"Gentrification" as an effective force: Case study: Reconstruction plan of Hafisa Quarter (Medina of Tunisia)

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Abstract:
In recent transition process of urban development, especially because of high and middle class abandonment, residential quarters of inner cities gradually had lost their values and occupied by immigrated groups (non-native), and low-income class. In result of this fact, quality of life has reduced to minimum possible limit, with non- hygienic conditions. One of the most useful theories in this course is *gentrification*; the process of improving old neighborhoods with low qualification, in order to encourage *high social, middle class, and* especially *gentries* to return there. In spite of its advantages, *gentrification* has often and wrongly become synonymous with *displacement of native residents*. Therefore, this paper is going to present an accurate comprehension about the essence of *gentrification* through analysis and description method by clarifying its distinction from *displacement*. In addition, by researching a sample of successful projects in this course, *gentrification* is going to be regarded as an achievable theory in reconstruction of historical areas by emphasizing on its offered advantages through this article. As a result, it should be mentioned that *displacement* is not a goal of *gentrification*, but just a consequence that could be created in result of inappropriate politics of development or any renovation methods in process of improving historic areas.

Keywords: Gentrification, middle class, low income, displacement, historic area

1. Introduction

Gentrification is a word that has become commonplace over the last several years. But yet, it is not necessarily understood completely. This process is trying to increase residential quality by a transformation in socio-cultural structure in urban areas (by attracting gentries and middle class population), variation encouragement and social class variety, renovation of modern cultural outputs, physically housing renovation, investing injection and developing quality of living environment.

Although gentrification is a topic that we could not reach a unanimous agreement between experts and researchers, at the same time, this paper is trying to reach in corners and mutual effects of this theory in urban

revolutions process by expansion of this hypothesis from development and renovation aspects.

2. Gentrification concept

Gentry in Great Britain, describes the non-aristocratic people with middle invest and high social rank that they would be lower than nobles from authenticity aspect (Redfern, 2003).

Two other words come out from this word: "Gentrify" and "Gentrification". The term "Gentrification" is the process of rehabilitation in old neighborhoods which made an opposition in city structure to immigration patterns from central area to suburbs (Habibi, 2007:144).

This term have been used by Ruth Glass for the first time, to describe a factory workers displacement in 1964 (Atroskin, 2003).

In gentrification theory, the reason is on the basis of neighborhoods of inner-cities around central commercial cores that lost investment opportunities because of some reasons such as: crowed activities and traffic, reducing urban safety, development of social problems, lack of economical and credits support from insurance companies and banks, and also movement of activities to new city quarters. For this reason, central areas would become vacant and environmental problems, erosion, and stagnant would happen. So district value would decrease and because of low rent prices, low income people such as workers, rural immigrants, race minorities and old peoples would join the quarter. After displacement become completed rent gap would rise in suburbs up to maximum level. In "Smith" (1996) opinion, in this stage, lack of investment would turn into renewed invest and background would be ready for development, renovation, reconstruction and benefits of plan.

On this basis, gentrification theory encourages informal developers and governmental investors to revitalize and improve city in order to attract middle and high class people. This theory that became common over the last years still there isn't good comprehension about it and has often become synonymous with displacement. But we would understand that gentrification would not be done within that goal through this article.

Several authors and researchers have written so many articles about the disadvantages of this hypothesis. Like displacing low income families by increasing rent prices. They think that it is related with advanced people who appeared in 70 and 80 decades in American cities and some of economists and sociologists was trying to introduce named process as positive power in order to make effective transitions and economic development reference that could increase economical activities, states values, earning taxes for physical renewal. Moreover, they know these types of actions as a factor that could improve social situation and rank of an area. They proved that harmful effects of this process are fewer than the results of suburbs and irregular distractions in city centers.

Are gentrification and displacement synonyms? What are the options for native resident situations support and variety social class encouragement? And is it possible to return middle-class to inner-cities without displacement of natives? These questions would be answered during investigation of the case study.

3. How gentrification would force native residents to leave neighborhoods?

Renovation of a quarter cause additional values belonging to states, so investment and used costs would improve urban environment. In this way, again high and middle income classes who have power for paying rent and expensive expenditures of life, would replace in low level classes (Shamaee,2005). Economist like Elvin Wyly (2004), Daniel Hammel (2004), Rowland Atkinson (2003_2004), and Redfern (2003) agree that the positive effects of gentrification come at the expense of displaced citizens. Displacement occurs when households have to move involuntarily from an area. Redfern believe that when a group of Gentrifiers moves in, those less fortunate are forced to move out and are unable to achieve their goal of improving their quality of life (Redfern, 2003).

