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URBAN RENEWAL IN IBADAN, NIGERIA: WORLD CLASS BUT ESSENTIALLY YORUBA

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ABSTRACT

Urban renewal is central to 'world-class' city aspirations on the African continent: demolitions and evictions exemplify the power of the state to restructure urban space, prioritizing elite forms of accumulation and enforcing aesthetic norms of cleanliness, order and modernity. The ubiquity of world-class city-making has been taken by urban studies scholars as evidence of African leaders' converging on a unitary aspirational urban imaginary. This article contends that the concept of world class should instead be understood as a key terrain on which African governments' distinctive and diverse ideational ambitions are expressed. In Oyo State, southwest Nigeria, vernacular political traditions—in this case Yoruba cultural nationalism centred on the ideas of Obafemi Awolowo—were deployed by the state governor to legitimize urban renewal. Drawing on the Yoruba notion that elitism can be 'generalized', the cultivation of globalized urban forms was not only a project of becoming ever more homogenously 'international' but a historically grounded aspiration to become ever more essentially Yoruba. Thus, beyond commonalities across the discourses used to legitimize neoliberal urban development—world class, international and global—these universal sounding imaginaries may at the same time express much more particularistic political projects.

SOON AFTER HIS ELECTION IN 2011, the new Governor of Oyo State in southwest Nigeria, Abiola Ajimobi, ordered large-scale demolitions of roadside

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shops as part of his flagship urban renewal programme, leading to the loss of livelihoods for tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of voters.[1] In a video that Ajimobi's team posted on YouTube, the governor inspects a flyover under construction in the state capital, Ibadan. From out of shot a journalist asks, 'What about the traders who have been evicted?' The governor replies:

> I have already spoken to them. We have moved them to a new location where they will not cause any… any eyesore. I mean the message is that Oyo State must change, we want a clean state. … There was this United Nations World Body that in 2011, 2010 said Oyo State is the … dirtiest state in the world. And we are removing that. We don't want to be the dirtiest state. So we want the cooperation of all our people.[2]

This quote captures a number of the key tensions common to urban renewal programmes across Africa. National and municipal governments, supported by private and multi-lateral backers, aspire to visions of modernized 'world-class' cities.[3] These policies entail widespread disruption and substantial costs for the urban poor whose homes and livelihoods are often destroyed to make way for new high-end developments.[4] The recent study of urban renewal in Africa theorizes this trend as the localization of international ideas: mobile urbanisms[5] through imaginaries such as 'world class', 'global' and 'modern' are adjusted to local context but ultimately represent a convergence on a shared, homogenous ideological vision.[6] This article contends that whilst these terms at first sight allude to the universalizing nature of 21st century urban development, they may simultaneously draw on ethnically particularistic repertoires of meaning. Moreover, a renewed attention to local political traditions illuminates a related question: whilst

1. Extensive demolitions took place at all major trading areas, including Dugbe, Challenge, Iwo Road, Molete under Bridge, Mobile, Ojaba and Bodija.
2. 'Inspection of on-going road construction projects', *YouTube*, 4 September 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJkrlXcHnCI&feature=youtube_gdata_player> (12 July 2015).
3. D. Asher Ghertner, *Rule by aesthetics: World-class city-making in Delhi* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015).
4. Alessandra Radicati, 'Hub city: World class city-making and ideology in Colombo' (Manuscript under Review, n.d.), p. 2.
5. Eugene McCann and Kevin Ward, *Mobile urbanism: Cities and policymaking in the global age*, vol. 17 (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2011).
6. Elizabeth Rapoport, 'Globalising sustainable urbanism: The role of international masterplanners', *Area* 47, 2 (2015), pp. 110–115; Grace Adeniyi Ogunyankin, '"The city of our dream": Owambe urbanism and low-income women's resistance in Ibadan, Nigeria', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 43, 3 (2019), pp. 423–441; Laurence Côté-Roy and Sarah Moser, '"Does Africa not deserve shiny new cities?" The power of seductive rhetoric around new cities in Africa', *Urban Studies* 56, 12 (2019), pp. 2391–2407; Vanessa Watson, 'Policy mobility and urban fantasies: The case of African cities', in Richardson Dilworth and Timothy P.R. Weaver (eds), *How ideas shape urban political development* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2020), pp. 214–28.

world-class ideas may motivate government action, how are such projects 'legitimized to wider populations',[7] especially the urban poor who bear the costs? Caroline Melly notes the surprising ways that everyday hardships imposed by urban renewal in Dakar, Senegal, are 'rationalized, emphasized and even celebrated' by the state in an effort to win the consent of the masses.[8] The second contribution of this article, therefore, is to show how the twinning of world-class aspirations with more bounded forms of ethnocultural belonging help explain how a 'sense of belonging [can] co-exist alongside dispossession'.[9]

This article attends to these theoretical questions through an analysis of the role of local political ideas in urban renewal in Ibadan in the 2010s. First, Ajimobi's world-class aspirations were driven by a simultaneous desire for assimilation into global norms and a rediscovery of a powerful politico-cultural inheritance in form of Yoruba progressivism embodied in the tradition of Obafemi Awolowo, known affectionately as Awo.[10] Central to this self-described progressive tradition is the concept of 'olaju' meaning enlightenment, development or civilization[11] and a belief in the duty of government to guide society through 'a purposeful and positive transformation in a given direction'.[12] Drawing on his Awo-ist political inheritance, Governor Ajimobi asserted that elitism, typically a criticism of urban renewal projects,[13] could be not only legitimate but inclusive, despite imposing tangible costs on the livelihood of the poor majority. Rather than aspiring to assimilation into universal global imaginaries, as suggested by the emphasis on mobile ideas in the literature, the aim of urban renewal is to become more essentially Yoruba through becoming world class. On this view, perhaps counter-intuitively, elitism can be 'generalized', in the sense that the duty of government is to 'equip […] the masses with tools to become elite themselves' whether through education or robust social interventions.[14] Second, while more established governing elites are able to strategically

7. Harry Pettit, 'Hopeful city: Meritocracy and affect in global Cairo', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 42, 6 (2018), p. 1059.
8. Caroline Melly, 'Ethnography on the road: Infrastructural vision and the unruly present in contemporary Dakar', *Africa* 83, 3 (2013), p. 388.
9. Alessandra Radicati, 'The unstable coastline: Navigating dispossession and belonging in Colombo', *Antipode* 52, 2 (2020), p. 554.
10. Wale Adebanwi, *Yorùbá elites and ethnic politics in Nigeria: Obáfemi Awólowo and corporate agency* (Cambridge University Press, New York, NY, 2014), p. 15.
11. John D.Y. Peel, 'Olaju: A Yoruba concept of development', *The Journal of Development Studies* 14, 2 (1978), p. 145.
12. Ademola Kazeem Fayemi, and Olawunmi Macaulay-Adeyelure, 'A philosophical examination of the traditional Yoruba notion of education and its relevance to the contemporary African quest for development', *Thought and Practice* 1, 2 (2009), pp. 41–59.
13. Robert Neuwirth, *Stealth of nations: The global rise of the informal economy* (Anchor Books, New York, NY, 2012).
14. Adebanwi, *Yorùbá elites*, p.12.

