaires were administered to household heads using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Interviews, photographs and maps from satellite images were other methods employed. Filed observation enhanced investigations regarding the patterns and trends of gentrification. Photographs of upgraded facilities were taken at different stages of development using the GPS camera version 1.3.6 and the GPS Map Camera Lite version 1.8.3.

4.0 STUDY AREA

The study covers the entire metropolis of Bamenda, made up of three municipalities (Bamenda I, II and III) located in Mezam division of the North West Region of Cameroon. Bamenda is located between latitude 5o94” and 5o 98” north of the Equator and longitude 10.15 o and 10.18o east of the Greenwich Meridian, situated at an elevation of 1,258m above sea level (Master Plan of Bamenda city council, 2011-2027). Figure 1 presents the location of the study area.

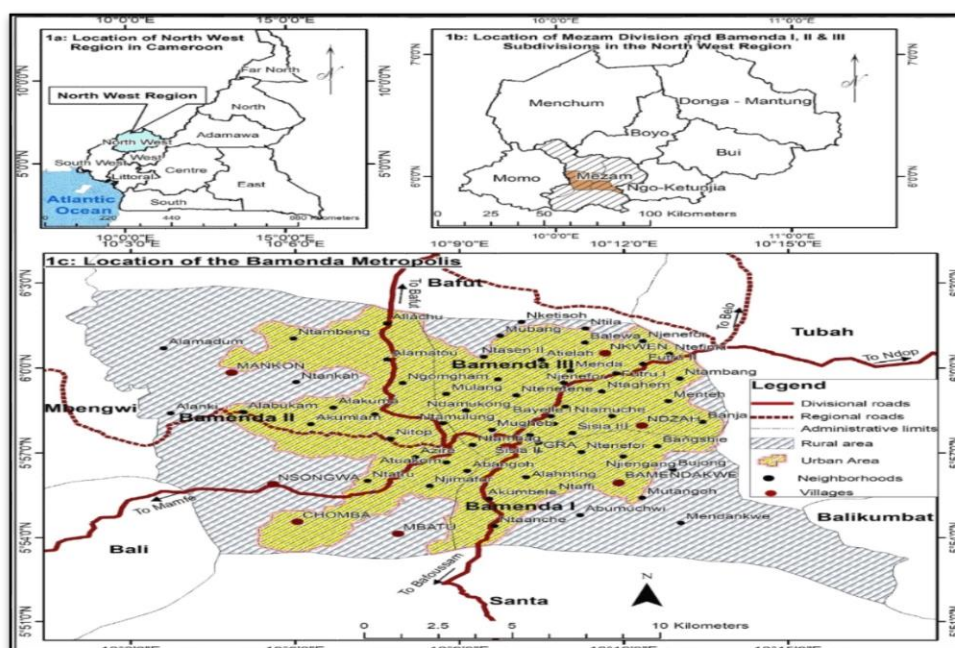


Figure 1. Location of the Bamenda Metropolis in Mezam Division of the North West Region of Cameroon

Source: Bamenda City Council (2020) and administrative limits of Cameroon (NIC, 2020)

5.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Patterns and trends of gentrification in the Metropolis of Bamenda

Gentrification patterns in the context of this study refer to the regular design or form through which various residential and non-residential developments (socio-economic facilities) are transformed/upgraded, their spatial outlay and how they shape the spatial structure of the city and urban fabric over time. This takes into consideration the common facilities transformed, designs commonly adopted for transformation and recurrent areas predominantly transformed. Respondent views on the patterns of gentrification revealed that it unfolds in multiple ways. Figure 4.2 illustrates some common patterns of gentrification conspicuous on the landscape of the metropolis manifesting over time and space.