Wyly and Hammel recognize these lost opportunities and unrealized goals in gentrified areas. They discuss how gentrification encourages realtors and banks to maintain segregation through discriminatory practices, thus contributing to displacement in gentrified areas. Realtor steering occurs when realtors encourage upscale buyers to locate in one area by showing property in specific neighborhoods. Meanwhile, they show low income clients options in less prosperous areas.

Realtors can play a part in displacement by encouraging high income buyers to locate in a gentrifying area. Banks also play a role in segregation because they are more reluctant to lend to buyers or developers in neglected areas. "Banks remain hesitant to lend in gentrifying areas until they see the results achieved" (Elvin, 2004).

Once gentrification has established a given amount of wealth in an area, banks widen the income gap by lending to more affluent borrowers. Discrimination from banks and realtors puts the under-privileged at a greater disadvantage and intensifies the negative effects of gentrification (Biro, 2006).

Unfortunately, banks and realtors are not the only institutions that contribute to displacement. Wyly and Hammer (2004), how insurance companies use insurance discrimination to extinguish poverty and contribute to the growth of affluence in a gentrified area. Just as banks with several loans in a specific area want the area to prosper to avoid default, property insurance companies fulfill their self-interests by maintaining class exclusivity in an area. Neighborhoods with low income whites and minorities increase the risk of theft, fire, and other crime-related losses, so insurance companies are more willing to insure the high income residents moving into a gentrified area.

Therefore, Insurance companies, banks, and realtors contribute to displacement in gentrified areas and make it more difficult for low income residents to take advantages of the positive opportunities provided by gentrification.

Atkinson, like Wyly and Hammel, discusses the forces behind displacement. Landlords often use harassment and eviction to displace lower income tenants. The intensity of price increases in many neighborhoods encourages landlords to remove tenants through illegal means so that they can sell the property or acquire higher paying tenants. This cruel treatment of tenants

puts low income residents at a major disadvantage. Low income residents are forced to find a more affordable location, and therefore must move away from their jobs and incur higher commuting costs.

These tenants have no chance to enjoy the revitalized area or embrace the opportunities for self-improvement when their landlords work so hard to force them out of their houses. Unless policies are enforced to prevent this behavior, the positive effects of gentrification are useless to the poor.

Maureen Kennedy and Paul Leonard (2001) agree that the benefits of gentrification are jeopardized when certain institutions work to displace poor residents. They focus on the city government's role in displacement by explaining its incentives to attract residents with higher incomes; like increasing taxes and charges which took from residents for reconstruction fabric expenditures. It is obvious through making low income residents to abandon that we would face reduction of crowd and less big houses. In this way, income from taxes would increase and government is forced to provide less service for rising welfare in that quarter.

By improvement of quality and life situation in areas, another class of people with higher income would become ready to live in quarter. *But government, planners and designers through policies have been taken, can prevent low income residents from displacement and make them able to take advantages of gentrification.* Sample of these politics in this investigation would be shown commentary.

Gentrification as an effective force
Rafael Bostic, Richard Martin, Loretta lees, Hoang Huu Phe, Patric Wakele (2000) believe that gentrification is not intrinsically designed to displace low income residents. They point out that people with similar interests tend to live in the same area, so when high income residents move in and low income residents move out, it reflects the change of preferences in the neighborhood (Bostic, 2003). They apparently agreed that transitions that occurs in several Inner-City quarters and making displacement was not the result of doing gentrification policies.

Also Bostic and Martin article (2003) that is in agree with Phe and Wakely achievements, emphasizes that gentrification can make a natural social movement but not deliberate displacement.

Creikingen and Decroly (2003) describe the term in this way: "A process sometimes labeled 'Yuppification' … the metamorphosis of deprived inner-city neighborhoods into new prestigious residential and consumption areas taken up by a new class of highly skilled and highly paid residents, typically business service professionals living in small-sized, non-familial households – that brings displacement of the neighborhood's initial population".