'forget'[15] the poor majority, Ajimobi's party, the All Progressive Congress's (APC), emerged from a tradition of Yoruba-led opposition parties[16] that had long been shut out of federal government networks.[17] Especially as centrally allocated oil revenues dwindled from 2014 onwards, their financial and electoral survival relied on re-orienting the levers of government to deliver tangible 'performance' whilst rapidly expanding their fiscal base.[18] The Lagos Model, as it came to be known, delivered repeated landslide victories for the APC in Lagos in 2003, 2007 and 2011; Ajimobi hoped to repeat this success in Oyo albeit on a much more limited budget.[19] The contingency and thus vulnerability of APC's political control in Oyo State makes Melly's question of how elites win popular legitimacy for painful renewal programmes especially pertinent. It was necessary for Ajimobi to make the top-down notion of generalizing of elitism somewhat politically plausible.

This article draws on ethnographically informed qualitative fieldwork in Ibadan. Over 150 interviews and focus groups were conducted between October–December 2013, April–August 2015 and June–July 2018, of which 53 were with market traders. Four market sites in central Ibadan were selected to give a spectrum of experiences of urban renewal: one new purpose-built 'modern' market that I call neighbourhood market, one informal roadside market, one market that had been informally relocated a short distance from the roadside and one established market at risk of demolition and redevelopment. Interviews were conducted in a mixture of English, Yoruba and Pidgin, facilitated by multi-lingual research assistants. Five interviews were conducted with civil servants from relevant departments in the state government and another 17 with staff from the three corresponding local governments. Further interviews were carried out with senior state-level politicians, local community leaders, political organizers, non-government organizations staff, academics and party officials. All informant names are pseudonyms and some identifying characteristics have been changed to maintain confidentiality.

The next section considers debates about urban renewal in Africa as homogenization around a set of shared global imaginaries and grassroots

15. Leela Fernandes, 'The politics of forgetting: Class politics, state power and the restructuring of urban space in India', *Urban Studies* 41, 12 (2004), pp. 2415–2430.
16. The APC (formed 2013) was preceded by Alliance for Democracy from 1998 to 2006 and Action Congress Nigeria from 2006 to 2013.
17. Laurent Fourchard, 'Lagos, Koolhaas and partisan politics in Nigeria', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35, 1 (2011), p. 45.
18. Diane de Gramont, *Governing Lagos: Unlocking the politics of reform* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC, 2015).
19. Portia Roelofs, *The Lagos model and the politics of competing conceptions of good governance in Oyo state, Nigeria 2011–2015* (London School Economics and Political Science, unpublished PhD dissertation, 2017), chap. 5.

claims for inclusion therein. It then sets out the dual material and ideological background to urban renewal in Ibadan. Section three considers the political dilemmas around winning consent for urban renewal and the complex ways that ideas of elitism entailed both exclusion and inclusion for the roadside traders. The final section explores popular engagement with urban renewal both as a discourse and a set of material conditions. It concludes that the apparent ubiquity of world-class city-making,[20] and the shared terminology it so often entails, should not necessarily be interpreted as African leaders converging on a unitary ideological or aspirational imaginary.[21] Rather, this article invites further exploration of the ways in which the concept of the world-class city functions both as a site of convergence and as a key terrain on which African governments' diverse ideational ambitions are expressed.

Theorizing urban renewal in Africa

Urban renewal exemplifies the power of the state to 'restructure urban space',[22] prioritizing elite forms of accumulation and enforcing aesthetic norms of cleanliness, order and modernity.[23] As the post-colonial state has withdrawn from an active role in the economy and social provision since the 1980s, it has increasingly intervened in urban public space to convey public authority via infrastructural spectacles.[24] Demolitions and evictions of those who do not fit with utopian visions reflect both neoliberal and authoritarian tendencies[25] whereby the creation of an 'enabling environment'[26] for private-sector-led development encompasses both pro-market institutional reforms and literal environmental transformation.

Since the early 2000s, urban renewal has become associated with an emerging set of ideas centred on world-class cities.[27] The policy mobilities literature[28] documents how the circulation of ideas is integral to the adoption of ambitious urban development initiatives by African governments.[29] These ideas can be divided into three interrelated motifs. The

20. Ananya Roy, 'Urbanisms, worlding practices and the theory of planning', *Planning Theory* 10, 1 (2011), pp. 6–15.
21. Watson, 'Policy mobility and urban fantasies'.
22. Fernandes, 'The politics of forgetting'.
23. Ghertner, *Rule by aesthetics*.
24. Ambreena Manji, 'Bulldozers, homes and highways: Nairobi and the right to the city', *Review of African Political Economy* 42, 144 (2015), pp. 206–224.
25. Sami Zemni and Koenraad Bogaert, 'Urban renewal and social development in Morocco in an age of neoliberal government', *Review of African Political Economy* 38, 129 (2011), pp. 403–417.
26. Roelofs, *The Lagos model*, chap. 5.
27. Roy, 'Urbanisms, worlding practices and the theory of planning'.
28. McCann and Ward, *Mobile urbanism*.
29. Richardson Dilworth and Timothy P.R. Weaver, *How ideas shape urban political development* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, PA, 2020).

first is the idea of a the world-class city as a universally 'desirable state to which all cities should aspire',[30] characterized by a shared visual vocabulary of 'symbolic power'[31] such as skyscrapers[32] and flyovers.[33] The second is the idea of a shared continental destiny such as seen in the Africa Rising narrative[34] that positions rapid urban development as a remedial response to the continent's perceived association with 'backwardness'.[35] Whether in the boosterism of McKinsey's 2010 description of African economies as 'lions on the move'[36] or in academic critiques of the consumerism of Afropolitanism,[37] the idea of African countries on a shared trajectory is widespread. The third and perhaps most widely documented idea is world-class cities as mimicry with Rwanda marketing itself as the Switzerland of Africa and Lagos as 'Africa's own Big Apple'.[38] Whether the 'borrowed plans'[39] come from the West, or represent a form of south–south mobility, with African governments imitating Singapore, Dubai or Seoul, urban renewal is undertaken to 'remake the city in the image of somewhere else considered world class'.[40]

According to Watson these ideas ultimately serve to homogenize cities across the African continent, even if in 'travelling from one place to another changes the character and content of mobilized ideas'.[41] Added to these ideational commonalities, urban renewal and regeneration schemes are often sponsored and promoted by a comparatively small group of 'international master-planners'[42] and share strong neoliberal rationalities.[43] The impression given by the literature is one of convergence upon and assimilation into a shared urban future, at least at the level of aspiration. Following the call to 'build understandings of urban processes based on the experiences of Southern cities',[44] there is a risk that the distinctiveness of urban

30. Watson, 'Policy mobility and urban fantasies', p. 215.
31. Michele Acuto, 'High-rise Dubai urban entrepreneurialism and the technology of symbolic power', *Cities* 27, 4 (2010), pp. 272–84.
32. *Ibid*.
33. Stephen Graham, 'Elite avenues: Flyovers, freeways and the politics of urban mobility', *City* 22, 4 (2018), pp. 527–50.
34. Manji, 'Bulldozers, homes and highways'.
35. Côté-Roy and Moser, 'Does Africa not deserve shiny new cities?'.
36. McKinsey Global Institute, 'Lions on the move: The progress and potential of African economies' (McKinsey Global Institute, London, 2010).
37. Ogunyankin, 'The city of our dream', p. 424.
38. 'LAGOS - Africa's own big apple| QCPTV.Com', *YouTube*, 19 July 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eVPQJWBmPQA> (23 April 2018).
39. Watson, 'Policy mobility and urban fantasies', p. 225.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*, p. 216.
42. Rapoport, 'Globalising sustainable urbanism'.
43. For a discussion of the extensive literature connecting neoliberalism and urban renewal see: Susan Parnell and Jennifer Robinson, '(Re)Theorizing cities from the global south: Looking beyond neoliberalism', *Urban Geography* 33, 4 (2012), pp. 593–617.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 595.

renewal across African cities is being underplayed by a superficial acceptance of this shared terminology and aesthetic. This article contends that the apparently universal imaginaries associated with 21st century urban renewal in Africa—world class, international and global—are not merely localized or domesticated but may in fact be equally constituted through particularistic ethno-cultural histories and ideas in specific urban contexts.