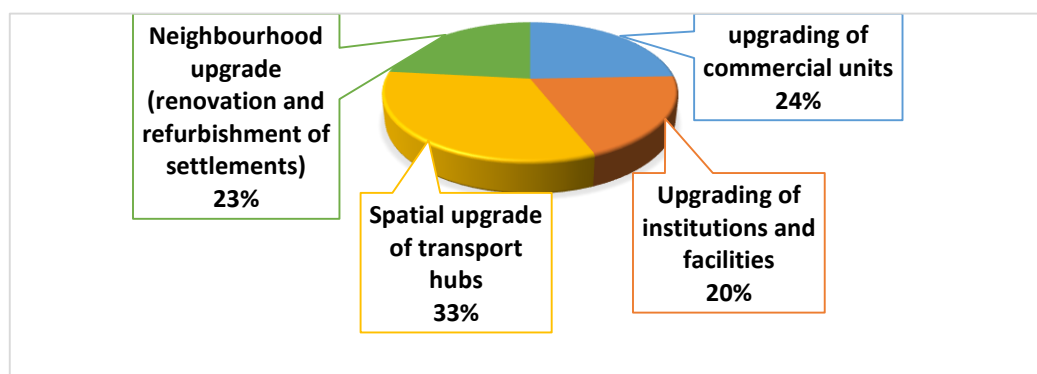


Figure 2: Gentrification patterns in the Metropolis of Bamenda

Source: Fieldwork, (2022)

5.1.1 Spatial upgrade of transport hubs

32.70% observed that gentrification in Bamenda has dominantly manifested through the spatial distribution of transport hubs. Over five decades ago, the metropolis had a single motor park located within the CBD (present Congress Hall) (figure 3). As the town grew, the park became too congested and posed problems of circulation. To disseminate traffic the motor park was decentralized to the various gateways of the city to enhance movement for commuters. This was effected by a municipal decision in 1982 leading to the creation of the Muwatsu, Nitob, Ntaturu and subsequently the Nkwen Parks. The Nkwen park operated in the Nkwen market popularly called Yaoundé Park. Some of these parks have relocated in recent times. Over time structures in these parks are upgraded from makeshift to permanent ones. This is the case with the Yaoundé Park which now operates in Bamenda I as Avenir Park. The Ntaturu Park was temporarily displaced by the socio-political crisis to Hospital Roundabout since 2019.

Beside the motor parks are multiple travel agencies that convey travelers/goods into and out of the metropolis given its functions as a regional headquarter and gateway to other regions. These travel agencies are Amour Mezam, Guarantee, Moghamo, Vatican, Jean Jeanot, Mondial, Nso Boyz and Guarantee express spatially located within the metropolis. They are currently upgrading their structures (figure 3) to accommodate more travelers and to be more competitive. Mondial and Moghamo agencies have recently constructed hotels for passengers. NSo Boyz and Amour Mezam have refurbished and upgraded their new premises, while Vatican Agency is under construction. In the early 2000s the dominant direction of these transport agencies was at Up Station neighbourhood based on an administrative decision that relocated them, but a few months later they all returned to their initial locations. However, from 2019 their dominant focus was towards Bamenda III. These spatio-temporal dynamics in transport hubs across the metropolis is associated with the creation of new branches, the upgrading process (figure 3), space transformation, and the development of commercial activities.