Criekingen and Decroly (2003) mentioned that we should make difference between different samples of gentrification. Most important of these distinctions which is suggested by Freeman , suggested that the level of education is a more adequate evaluation factor of gentrification; by this way its opposite with level of incomes, because young artists and experts often taking lead in gentrification and residency in this type of areas. But they do not seem to be rich.

Rofe (2005) suggested that gentrification generally is a factor that would return the lost identity of quarters till can make one part of ideal social life. Ideal society that people desire is a quarter with various economic and race which this theory can help to make this dream certain.

4. Gentrification values

Entirely, describing positive aspects of this theory is hard and scarce, because scarcely research have done about it and empirical investigations are required to find them, Moreover if there is any claim, there are few evidences, document, empirical, and theoretical reasons to prove it. Despite this fact, we cannot say that these positive effects would not happen; from the point of our views some of these effects are such as:

▪ *Leading urban evolutions toward stable development*; this process would make missed historical areas values return and prevent from suburbs development in which areas without any service, principle and city rules, with supporting social and economic infrastructures; According to the fact that inner-city areas still have potential for accepting crowed more than its residents.

▪ *Eliminating discriminations, preventing from urban polarization;* because during right and justifiable implementing this method, and equipping old areas, essential requests would be responded. It can be easily observable that lack of these facilities, in addition of removing area's attraction, would also force residents to leave.

The fact has been emphasized in most agreements of theorists, showed that gentrification process from the beginning and intrinsically does not intend to move residents out, by contract, development and reconstruction of historical quarters without moving residents is also possible and through policies such as, controlling the rent and housing prices in these areas, fund and economical aids to natives could prevent from compulsory immigration and even encourage quarters to revitalize by themselves.

So as a result of implementing gentrification in the right way, it could be announced that low income residents in the area have greater opportunities to bridge the income gap while achieving self-improvement and a higher standard of living.

▪ *Increasing social quality and values of historical areas, with cultural and historical worth;* in other words, gentrification on the basis of this concept "replacing residents with those who would give identity to city", try to encourage different class people to live in these areas, specially people who have high social rank (who are not necessarily rich) and would add social values to the environment (Redfern, 2003). This factor plays an important role in preventing native residents from immigration and non-native immigrants from residing in the fabric. People who would save social aspect of cities mainly include quarter elders, high level ranks in urban offices, artists, educational and specially architectures and all those who have an idea about valuable cultural and historical areas.

▪ *Making suitable spaces in society to make coexistence of different social and economic classes;* according to valid socialist's opinions in this background; three groups of people are more interested in immigrating to these quarters: first of all are the artists that with entrance to these quarters

they would increase beautifulness values. The Second one are youngers that immigrate to these quarters for searching cheap accommodation and they are making places more attractive and various. The third one is a composition of high level income people and characters who would take risk and this class are more interested in renovation and development. Their presence seems to be an economical attendance but not a result of gentrification.

▪ *Making employment and improving social and economic activities and then reduction of crime rates.*

▪ *Increasing income taxes;* that would improve quality and quantity levels of urban services in these areas.

▪ *Prevention of suburb's development;* gentrification would make more opportunities for poor people and prevents quarters from collective movement toward places with high job opportunities (suburbs), Through the housing redistribution and employment by the fair policies. Since inner-city's low income residents have fewer job opportunities, which are decreasing more and more each day, than the suburbs. Consequently, unemployment rate would increase. Also because of non-flexible distribution of low-priced housing, low income households have less opportunity and equipment to move to suburbs. On the other hand, they would face with increasing housing prices in city cores. Then urban spaces would become imbalanced.

Summary
It is important to be mentioned that without particular planning and economic-social researches, any interference in historical areas, including development, renovation and reconstruction, would cause displacement. on the other hand, till there would not be any changing in social- economic structure of historical areas, social renovation is not expected and physical promotion of cultural inherent is just possible by their economic sources; *so is there any other methods more a than gentrification?* This is very important for urban planners, designers and decision makers that they should be able to solve some of harmful results of gentrification.

Of course by looking precisely in urban areas we would find that very less residents are natives and most of them are immigrants without any interest and imagination of spatial and physical values. Actually, they chose these quarters for because of their low-priced accommodations. So this lack of knowledge about environment, the other residents, interest for belonging to quarter, would make residents to have low social trust and participation.