A related question is how these local political ideas in turn shape the strategies and prospects for states' efforts to legitimize urban renewal to those most affected, and their reception and contestation by the urban poor. Common to most if not all urban renewal projects is the accusation of elitism and that they fuel exclusion of the poor from urban space.[45] However, as Melly argues, leaders often celebrate the costs of urban renewal, framing shared sacrifice as a form of inclusion in national development.[46] Whilst earlier work focussed on resistance to top-down renewal policies,[47] scholars increasingly attend to 'people's acquiescence to their displacement by modern developments'[48] and their efforts to claim inclusion in these world-class visions.[49] The literature has largely focussed on the ways in which leaders and citizens have navigated inclusion in the same 'globally recognisable'[50] universal categories discussed above, exemplified by Durban based street-traders' call for 'World Class Cities for All'[51] and the identification of unemployed men in Cairo with UN-sponsored discourses of neoliberal entrepreneurship.[52] The second contribution of this article is thus to raise the possibility that inclusion in world-class visions is legitimized not only as a matter of assimilation into global norms, but equally as the expression of much more localized and bounded political identities. As such it responds to Susan Parnell and Jennifer Robinson's call to open up 'a greater range of theoretical initiatives to interpret processes of urbanization'.[53]

The Lagos Model and urban renewal in Ibadan

Urban renewal has a long history in Nigeria. British efforts to rationalize Ibadan via urban planning started in 1917, with the Township Ordinance,[54] and initiatives to criminalize street trading go back to at least the

45. Manji, 'Bulldozers, homes and highways'.
46. Melly, 'Ethnography on the road'.
47. Manji, 'Bulldozers, homes and highways'.
48. Pettit, 'Hopeful city', p. 1050; Melly, 'Ethnography on the road'.
49. Radicati, 'The unstable coastline'.
50. Ogunyankin, 'The city of our dream' p. 426.
51. Radicati, 'The unstable coastline', pp. 542–61.
52. Pettit, 'Hopeful city'.
53. Parnell and Robinson, '(Re)Theorizing cities from the global south', p. 595.
54. Boyowa Anthony Chokor, 'Ibadan', *Cities* 3, 2 (1986), p. 110.

1940s.[55] In the post-1999 era, urban renewal centred on flaunting 'Hilux trucks and gleaming new white rubbish transporters' around the city.[56] In this context, Governor Ajimobi's ability to see through a coherent city-wide programme marked him out from his predecessors. Between 2011 and 2013 Ajimobi initiated and, at times, personally participated in[57] large-scale demolitions of informal roadside shops to 'clean up' Ibadan, Oyo's state capital of roughly six million people, reshaping the social and environmental fabric of the city on an unprecedented scale. Sanitation Day, for instance, is a nationwide convention dating from the War Against Indiscipline of the 1983–1985 military regime.[58] On one Saturday morning a month, roadblocks prevent vehicle movement and people are required to clean their local area or else remain indoors. Under Ajimobi, this traditional monthly rite was supplemented with a second sanitation day on the last Thursday of every month, when businesses are barred from opening before 10 am.[59]

Ajimobi's vision for Ibadan was part of a wider regional political programme. What I describe elsewhere as the Lagos Model[60] was first pioneered in Lagos under former Governors Bola Tinubu (1999–2007) and Babatunde Fashola (2007–2015) and 'underpinned by a distinctly high-modernist vision of the future'.[61] The Lagos Model relied on a political-economic balancing act to finally overcome antagonisms between Lagos-based elites and the federal government dating to the colonial era. Throughout military and democratic regimes, the southwest has tended to be an opposition-held area, shut out of Northern dominated federal patronage networks.[62] In the early 2000s President Olusegun Obasanjo of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) regularly withheld the statutory allocations from the Governor of Lagos State, Bola Tinubu, making the region reliant on internally generated revenues if it was to build up an alternative economic base for the opposition.[63] Whereas the PDP used

55. Laurent Fourchard, 'Lagos and the invention of juvenile delinquency in Nigeria, 1920–60', *Journal of African History* 47, 1 (2006), p. 115–137.
56. John Manton, "'Environmental Akalism" and the war on filth: The personification of sanitation in urban Nigeria', *Africa* 83, 4 (2013), p. 607.
57. Interview, Iyaloja and Babaloja, female and male market leaders, informal roadside market, Ibadan, 19 and 20 May 2015.
58. The War Against Indiscipline was the key plank of the Buhari-Idiagbon military regime of 1983–1985. For more discussion of the role of Sanitation Day in this 'authoritarian and ostensibly anti-corruption' regime see: Manton, 'Environmental Akalism', p. 610.
59. Whilst this requirement was subsequently eased for more high-end businesses like banks and petrol stations, by Ajimobi's second term it was still in force for ordinary shop-keepers.
60. Roelofs, *The Lagos model*.
61. Nic Cheeseman and Diane de Gramont, 'Managing a mega-city: Learning the lessons from Lagos', *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 33, 3 (2017), p. 460.
62. Rotimi Suberu, *Federalism and ethnic conflict in Nigeria* (United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC, 2001), p. 88.
63. Fourchard, 'Lagos, Koolhaas and partisan politics', p. 45.

the full muscle of the federal state to contest elections, governors from 'the progressive camp'[64] had to win over voters with a demonstration of their ability to 'perform', that is, deliver tangible evidence of economic and social development. This meant attracting foreign direct investment and expanding the formal private sector in order to enlarge the taxable economic base.[65] For state governors in Lagos, Oyo and elsewhere in the APC-held southwest, 'elite ambitions to construct an orderly and prosperous mega-city'[66] were central to their strategy for economic and political survival.[67]

This rapid urban transformation was achieved in part through violent state action and legislation that criminalized informal urban livelihoods.[68] The 2012 Lagos Traffic Law banned 'okadas'—informal motorbike taxis—from plying the city's main routes.[69] In Ibadan too, urban renewal was enacted through coercion: traders were given little or no warning[70] before their stalls and stock were bull-dozed by 'Caterpillar'-mounted sanitation officers and mobile police. Rival gubernatorial aspirants from the PDP demanded that displaced traders be given 'palliatives'[71] and market associations petitioned the governor and local governments to provide alternative locations.[72] Yet, these alternative neighbourhood markets—whilst purpose-built and 'modern'—enjoyed little passing trade. Many traders, facing ongoing economic hardship, returned to their previous locations by the road risking fines of up to 10,000 naira (N).[73]