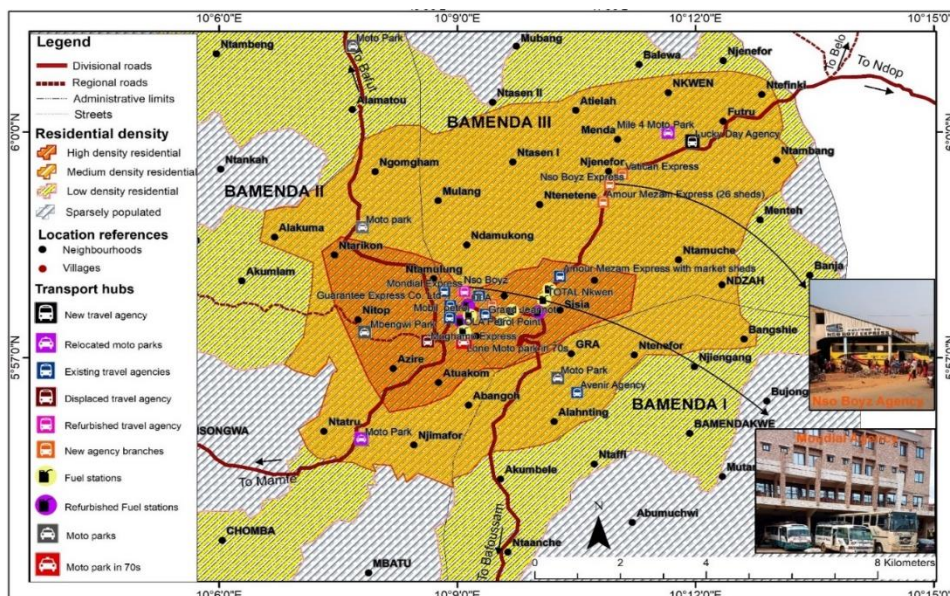


Figure 3: Spatial distribution of Transport Hubs in the Bamenda Metropolis

Source: Fieldwork, (2022)

5.1.2 Spatial upgrade of commercial units

Before the 1930s, the metropolis had a single market, which operated in makeshift structures, at Up Station around the Present High Court. This market was moved to Ntambag (present Old Town) and by 1930 other natives started erecting bamboo huts with thatched roofs and sheets of old zinc in which corn mills operated. With the growth in the population of Ntambag and the influx of more businesses like Emmens Textile International, Holland, the United African Company, and Barclays Bank International, Ntambag became saturated (Fombe, 1983) and the market was moved to the present site as Mankon Main Market (presently the Bamenda Main Market). This market began operation in temporary sheds and later the first 316 lock-up sheds were constructed in 1985. Before 2022 over 599 new sheds were constructed and 325 sheds

transformed from wooden to permanent materials (cement blocks and iron doors), through demolition and refurbishment in response to the increasing demand. The most recent development in this market is the upgrade of rooftops that were in a decrepit state (figure 5).

In 1978, Nkwen Market was created to meet the needs of the expanding population of Nkwen. This Market began operating on a weekly basis and later grew into a daily market triggered by the presence of Yaounde Park. The growth and transformation within the Bamenda main market continued till early 1990 when it became saturated and the local planning authority created the Food Market to decongest it. The Food Market as well grew upon a wetland and became saturated. Thereafter, the Ntarinkon Market was created to decongest the Food and Main Markets and subsequently the Nitob Market, Ntaturu, Muwatsu, Mile Four, Up Station and the Mile Six Markets in 2022. Most of these markets have been driven by the relocation of motor parks where minor commercial activities proliferate to meet the needs of travelers. Beside these Municipal markets and parks is the growth of market stores around church premises. Figure 6 illustrate the distribution of commercial facilities, some of which are refurbished from temporary to permanent structures over time.

The commercial sector in Bamenda is controlled by the Regional Delegation of Trade and Commerce and the Regional Delegation of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, Social Economy and Handicrafts (MINPMEESA), created in December 2004 and the Councils which work in synergy to facilitate and implement government policies, monitor and evaluate commercial activities. Transformation in the commercial sector include growth in Very Small Enterprises (VSE), Small Enterprises (SE) and Medium Enterprises (ME), which constitute retail gentrification as represented on figure 4.

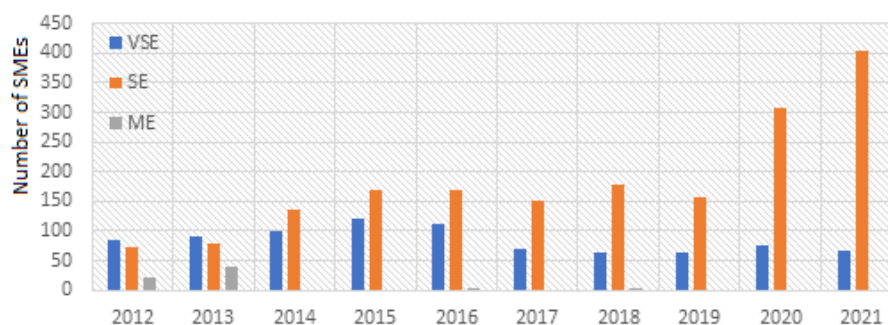


Figure 4: Evolution in the number of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Bamenda from 2012-2021.

(VSE= Very Small Enterprises, SE = Small Enterprises and ME= Medium Enterprises).

Source: Statistical yearbook, (2013), updated by Service of Statistics at MINPMEESA, (March 2022).