6. Investigating design of reconstruction Hafsia

The Hafsia quarter covers about 13.5 hectares in the lower medina of Tunis. The Hafsia quarter project is an attempt to rehabilitate a run-down and largely derelict area in the medina (old town) of Tunis. Middle income residents encouraged to return and once again made city as geometrical social place like economic and social activities. This plan was the first large-scale renovation project of its kind to be undertaken in an Islamic country.
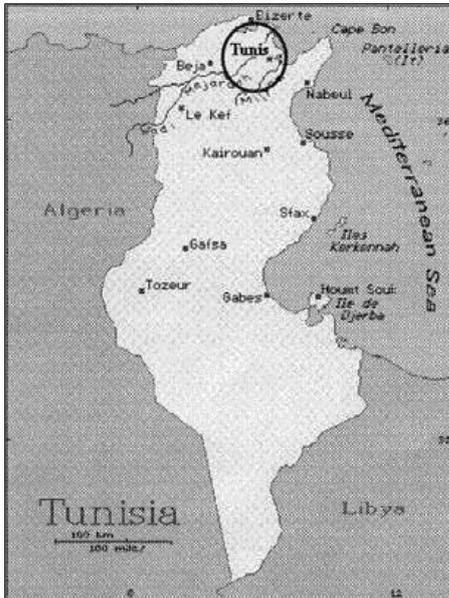
Figure 1. *Tunisia location (www.archnet.org).*

Figure 2. *Hafsia Quarter (www.archnet.org).*


Figure 3. *Total view of Hafsia quarter (www.archnet.org/library/images).*

The **main goals** of this project include:
▪ *Providing housing for the poor,*
▪ *Greatly raising the standard of living of the inhabitants,*
▪ *Reconstruction and renovation of living and its variations in inner cities,*
▪ *Encouraging middle class society to return there (Gentrification).*

Most reasons of this plan success are:
▪ *Enabling social and cultural continuity,*
▪ *Prevention of forceful abandonment of native residents from the area,*
▪ *Making connection between old and new urban fabric through native architecture plans of*
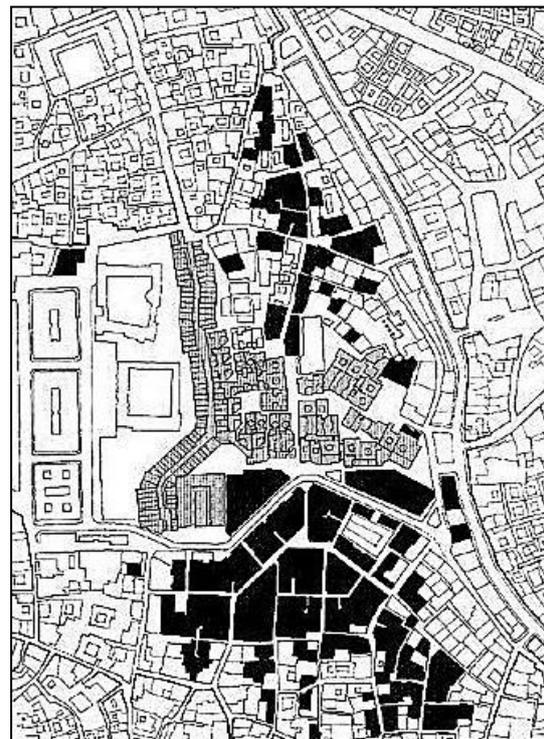
Phase I (1983)

Phase II (1995)

Phase I
Première phase

Phase 2, Award 1995
Deuxième phase, Prix 1995

Figure 4. *Hafsia Reconstruction Project (www.archnet.org/library/images).*

Tunisia; which equality and city singularity in neighbors unit, the goal of prevention from native abandonment would became certain,
▪ *Attracting people to reconstruct and restore their own quarters.*

But what makes the plan of Hafsia different from the others, is *supporting native residents linked with attraction of middle class and high social prestige*. Noted qualities included:

Figure 5. *Intersection of two residential blocks adjacent to the Bab Carthagene, Hafsia Quarter (www.archnet.org/library/images).*

6.1 Response of the plan to households' requests with different social-economic qualities

This action needed the time to encourage the old residents to repair their houses with loan or without it for making temporary residence during this process and it was necessary to response probably new residency requests. So at the first part of the plan, urban community determined resident's requests. *Importance of this project is primary investigations for recognizing residents' requests.*

The mayor of Tunisia with accompany of reconstruction and repairing city office and old quarter's protection community, provide complete plan in second part depended on follow conditions:

▪ Complement the former physical and social-economic researches in order to response to beneficiaries and sort or level of considerations about reconstruction, demolition or renovation,
▪ Counting probabilities building job during residence of people in units,
▪ Evaluate necessary economic programs in relation to ownership of residence situation,
▪ Searching about the number of units for residency of some households for crowd reduction or units for temporary residency of some households that their house was not reparable during their resident (later 35 households didn't leave temporary units!).