At the same time, Tinubu, Ajimobi and other APC governors were dependent on their electorates. Although urban renewal was accompanied by state violence reminiscent of the military era,[74] governing through force was financially and electorally unsustainable for the comparatively vulnerable progressive governors. They needed their taxes, compliance and votes.[75] In spite of the obvious costs of widespread demolitions, the Lagos Model's vision of urban transformation would ultimately have to be achieved through consent. Billboards proclaiming 'Lagos is working. Pay

64. Adebanwi, *Yorùbá elites*, p. 248.
65. Cheeseman and de Gramont, 'Managing a mega-city'.
66. de Gramont, *Governing Lagos*, p. 1.
67. Cheeseman and de Gramont, 'Managing a mega-city', p. 474.
68. Neuwirth, *Stealth of nations*.
69. Daniel E. Agbiboa, 'Conflict analysis in "world class" cities: Urban renewal, informal transport workers, and legal disputes in Lagos', *Urban Forum* 29, 1 (2018), pp. 1–18.
70. Interview, roadside pepper seller, Ibadan, 21 June 2018.
71. Olakunle Taiwo, 'Politics of poverty alleviation schemes,' Tribune, 6 August 2014, <http://tribune.com.ng/quicklinkss/politics/item/12553-politics-of-poverty-alleviation-schemes/12553-politics-of-poverty-alleviation-schemes> (7 July 2015).
72. Focus group, roadside phone sellers, Ibadan, 20 May 2015.
73. *Ibid.*
74. Manton, 'Environmental Akalism'.
75. Cheeseman and de Gramont, 'Managing a mega-city'.

your tax!' were the most obvious visual sign of renewal of the social contract.[76] Whereas governors in Lagos had the resources to secure consent for their transformative vision by offering mass employment in traffic and waste management cadres,[77] Oyo State, with a budget less than a tenth of the size was in a more precarious position.[78] Moreover, as the 2015 election approached, oil prices and the states' statutory allocation collapsed. With a monthly deficit of N1.8bn by late 2014, Ajimobi was unable to pay civil servant salaries, let alone expand public sector employment.[79]

Given the constraints of scarce funds and tight electoral competition, ongoing coercive enforcement was neither sustainable nor desirable. In advance of 2015, Ajimobi was forced to relax enforcement of urban renewal and environmental offences—fines for illegally parked cars and incorrect disposal of waste—in order not to jeopardize his chances of re-election. However, he remained committed to transformation and believed it was possible to win compliance through consent. The rest of the article explores how this was attempted not through a denial of urban renewal's elitist connotations but asserting the long-standing Yoruba idea linking elitism and collective development.

Yoruba ideas of elitism

The ideas of elites as a social and discursive category has historically been intertwined with notions of enlightenment and modernization, both in southwest Nigeria and African politics more generally.[80] However, the exact meaning of elites and elitism has shifted with changes in education, income distribution and social consciousness. Elites have been defined as not only those in leadership roles but 'creator[s] of new ideas and values' which allowed them to act as the 'prime movers of change'.[81] In the post-independence era formal education and employment in white-collar jobs became new signifiers of elite status across the continent.[82]

Typically, elites are defined by exclusivity, whether sociologically or politically; a minority of very important people defined in contrast to the

76. Leah Gatt and Oliver Owen, 'Direct taxation and state–society relations in Lagos, Nigeria', *Development and Change* 49, 5 (2018), pp. 1195–1222.
77. de Gramont, *Governing Lagos*.
78. Roelofs, *The Lagos model*, p. 127.
79. 'Ajimobi raises alarm over dwindling allocation to states', Oyo State Government Website, Ibadan, 7 November 2014, <http://www.oyostate.gov.ng/ajimobi-raises-alarm-over-dwindling-allocation-to-states/> (1 April 2015).
80. Adebanwi, *Yorùbá elites*.
81. Peter C. Lloyd, *The new elites of tropical Africa* (International African Institute, Oxford, 1966), pp. 50–51.
82. *Ibid.*

masses.[83] Yoruba social and political thought shares this idea of a special leadership role falling to those who are elite by the virtue of their education or understanding. A long-held elitist conviction among Yoruba rulers links knowledge and power.[84] The sociological context of this line of thought stretches back to pre-colonial times with knowledge and power reaching a 'fused pinnacle in the person of the King'.[85] Central to ideas of good leadership is the Yoruba concept 'olaju', meaning development, enlightenment or civilization. The term was first used to refer to the 'the cultural package brought from outside by, above all, missionaries'.[86] Through the region's early experience with mission education, the southwest contributed a disproportionate share of government functionaries to the colonial state bureaucracy.[87]

Whereas in the days of the warrior kings, knowledge was seen as scarce, and to be hoarded by the king, the association of 'olaju' with conversionary religions such as Christianity re-cast it as 'something to be spread about'.[88] More recently, a 2014 promotional brochure for foreign investors from the Development Agenda for Western Nigeria (DAWN) Commission—a regional development association funded by the six state governors of the southwest zone—lauds the 'highly sophisticated and educated' nature of the Yoruba people.[89] Enlightened understanding is at once a source of authority for those leaders who possess it, and yet those enlightened leaders have a duty to massify such knowledge. As such, Adebanwi explains, rather than elites and elitism being defined by its exclusivity, progressive Yoruba politicians govern on the assumption that the masses are in fact putative elites-in-the-making and that elitism can be 'generalized'.[90] On this view, social stratification is not an inevitable and natural social fact, but—through appropriate state-guided social transformation—the masses might be absorbed into the elite, with upward social homogeneity on the horizon. Thus, while much of the scholarship has:

> emphasized the distinction of the elite from the non-elite – that is, the masses – the Yoruba concept of the elite in the Awolowo tradition emphasises the elective affinity of the elite and the masses, and their common destiny.[91]

83. Edwin Ardener, 'The notion of elite', *African Affairs* 66, 262 (1967), pp. 64–66.
84. Aderemi Suleiman Ajala, 'Identity and space in Ibadan politics, western Nigeria', *African Identities* 6, 2 (2008), pp. 149–68.
85. Peel, 'Olaju', p. 145.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
87. Ajala, 'Identity and space in Ibadan politics'.
88. Peel, 'Olaju', p. 149.
89. DAWN Commission, 'Southwest Nigeria: An economic outlook 2014' (DAWN Commission Research and Analytics Department, Ibadan, 2014), p. iii.
90. Adebanwi, *Yorùbá elites*, p. 10.
91. *Ibid.*, 12.