Figure 4, reveals that the trend of SME fluctuates over time. They grew progressively from 2012 to 2016, became stable between 2017 and 2019, corresponding to the peak period of the socio-political crises in the North West, then began surging from 2020 until present. SE have been the dominant category of businesses recorded in the metropolis, followed by VSE and the least being ME. This disparity in the categories of SME over time reflect the capital input

required by each category. However, there is a general transformation in the commercial sector, characterized by growth in the formalization of SME from 179 in 2012 to 470 in 2021 (annual growth of 18%). This sector is boosted by nationals, Chinese, Nigerians and others of ages between 30-59. (Statistical year book 2013, MINPMEEESA Annual Records, 2021).



Figure 5. Transformed structures (roof tops and sheds) in the Municipal Markets of Bamenda

Source: Fieldwork, (2022)

Gentrification patterns in the commercial sector embodies the creation of new markets to decongest those overpopulated, upgrade decrepit market sheds and construction of others along roads and strategic areas as indicated on figure 6.

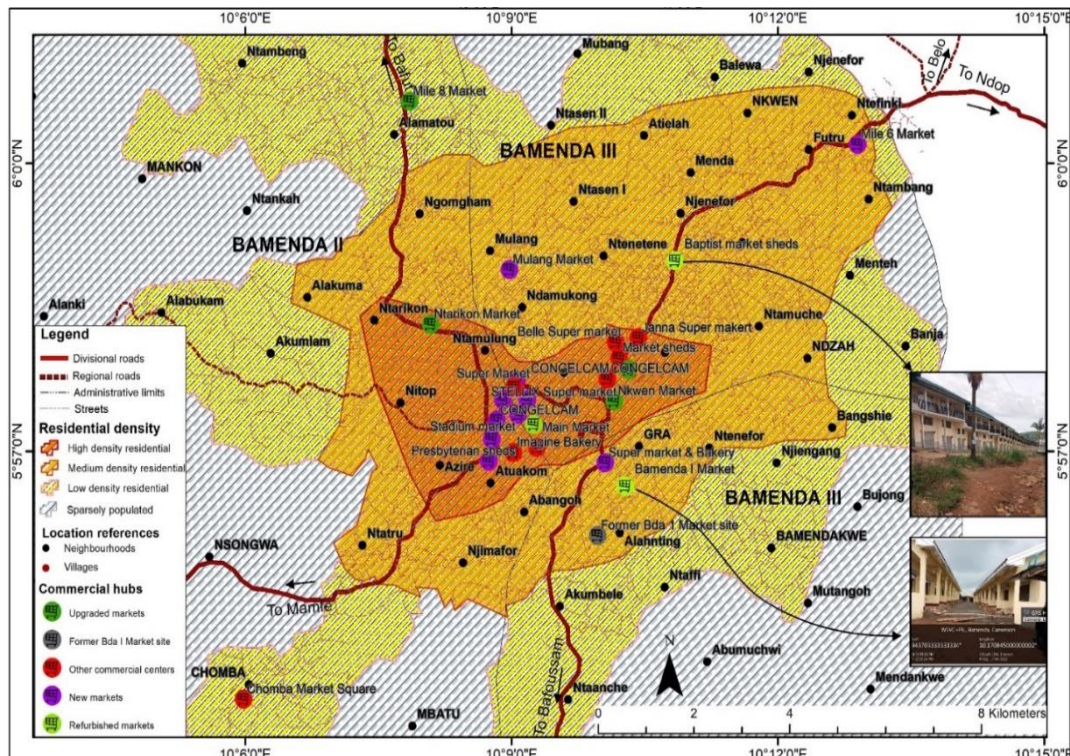


Figure 6. Spatial distribution of commercial facilities undergoing transformation in Bamenda

Source: Fieldwork, (2022)

5.1.3 Upgrade of socio-economic institutions and facilities

This englobes transformation of educational, health, religious and financial institutions. Figure 2 reveals that 19.60% of gentrification takes the form of institutional upgrading. Socio-economic institutions like hospitals, schools, religious and leisure facilities like bars, restaurants and hotels that have witnessed transformation in varied ways. Educational institutions have been upgraded through renovation, extension or enlargement of structure, rehabilitation of dilapidated classrooms and constructions of new facilities which in some cases are story blocks to maximize space (figure 7) and to contain a larger population. In some instances, roofs are completely changed where leakages are profuse. This is not different with health and faith-based institutions.