6.2 Prevention native residents from displacing

For households with very low income separate houses were chosen with two rooms, one bathroom and one small kitchen or in another word equal to 40 square meters. Rent price for per month was equal to 18 percent of income and for households who were able to buy a house and had good condition for paying, maximum level of rent 22 percent selected.

About 134 households were included in this new reconstruction plan. 46 of them were became an option for buying their own house because their income was about 150 dinar and 23 households with less than 150 dinar per month income could rent a place in Hafsia. And only 65 other families were forced to live in other places according their level of incomes.

In order to displace as few as possible of the urban poor already living in the neighborhood, the incoming, more affluent inhabitants should pay a higher share of the costs.

Figure 6. *The form of new architecture in Hafsia quarter (www.archnet.org/library/images).*

6.3 Relocation displaced households

All occupants in the buildings affected by the project were entitled to receive a relocation payment, and a compensation option, which included housing accommodations. Temporary relocation accommodations were provided for families having to vacate premises during consolidation and rehabilitation work as well as families in need of accommodations while waiting for alternative housing solutions. Displaced families were able to choose among several options:
▪ A serviced plot in a public project on the urban fringe,
▪ An apartment in a government built affordable housing project,
▪ Monetary compensation in cash, allowing them to find alternative housing on their own.

A list of occupants based on the 1982 and 1984 surveys of affected buildings was used by the study team to assess the relocation process. The results of the 1994 follow-up are summarized in the following table.

Table 1. *Hafsia - Relocation of Displaced Households Project Assessment 1994 (World Bank, 1999).*

Relocation/Compensation Package	1st stage 1982-84	2nd stage 1984-86	Total
Cash Compensation	17	20	37
Dwelling Units in Hafsia	9	3	12
Temporary Displacement	13	15	28
Apartments in Hafsia (or elsewhere)	9	3	12
Land in Douar Hicher (serviced site)	9	3	12
No Information in 1994	19	24	43
Total	76	68	144

6.4 Making good benefits from economic equipment

This project made fruition from economical equipment in this meaning that with more encouragement of residents to repair and revitalize of their house and also through reduction of empty areas necessary investment for giving loan was provided. Project number 2 of Hafsia used successful and real plans for increasing potential economic powers of area:

- An important point in this project was acceptance of high income people for paying more portions from expenses for plan. In this way old houses become mild.
- Renovated buildings were exempt from taxes of states and properties. 120 units of 400 new buildings were also exempted from paying bill. These units include destroyed or rental houses. In any way taking taxes from other units spent for building and upgrading streets and reparation to some owners.
- Supporting and encouraging residents through arranged program by housing national saving fund for renovation of their units.
- Selling several lands to private construction and building companies; in result of development of substructure, lands and states values increased. Then produced income was used for helping construction budget and people were needed to take loan without benefit had gotten money.

6.5 Summary

Through the policies like controlling land and property values in these areas, fund loans to residents, and transition in rental rules of states according to what is observable in reconstruction plan of Hafsia, it would be possible to prevent from compulsory immigration of natives (displacement) and even encourage them to repair their house by themselves. Hafsia project was especially effective in creating financial program to achieve social goals.

Figure 7. *Municipal property rehabilitated without displacing rural migrants living in the building (Word Bank, 1999).*

7. Conclusion

This article proved that if just principles change in policies, gentrification could make social-economic transition and would be helpful for all people. It is important that the causes and effects of gentrification should be studied in different cities throughout the country. Since laws and government policies vary among states and cities, the effects are always slightly different. So unless these changes are made, it would not be good to label this theory a hasty and furious transition.

Gentrification is not intrinsically designed to displace low income residents and natives. By contrast, development and improvement of quarters is also possible without displacement; according to what is observable in reconstruction plan of Hafsia.

So as a result of implementing gentrification in the right way, it could be announced that low income residents in the area have greater opportunities to bridge the income gap while achieving self-improvement and a higher standard of living.

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