Adebanwi's theory of a harmonious shared identity between elite and masses opens up the possibility of everyone becoming socially if not politically or economically elite through an 'affinity of interests' in the long term if not the short term due to a 'homogeneity of social aspirations between the elite and the masses'.[92]

The politics of Obafemi Awolowo's pre-independence progressive agenda illustrates these ideas in practice. During the 1950s, the western region government distinguished itself as a force for social intervention in order to accelerate the social and economic transformations required for a modern, developed society. With the seat of government in Ibadan, Awolowo's party, the action group, saw the state as the instrument for 'the grand enactment of olaju'[93] including the flagship scheme to provide free and compulsory primary education. Adebanwi describes the aim of these transformative social programmes as 'generalizing elitism, or at least equipping the masses with the tools of becoming elite themselves'.[94]

Mass education was not without sacrifice: the action group imposed hefty taxation increases to support free universal primary education that consumed 40 percent of the western region's budget. At the time it was noted that 'the people are not averse to paying high education rates at some considerable sacrifice to themselves'.[95] Indeed Awolowo set a precedent within Yoruba progressive practice for an expectation that ordinary people would submit to top-down intervention in order to achieve social progress from which they would eventually benefit.[96] Inevitably this was contested, culminating with the subsequent Agbekoya Revolt against taxation in the 1960s. Yet this ideological discourse—linking good governance, to 'olaju', to popular forbearance and sacrifice—was central to Awolowo's enduring legitimacy even as he faced resistance on certain policies. As such, Adebanwi argues, Yoruba political ideas, reworked through 70 years of Awo-ist political practice, challenges the 'negative connotations' that elitism has in the West.[97]

The counter-intuitive idea that elitism is at heart a question of attitude and as such can be generalized is a striking challenge to the standard meaning of elite as an exclusive minority. Yet, it invites us to re-consider common 21st century political projects—such as urban renewal—through the alternative lens of the deeply held ideological attachments of their initiators.

92. *Ibid.*, 12.
93. John D.Y. Peel, *Ijeshas and Nigerians: The incorporation of a Yoruba kingdom 1890–1970s* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983), p. 159.
94. Adebanwi, *Yorùbá elites*, p. 12.
95. L. Gray Cowan, *Local government in West Africa* (Columbia University Press, New York, NY, 1958), p. 135.
96. Eades, *The Yoruba today* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980).
97. Adebanwi, *Yorùbá elites*, pp. 12–13.

Ajimobi's election in April 2011 as the Governor of Oyo State was part of the 'contemporary revival' of Awo-ist politics.[98] As such it provides a case study from which to explore how this surprisingly elastic meaning of elitism shaped government action and popular legitimacy. As we shall see, urban renewal posed similar tensions around the role of the masses in elitist visions of development.

Urban renewal and the resurgence of Yoruba cultural nationalism

Adeniyi Ogunyankin argues that urban renewal under Ajimobi was evidence of 'the localization of neoliberal planning'[99] and part of a wider Afropolitan Imagineering project of 'making Africa conform to the dominant norm'.[100] She describes this as 'owambe urbanism': a way of showing that Ibadan 'has arrived'.[101] However, where exactly Ibadan was meant to end up is less obvious. Whilst Ajimobi did indeed make familiar claims to copying Dubai, the UK and Singapore, this section draws on interviews with individuals who were part of the APC's rise to power in Oyo State in the 2010s to show how these internationally salient ideas of global megacities were only part of the picture. Urban renewal was also pursued as a way of resurrecting an imagined Yoruba golden age.

Transnational networks of Yoruba professionals in the diaspora played a key role in the resurgence of progressive politics linked to Awolowo. These networks were formalized in a number of institutions. Whilst Tinubu's funding and the Lagos Model provided the political-economic blueprint for the Action Congress Nigeria (ACN), this set of institutions linked regional transformation to long-standing aspirations for collective Yoruba self-realization. First among these was the Afenifere Renewal Group (ARG)—an off-shoot of younger modernizers from the Awo-ist political grouping, the 'Egbe Afenifere'. In 2007 the ARG joined with other Yoruba intellectuals to set up the Yoruba Academy to promote the revitalization of Yoruba language and culture. In 2011, when five out of six states in the southwest were led by progressive governors, this broad network drafted a roadmap for the DAWN. The roadmap describes the electoral victories of 2011 as 'a rare opportunity (never experienced since 1966) to unlock the region's potential for world-class development'.[102] The DAWN commission formally launched with the backing of the region's governors in 2013 with its headquarters on the 10th floor of Cocoa House in Ibadan,

98. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
99. Ogunyankin, 'The city of our dream', p. 429.
100. *Ibid.*, p. 426.
101. *Ibid.*, p. 428.
102. DAWN Commission, 'DAWN roadmap' (Development Agenda for Western Nigeria, Ibadan, 2011), p. 18.

an icon of the western region's glory days and the one-time tallest building in Nigeria. DAWN's website notes how this symbol of urban modernism 'remains a centre for economic development for the Yoruba people and the Region'.[103]

Olu was in his 40s and a member of this highly educated and politically engaged diaspora.[104] He had attended meetings of the ARG in Nigeria and Britain periodically before getting more involved with group emails on the future of Yorubaland in 2010–2011. When we met in 2015, he was working for the DAWN Commission. Olu explained that throughout all these projects, they were guided by the question: 'How can we re-enact the Awolowo era of the old western region?' However, these cultural ideas were combined with more self-consciously globalized affinities. As Olu explained, 'Exposure matters'.[105] Following in the tradition of 'olaju' he drew on, he emphasized that his vision for Nigeria was based on experiences living and working in the UK and the USA. For those who did not have the opportunity to live or work abroad, education could serve a similar purpose: 'When you are well read, even if you haven't left the shores of your country you are exposed.'[106]

Whilst 'olaju' has long linked knowledge and power to 'connection with faraway places',[107] this generation of Yoruba intellectuals gave 'olaju' meaning via their own experiences of mobility. Under Awolowo, formal employment was predominantly in the public sector and the state was assumed to play a leading role in development through expanded free public provision.[108] Many of this younger generation of self-described 'eggheads' had left Nigeria in search of better opportunities in the wake of the collapse of formal sector jobs in the 1990s. They were more likely to have built careers in the private sector, such as business, banking and IT. A more pro-market orientation was reflected in emphasis on public–private partnerships in transport, waste management and utilities[109] and scepticism towards state provision of services.[110] Urban renewal—beautification, decongestion and the introduction of local taxation[111]—was central to this vision of 'moving forward by returning to the past'.[112]

Thus, the reformist project in southwest Nigeria can be understood as informed by both norms of internationalized corporate urbanity and

103. DAWN Commission, 'DAWN & the commission', DAWN Commission Website, 2019, <http://dawncommission.org/dawn-the-commission/> (12 November 2020).
104. Interview, senior staff member of DAWN Commission, Ibadan, 5 June 2015.
105. *Ibid.*
106. *Ibid.*
107. Peel, 'Olaju', p. 146.
108. *Ibid.*
109. DAWN Commission, 'DAWN roadmap'.
110. Interview, senior staff member of DAWN Commission, Ibadan, 5 June 2015.
111. DAWN Commission, 'DAWN roadmap', p. 40.
112. Adebanwi, *Yorùbá elites*, p. 223.

Yoruba political traditions. As the next section demonstrates, world-class aspirations were informed as much by particularistic ideas of rediscovery, an essential Yoruba identity, as they were by the desire to adopt increasingly homogenous global norms and practices.