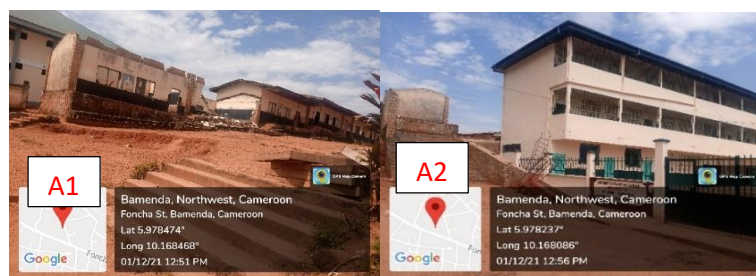


Figure 7. An upgraded school from bungalows to a story Block structure in Bamenda.

Source: Fieldwork, (2022)

5.1.4 Neighborhood upgrade.

Neighbourhood upgrade includes transformation of settlement structures which constitutes one of the primordial needs of the population. Over time, building type and pattern of upgrading has changed following demand, income, age of the building and purpose of the structure erected. Multiple aspects about housing in recent years exhibit significant changes from what prevailed in the 70s/80s in Bamenda. 23.30% of the population observe that houses have been upgraded through renovation, refurbishment, demolition, expansion though these patterns vary temporarily as illustrated in figure 8. Over time, the trend in type of structures constructed have changed (figure 10), same with the materials commonly used.

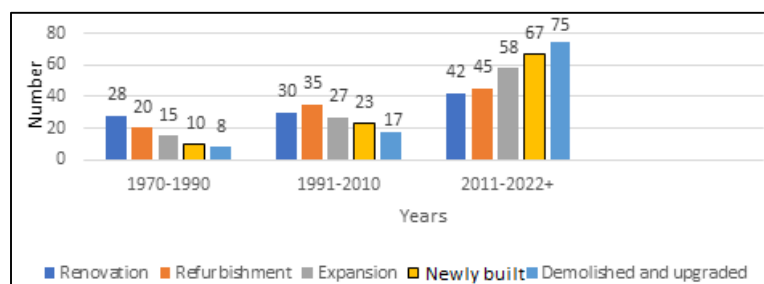


Figure 8: Method of transformation of Housing structures from 1970-2022

Source: Fieldwork, (2022)

Figure 8 reveals that patterns of housing transformation have taken the form of demolition/upgrade wherein old low-rise buildings are demolished and replaced with story buildings (figure 9a). These patterns have become more prominent since 2011 constituting 75%, compared to 8% between 1970-1990, and 17% between 1991-2010. Many houses are demolished and upgraded, refurbished, expanded and new constructions undertaken in the recent years compared to the past. Majority of buildings are transformed by expansion which is vertical or horizontal constituting 58% between 2011-2022, compared to 27% between 1991-2010, and 15% between 1970-1990. Housing transformation has equally taken the form of rehabilitation which embodies renovation and refurbishment being the most dominant in recent years. Demolition is most common in the CBD, along roads where decrepit bungalows are demolished and replaced with bungalows of story buildings for commercial purposes and in neighbourhoods like Atuakom, Ntambag, Ntamulung, and Bayelle. The process of ongoing road expansion across the metropolis of Bamenda led to the demolition of 26 buildings in 2022 and 630 marked for partial/complete demolition before 2025 (interview with the Chief of Services for Social Urban Development at MINDUH, August 2022).

5.1.4.1 Gentrification pattern and trend in building type from 1970 – 2022

Over the past 50years, building type in the metropolis of Bamenda has shifted from traditional houses to story blocks and mansions as revealed on figure 10. Nine types of buildings were identified dominantly corresponding to different periods depicting evolution in the development of settlements.