Elite audiences, political dilemmas

Urban renewal in Ibadan, as in other world-class aspiring cities,[113] was justified on the basis that it would attract more investment and foreign capital[114] in addition to being safer for traders who were at risk from passing vehicles. The vision statement for the DAWN strategy reads: 'To make the Southwest region of Nigeria the preferred place to live, to work and to visit.'[115] The project of transforming Ibadan was lent urgency by the political imperative to build a sustainable economic base outside of federal government structures. Ajimobi committed himself to creating an 'enabling environment'[116] for investors, both through the establishment of new executive agencies like the Bureau for Investment and Public–Private Partnerships and more literally through appealing to imagined aesthetic and consumer tastes. Echoing Ajimobi, sympathetic newspapers frequently bemoaned Oyo's reputation as one of the 'filthiest' states in the country, a tag it was supposedly awarded in a now mythic UN Habitat report on Ibadan from the 1990s.[117] A 2013 article from *The Nation*, owned by Ajimobi's political sponsor, Tinubu, celebrates how 'Ibadan wears new look as Oyo govt transforms ancient city', explaining how 'travellers from Lagos' would be treated to a new vista, with the 'alluring green lawn and flowers' and 'beautified' road medians.[118]

Moreover, it was argued by Ajimobi and his team that to attract investors Ibadan needed not only better transport links and security but also hotels and recreational facilities. One insider, known to be 'in the engine room of governance' in Ajimobi's first term—explained the importance of appealing to the consumer tastes of foreign elite investors:

113. Radicati, 'Hub city', p. 2.
114. Ogunyankin, 'The city of our dream'.
115. DAWN Commission, 'DAWN roadmap', p. 6.
116. Kunle Oderemi and Moses Alao, 'My govt's stomach infrastructure not about propaganda—Ajimobi', *Tribune*, 3 January 2015, <http://www.tribune.com.ng/interviews/item/25763-my-govt-s-stomach-infrastructure-not-about-propaganda-ajimobi/25763-my-govt-s-stomach-infrastructure-not-about-propaganda-ajimobi> (5 January 2015).
117. Oseheye Okwuofu, 'Neighbourhood markets end Oyo traders' grief', *The Nation*, 12 February 2014, <http://whatsupibadan.com/2014/02/12/neighbourhood-markets-end-oyo-traders-grief/> (21 October 2015).
118. Bisi Oladele, 'Ibadan wears new look as Oyo govt transforms ancient city', *The Nation*, 6 December 2013, <http://whatsupibadan.com/2014/02/12/neighbourhood-markets-end-oyo-traders-grief/> (3 March 2015).

> If you go to the UK or you go to America and you say, come to my state and invest. I mean, when you drive into the state you want good roads, you want a nice hotel to stay in.[119]

Indeed, Ajimobi's achievements included setting up public–private partnerships to build consumer infrastructure such as a state government sponsored five star hotel,[120] replacing beer parlours with 'nite clubs', the redevelopment of Agodi Gardens—a recreation park near Secretariat—and attracting a second ShopRite to the city.[121] Certain local government areas were identified as the epicentre of the 'new Ibadan', including the governor's own home neighbourhood of Ibadan southwest.[122] However, this left much of the city, and the majority of its inhabitants, in need of rapid transformation.

Olu[123] noted that whilst they could now boast 'intellectuals' in government, southwestern governors 'were dealing with a largely illiterate population'.[124] Within the overarching Awo-ist's characterization of the Yoruba people as sophisticated, there were variations: voters in Oyo State, he argued, more susceptible to spurious political manipulation compared with a more cosmopolitan electorate in Lagos: 'If I bring in taxes as a governor [here] and you are my opponent, you can go to town and *lie* to them, oh God'.[125] Olu was not alone in this analysis. The engineer, a high-ranking appointee of the governor during the height of the demolitions, described clearing traders from the roadside as epitomizing the dilemma of trying to achieve urban transformation: 'decisions that are not popular with people but are essential if you are going to transform the state into a modern state.'[126] Amongst the wealthier, better educated members of the progressive movement that brought Ajimobi to power, there was a belief of resistance to urban renewal with reference to traders being uneducated, illiterate and difficult to convince. The engineer explained that convincing a trader not to sell on the road

> is much more difficult than convincing an educated person who is an elite, on the need to build his houses with government approved plans.

119. Interview, senior member of Ajimobi's cabinet, Ibadan, 24 July 2015.
120. Oyo State Government, 'Oyo commences construction of 150-oom 5-star hotel' Oyo State Government Website, 22 May 2012, <http://www.oyostate.gov.ng/oyo-commences-construction-of-150-room-5-star-hotel/> (3 May 2015).
121. Temitayo Olofinlua, 'Could Ibadan be Nigeria's next top city?', *African Business* 49, 421 (2015), pp. 81–83.
122. Interview, senior staff member of DAWN Commission, Ibadan, 5 June 2015.
123. Pseudonym.
124. Interview, senior staff member of DAWN Commission, Ibadan, 5 June 2015.
125. *Ibid.*
126. Interview, former member of Ajimobi's cabinet, Ibadan, 6 May 2015.

> … they could relate with the logic of what the governor wants to do. … But the common man, they don't see that.[127]

Yet they still hoped that the wider population could be convinced to consent to the sacrifices of development, as prefigured in Awo-ist political tradition of generalizing elitism.

Sacrifice and the need for 'mind shift'

The condescending attitudes towards the urban poor, discussed above, existed in parallel with a conviction among the governor's team that the urban poor could nonetheless be convinced to see and act like elites after all.

Echoing the expansion of taxation for education in 1950s Yorubaland,[128] Ajimobi justified demolitions as a sacrifice for development. Adeniyi Ogunyankin has documented Ajimobi's framing of urban renewal as embodying the 'collective resolve' needed to enjoy the 'fruits of discomfort'.[129] This same discourse was reproduced in public discussion of urban renewal in the press. What is striking is that supporters of urban renewal did not downplay the strength of opposition to the policy or the suffering it entailed. 'The nation' likewise noted that Ajimobi's plan to clean up Ibadan 'drew a lot of criticisms from some of the people, especially those in the opposition'.[130] Rather, progressive commentators emphasized how the traders had eventually been reconciled to Ajimobi's elitist vision, bringing their understanding into alignment with his 'enlightened' view of the world. The following quotes come from a report in 'The Tribune', a newspaper founded in 1949 by Awolowo himself and still owned by his descendants that is broadly sympathetic to Ajimobi's agenda:

> While some traders ground their teeth, the political opposition screamed blue murder. But the government insisted that the pains that came with the traders' movement to the new market, which was under construction then, were a sacrifice during a change process.[131]

In the governor's discourse sacrifice was twinned with a transformation in understanding, after which voters would view short-term suffering in the context of long-term collective development. The governor's special

127. *Ibid.*
128. Cowan, *Local government in West Africa*, p. 135.
129. Ogunyankin, 'The city of our dream', p. 431–33.
130. Okwuofu, 'Neighbourhood markets end Oyo traders' grief'.
131. *Sunday Tribune*, 'From roadside to neighbourhood market, Ibadan traders speak on experience', 8 February 2015, <http://tribune.com.ng/quicklinkss/features/item/28860-from-roadside-to-neighbourhood-market-ibadan-traders-speak-on-experience/28860-from-roadside-to-neighbourhood-market-ibadan-traders-speak-on-experience> (6 May 2015).

adviser on public affairs explained that in voting for Ajimobi the electorate had already demonstrated an appreciation of this approach, which he summarized as 'no pain no gain'. He explained that they could put the sacrifice in its correct perspective of future gain: 'They can see the promise land and are willing to break eggs to make the developmental omelet [sic].'[132] In this way, urban renewal in Ibadan shares ideational similarities with state discourse from other schemes on the continent, where 'inconveniences and disruptions [are] endured for the sake of the nation'.[133] However, whereas Melly emphasizes how sacrifices are legitimized in the name of the evolution of Senegal as a modern nation state, the case of urban renewal in Ibadan shows the way in which world-class city-making is legitimized not only by the need to assimilate into a global order of modern political uniformity, but also by the fulfilment of a certain historical construction of ethno-cultural identity.