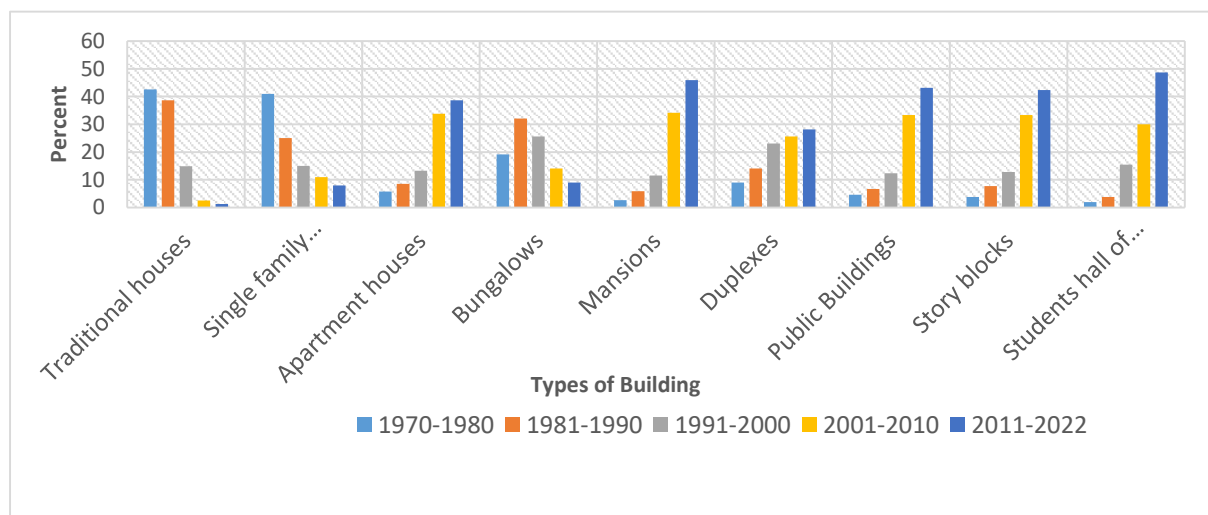


Figure 9: Evolution in building types from 1972 to 2022.

Source: Fieldwork, (2022)

Figure 9 indicates that traditional houses dominated (42%) from 1970-1980, but decreased to 1.3% by 2011-2020 same with single family dwelling units that decreased from 41% to 8%

within the same period. Apart of bungalows that have not followed the same trend, apartment houses, mansions, duplexes public buildings, story blocks and student halls of residence have grown significantly in number over time replacing the traditional housing types. Public buildings for example like schools, health units, financial institutions, bars, hotels, churches, etc; have grown from 4.8% in the 70s to 43% by 2022. Table 1 illustrates the evolution in building types constructed over the years.

Table 1: Evolution in building types across the metropolis from 2008-2022

Period	Building type									Total
	Bungalow	G1	G2	G3	G4	G5	B+G	B+G+1	B+G+2	
2008-2016	2208	283	201	118	32	27	40	20	15	2944
2016-2022	2752	315	215	153	66	44	58	41	25	3669
Total	4960	598	416	271	98	71	98	61	40	6613

Source: Building Permit Records Book, BCC, (2022)

In building parlance, G1 means a storey building with one floor and G2 refers to two-floor story building; B+G means Base + Ground floor, B+G+1 equals Base + Ground floor + one floor.

Table 1 indicates the growth in the building type over time. G1 structures grew from 283 to 315, G5 from 27 to 44, similarly B+G+1 grew from 20 to 41 between 2008-2022 respectively. This implies development in housing indicative of gentrification.

5.2 Development implications of gentrification in Bamenda.

The gentrification process in the metropolis of Bamenda is associated with changes in everyday life, which could be positive or negative.

5.2.1 Increased property value

Gentrification is accompanied by increase in value of property like land and housing in the metropolis of Bamenda. This can be profitable for the property owners, but detrimental to non-property owners. Majority of the population reveal that increased property value is the dominant negative effect of gentrification. Within the metropolis, property value has doubled and even quadrupled compared to what obtained in the 1970s. This study investigated the trend of the assessed value of land, rents and some commodities between 1970 and 2022, (Table 2).

Table 2: Evolution in property value in the Bamenda metropolis, from 1970-2022 in FCFA

Zone/Location	An apartment of 3 bedrooms with internal facilities.			
	1970s- Mid-90s	Late 90s –Mid 2000s	Late 2000s-2015	2016-2022
Within the urban core	≤ 25,000	25,000-40,000	40,000-60,000	60,000 - 80,000

Medium Residential Density zone	≤ 20,000	20,000-30,000	30,000-40,000	40,000 – 60,000
Within the urban core (High residential density zone)	<10,000,000	10,000,000 - 35,000,000	35,000,000 – 100,000,000	100,000,000 ⁺
Along major roads within the metropolis (Medium residential density zones)	1,500,000 - 3,000,000	3,000,000 -5,000,000	5,000,000 - 15,000,000	15,000,000 ⁺
In Low residential density zones (Futru, Alahtinging, Chobouh)	1,000,000 - 1,500,000	1,500,000 - 3,000,000	3,000,000 - 5,000,000	5,000,000 ⁺
Commodity prices	1970s- Mid 90s	Late 1990s –Mid 2000s	Late 2000s- 2015	2016-2022
A bag of rice (50kg)	10,000 - 13,000	13,000 - 16,000	6,000 - 20,000	20,000 - 25,000
A bucket of Irish potatoes	700 -1,000	1,000 - 1,500	1,500 - 3,000	3,000 - 5,000
A bag of cement	700 -2,000	2,000 - 4,000	4,000 - 5,000	5,000 - 7,500
Zinc (3m)	3,000 - 4,000	4,000 - 6,000	6,000 - 8,000	9,000

Source: Price collection form for the month of June/ July 2016 and October 2022, Divisional Delegation of Commerce, complimented by Fieldwork, (2022)

Regardless of the increase in built-up space over the years, the problem of unaffordable housing is inevitable as housing rent tripled from 1972-2022. Land in the metropolis has become exorbitantly expensive and scarce. A 500m² of land located in the city centre which sold at less than 10,000,000 FCFA in the 1970s, has increased to 100 – 200 million FCFA since 2016. The increase in property value increases living cost, creating vulnerability especially for the urban poor and the unemployed leading to increased frustration and vulnerability to crime.

5.2.2. Gentrification and Service provision.

Gentrification in Bamenda is accompanied by increased service provision among which are leisure facilities like hotels, bars, restaurants, laundromats, barbing, hairdressing, financial, education and health services. There is a visible growth in social services associated with population growth aimed at ensuring the wellbeing of the population. Individuals, organizations, institutions, the state and NGOs have invested in providing services for the population. The National Community Driven Development Program (PNDDP) for example has constructed market sheds and rehabilitated roads in the metropolis to provide economic services for the population.

5.3 Disparity in gentrification patterns across the Bamenda metropolis

There are differences in gentrification patterns within the residential areas in the metropolis of Bamenda (figure 12).

The dominant pattern of gentrification in the high residential density (HRD) zones is refurbishment/renovation (45%), followed by demolition/upgrading (40%) and newly built

structures (15%). This implies that gentrification pattern in the HRD zones (Ntambag, Mugheb, Atuakom etc.) is mainly through replacing outmoded, decrepit structures with upgraded ones.

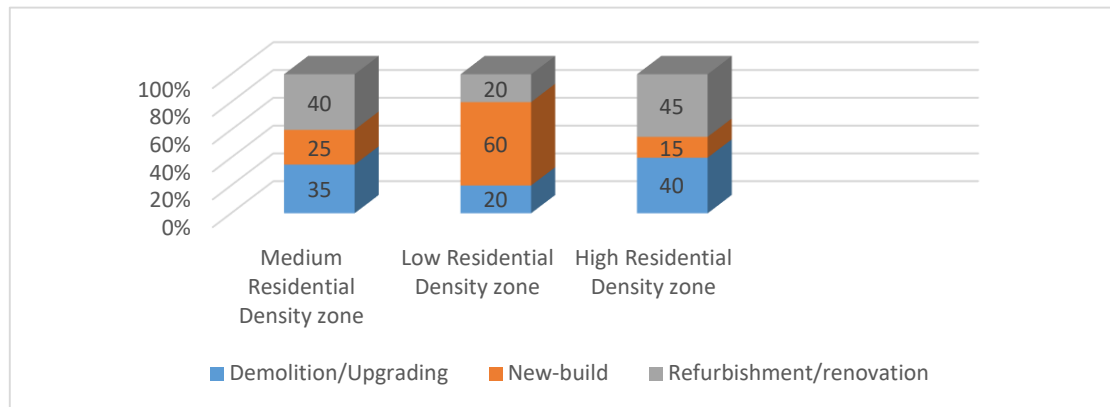


Figure 12: Disparities in gentrification patterns within the Low, Medium and High density residential areas of Bamenda