Echoing the principle of 'olaju', Ajimobi focussed on making these sacrifices acceptable through cultivating an appropriate understanding among the electorate. In his 2011 inauguration speech, the new governor explained to the assembled crowds that the march to restore the state 'requires a collective resolve to change our attitude'.[134] Indeed, development was cast as a question of cultivating the right attitude and values. Commenting on his government's efforts to fix the unclean environment, Ajimobi noted that 'the major challenge was the psychology of a great people' who through the previous governors' failings had been 'left fallow'. Fortunately, he noted, the problematic psychology had been replaced with 'a can-do environmental cleanliness spirit' and 'a passionate disgust for filth'.[135] As Ajimobi's Special Adviser of Public Affairs put it: 'The Ajumose progressive train is on the move around Oyo State . . . no ticket needed, just a mind shift'.[136] In the context of the Awo-ist tradition and the tradition of 'olaju', this psychological transformation is not just an expression of generic norms of modernization and development, but a call to realize a shared and as yet unfulfilled Yoruba identity. The next section asks, how the traders—simultaneously imagined to be both backward and mouldable—responded to such efforts to cultivate 'enlightened' attitudes and generalize elitism.

132. Toye Arulogun, 'Tidal wave of Ajimobi's intellectualism', *The Guardian*, 30 April 30, 2015, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201504300776.html> (2 July 2015).
133. Melly, 'Ethnography on the road', p. 387–88.
134. Ola Ajayi, 'Oyo: It is more than amala politics for Ajimobi', *Vanguard News*, 17 June 2011, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2011/06/oyo-it-is-more-than-amala-politics-for-ajimobi/> (14 April 2016).
135. 'Full text of Governor Ajimobi's inaugural speech,' Oyo State Government Website, 30 May 2015, <http://www.oyostate.gov.ng/full-text-of-governor-ajimobis-inaugural-speech/> (12 April 2015).
136. Arulogun, 'Tidal wave of Ajimobi's intellectualism'.

Popular engagement with urban renewal

In response to criticism of urban renewal, Ajimobi announced that all local governments should build a modern neighbourhood market in their local government area, to accommodate the traders who had been cleared from the roadside.[137] These were to showcase aesthetics of cleanliness and order and acted as outposts of the 'new Ibadan' in an otherwise unruly city. Purpose-built stalls were arranged in numbered blocks, shaded from the sun and rain and provided with amenities like electric lights, a bore-hole and toilets. This section presents the experiences of traders in one of the first modern markets to be built by Ajimobi's government, referred to here as neighbourhood market.

The displaced traders were central to the construction of the market. They organized themselves into sectional associations according to what they sold, allowing them to liaise more effectively with the local government and contractor. Through such associations the traders helped clear the ground before building work began, trading from an access road in the interim. In line with the governor's policy of private sector development, the market was built via a public–private partnership and eventually managed by a locally based company that charged a fee to provide security and waste collection. Once the market was officially launched, the market represented the traders' removal from the roadside and relocation away from the view of passing traffic, whilst also representing their inclusion—however unrewarding—in the vision of the 'new Ibadan'. When Ajimobi visited one of the modern markets to distribute cash to establish a system of rotating loans, he said the money 'was the dividends of obedience for the traders who decided to assist his government's urban renewal programme by removing their wares from the streets'.[138] Yet, the success of this largesse relied on the self-government of the traders to enforce the repayment and administration of the loans such that they could be re-circulated within the market.

Even with some financial support from the state government, traders faced poor sales. They struggled to rebuild a customer base in a city where shopping from roadside stalls and traditional markets is the norm. Gradually traders started leaving neighbourhood market and selling at the roadside again. For those who stayed, this decision involved sustained periods of economic hardship in order to continue to attend the market despite earning little to no revenue. Individual traders were forced to either cross-subsidize their presence with economic activities elsewhere or draw

137. Tunde Sanni, 'Ajimobi- urban renewal programme to attract investors', *This Day*, 28 November 2012, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201211280604.html> (11 April 2016).
138. Okwuofu, 'Neighbourhood markets end Oyo traders' grief'.

on familial resources to subsidize the government's vision of anew orderly market.[139]

The rest of this final section compares how those who stayed in neighbourhood market positioned themselves with regard to the discourse of elitism versus those who returned to the roadside. Together they show how top-down agendas are variously leveraged and resisted by the targets of urban renewal schemes.

The view from neighbourhood market

Like most markets in Ibadan, neighbourhood market was overseen by a Babaloja or male leader of the market. Mr Ogunyemi[140] was around 50 years old and had been in business for two decades, before buying a small shop at a large roundabout in central Ibadan. When the traders were cleared away as part of urban renewal, he informally took on a leadership position among the traders who initially camped outside the modern market. Many of the traders he represented told me about the stress of urban renewal, shops and stock destroyed, their fear for their lives and their future. Yet, when I asked Mr Ogunyemi what happened when they were moved to the site, he was quick to interject and correct me. In his account the government did not make them move, rather, the traders had taken it upon themselves as a group to relocate: 'we the traders know the right thing.'[141]

The Babaloja was not the only one to reproduce the discourses of urban renewal as a decision reflecting a new and elevated understanding. A provisions seller drew a clear link between the modernization of Ibadan and Ajimobi's claims to elite knowledge: 'He was schooled abroad, he knows comfort is good for human beings'.[142] Others noted the benefits of the 'organized'[143] and 'conducive'[144] atmosphere where they could finally 'live well'.[145] Mrs Omowale[146] was a clothing seller, who grew up in Ibadan and had several children in school. She similarly affirmed the benefits of relocation:

> We like it o! Because he chased us away from roadside and death…even when rain falls now we have where we can hide our heads and markets. So, we like it.[147]

139. Interview, ready-made clothing seller, modern market, Ibadan, 30 June 2015.
140. Pseudonym.
141. Interview, Babaloja, modern market, Ibadan, 19 June 2018.
142. Interview, provisions seller, modern market, Ibadan, 13 May 2015.
143. Interview, herbal medicines seller, modern market, Ibadan, 13 May 2015.
144. Focus group with plastics sellers, modern market, Ibadan, 13 May 2015.
145. Interview, provisions seller, 13 May 2015.
146. Pseudonym.
147. Interview, ready-made clothing seller, modern market, Ibadan, 30 June 2015.