Source: Fieldwork, (2022)

The medium residential density (MRD) zones follow a similar pattern to what prevails in the HRD zone though not with the same magnitude of refurbishment/renovation, constituting 40%, demolition/upgrading 35%, and newly built structures 25%. This is applicable to areas like; Menteh, Chomba and Mankon. Whereas the low-density residential zone is dominantly transformed through newly built structures with 60%, refurbishment and renovation while demolition/upgrading constitute 20%.

6.0 DISCUSSION

Findings on gentrification in Bamenda shows that the socio-economic transformation that upgrades the metropolis unfolds in multiple ways over space and time. Major patterns of gentrification in the metropolis of Bamenda are spatial upgrade of transport hubs, neighbourhood upgrading, spatial upgrade of commercial units and socio-economic institutions which all constitute socio-economic variables indicative of neighbourhood change. This is corroborated by the ideas of Grigsby et al., (1987) who stated that “neighbourhood change starts with changes in social and/or economic variables”. This is linked to the ideas of Waldek, (2020) who noted that cities are traditionally engines of social modernization and economic growth. Upgrading social institutions like health, education and hotels implies health gentrification, studentification, and tourism gentrification, which aligns with the view of Cole, Medipandah, et al., (2021) who identified these as some of the types of gentrification in Spain, stating that ‘retail market may come with changes in neighbourhood social composition, in a process that can be defined as retail gentrification’.

Multiple aspects about settlements in recent years exhibit significant changes from what prevailed in the 1970s/1980s within the metropolitan area of Bamenda. Settlements have upgraded through renovation, refurbishment expansion and new buildings though these patterns vary. Traditional housing and bungalows that constituted the dominant housing type

in the 1970s, are replaced by story blocks and mansions. This implies that settlement type and trend have changed tremendously over time as the metropolis upgrades. This affirms the idea of Fombe and Agbortoko (2014) who noted that housing has considerably evolved over time and space in terms of standards. In the same light Mbanga (2018) observed that every human settlement, from its occupation by a pioneer population continues to undergo a process of dynamics which is the result of socio economic and changing factors operating at the local, national and global levels. Upgrading settlements in Bamenda serves as a panacea to the poor state of housing that characterizes the metropolis. This corroborates the work of Wanie (2019) who observed that the existing state of housing in Bamenda City is characterized by inadequate, poorly built houses which are randomly and haphazardly arranged.

The study revealed that gentrification patterns differ over space and time in the metropolis. Within the high-density residential areas, the principal pattern of gentrification is rehabilitation (renovation, refurbishment) while in the low density residential areas the principal pattern is indicative of newly built structures. This implies rehabilitation of older buildings as well as construction of new ones with more advanced architectural designs. This corroborates the ideas of Fombe (1983) who noted that the Bamenda urban space has evolved mostly through rehabilitation. Thejas (2018) observed that gentrification patterns differ spatially depending on the drivers. Physical changes that accompany gentrification include the rehabilitation of older buildings and the construction of new ones. Public improvements of streets, parks, and infrastructure may accompany government revitalization efforts or occur as new residents organize to demand public services. However, government revitalization effort is insignificant in the gentrification picture of Bamenda.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Although the study reveals that the metropolis of Bamenda is upgrading with the replacement of traditional buildings by story blocks and refurbishment of decrepit settlements, it however occurs in informal non-harmonized patterns that undermines the aesthetics of the metropolis. The metropolis is not uniquely transformed over space and time. Significant differences prevail in the gentrification patterns within the residential areas, which results in negative and positive implications. The study therefore suggests that urban land reform for housing, efficient urban upgrading, renewal programs and increase provision of low-cost housing under state supervision, be implemented to reduce the problem of sub-standard housing and shortage.

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