Whilst she admitted that they were initially 'chased away' from the roadside, she explained that the governor's instruction to leave the roadside was initially received as a top-down order but over time she changed her mind and saw the benefit:

> They asked us to leave the road for the fear of accident and *iku leni iku lola* (death today! death tomorrow). Oncoming vehicles crushing everybody including children of the traders and hawkers to death and when I also reasoned I decided to leave and never want to go back to the roadside.[148]

However, remaining in neighbourhood market was not unproblematic. Whilst a few of her customers from her previous location had stuck with her out of loyalty, others had abandoned her as similar products could be bought more conveniently at roadside stalls and the cost of transport to the new, unfamiliar location was off-putting. She did not blame them. She herself was paying 400N a day for travel and complained that business in the new market was slow. Fortunately, her husband, a truck driver, was able to cover the family's basic needs so she was able to stay in neighbourhood market. The stories of Mr Ogunyemi, Mrs Omowale and the provisions seller reproduced the idea of an enlightened elite public and the possibility that by remaining in neighbourhood market—despite the cost—they were members of it.

At times, this claim to belonging in Ajimobi's 'new Ibadan' was explicitly linked to party networks. The more enthusiastically pro-government traders implored me to pass on specific messages to the governor about their continued presence in the market. As one of the market leaders told me, 'This is Ajimobi's market'.[149] Mr Ogunyemi was open about his role in promoting the APC. He saw his conversations with me as a means of demonstrating his loyal partisanship; 'What I'm saying now is part of that promotion'.[150] He was affiliated with one of the state-wide associations that had benefitted from a high-profile loan disbursement scheme from the governor and when we spoke again in 2018, he told me about how the first lady had distributed food parcels for Ramadan.[151]

This raises the question of the extent to which traders' compliance—both by affirming the government's discourse and by remaining in 'his' market—spring from their incorporation into party patronage networks. As I have

148. *Ibid.*
149. Focus group with food sellers, modern market, Ibadan, 2 July 2015. Others described it as 'the Ajimobi market zone': focus group with food sellers, modern market, Ibadan, 9 July 2015.
150. Interview, Babaloja, modern market, Ibadan, 19 June 2018.
151. *Ibid.*

argued elsewhere,[152] traders associations were central to the APC's distribution of patronage in advance of the 2015 election. Indeed, some of the traders remained in neighbourhood market in the belief that their presence made them eligible for party-affiliated youth empowerment programmes, which were always on the horizon, but for the majority did not materialize. In particular, a few high-profile female traders devoted considerable time to establishing themselves within APC-affiliated groups and were partially successful: securing N1,000 for attending a rally or slots for their group members in welfare schemes run by the governor's wife.

However, party patronage was only part of the picture. The initiative for building these connections to the governor's party came as much from below as from above: interested traders exercised agency in maintaining their position in such networks or opting out of them altogether. Prospective members had to pay up to N1,000—more than many made in a week—for the application form and then make regular donations to a kitty used for banners and branded clothing to show that they were active and visible supporters. Moreover, the APC did not have a monopoly of support within the market: one trader used connections from the market to form an unaffiliated group which then invited rival politicians from the area to woo them for support.[153] Others avoided participation in political networks, seeing it as too much of a hassle. Whilst some of those affected by urban renewal were incentivized to 'speak the same language' as the governor in the hope of receiving party patronage, this fails to fully account for the affirmation and adoption of the discourse of elitism. Rather it needs to be understood in the context of widespread and deeply held cultural and political ideas of education, enlightenment and progress embodied in concepts like 'olaju'.

No longer an eyesore: The view from the roadside

Indeed, even those who had returned to the roadside in violation of the governor's urban renewal injunctions used the discourse of elitism to position themselves as part of a valued constituency. Agatha[154] had been relocated from a busy junction to neighbourhood market by the government in 2011.[155] On arrival she joined the shoe and bags sellers' group and started trading shoes. Despite receiving the N10,000 interest-free loan Agatha had found it impossible to make enough money in the new market, so in 2012

152. Portia Roelofs, 'Beyond programmatic versus patrimonial politics: Contested conceptions of legitimate distribution in Nigeria', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 57, 3 (2019), pp. 415–436.
153. Interview, baby-wares seller, Ibadan, 2 July 2015.
154. Pseudonym.
155. Interview, electricals seller, Ibadan, 3 July 2015.

she returned to roadside trading near her previous spot, where she switched to selling electrical products. Her position shows the way that party patronage is insufficient to keep people trading in the spaces that the government envisaged as part of their modernizing visions; indeed she had used half of the loan to pay off an existing debt and spent the rest on food for her children. She was still to pay back the original loan over 2 years later.

Whilst Agatha had been forced to go against government policy in terms of roadside trading, she was nonetheless keen to emphasize her embrace and domestication of central themes from the urban renewal agenda and broader Awo-ist progressive project—cleanliness, aesthetic order and 'sanity'. She agreed with the need to clean up the city and move traders away from the most dangerous traffic intersections. She complained about other roadside traders who sell in 'dirty areas like a dustbin', immediately following it up by saying: 'But the present government is saying no to such a life style and changes in the attitude of the people are the utmost in the minds of the government.'[156] When asked whether she could describe herself and her immediate neighbours as elite she replied: 'To an extent I can liken them to elite in the sense that every Thursdays we engage in general cleaning after which we do the personal one to ensure that our environment is clean.'[157]

These grassroots discourses of elitism and enlightenment were echoed by other roadside traders: a young woman explained the pleasure she took when people refused to believe she was a pepper seller. Aware of the image, implicitly endorsed by the governor, that 'market sellers smell, aren't educated or don't dress well' she asserted her membership of a more valued constituency.[158] She was preparing for the university entrance examination and in the meantime made sure to have attractive outfits and well styled nails, even when she was trading. Elitism, it seemed, was in reach.

This article opened with Ajimobi describing roadside traders as an 'eyesore' who would have to be swept away to make space for the 'new Ibadan'. He ordered the building of modern markets to act as spatial outposts of this elite vision. Traders who could not survive low sales and so defied top-down urban renewal, nonetheless internalized aspects of the overall ideational project. In this way, traders at the sharp end of global-city aspirations carved out space for their own 'new Ibadan': spaces of order and cleanliness where they too could enact refracted visions of elitism.

156. *Ibid.*
157. *Ibid.*
158. Interview, pepper seller, Ibadan, 21 June 2018.

Conclusion

In southwest Nigeria, the past, embodied in the memory of politicians like Obafemi Awolowo and concepts like 'olaju', serves as a blueprint for legitimizing urban renewal. Governor Ajimobi's world-class mega-city aspirations were informed by a contested Yoruba conception of elitism, giving rise to a vision of urban transformation rooted both in 'future-oriented aspirations'[159] and nostalgia. The rise of the Ajimobi in Oyo State and APC governors across the southwest was supported by a new generation of institutions devoted to the promotion of Yoruba cultural nationalism alongside the political and economic project of autonomy from the PDP-held controlled federal government, via the Lagos Model. For intellectuals within these institution, urban renewal was an opportunity to continue the political project initiated in the 1950s by Obafemi Awolowo, with roots in pre-colonial Yoruba thought. Thus, the cultivation of globalized urban forms does not simply indicate a project of becoming ever more homogenously 'international' but combines it with a historically grounded aspiration to become ever more essentially Yoruba.

The legitimizing of urban renewal policies through the ideas of Yoruba progressivism alerts us to a wider and thus far overlooked aspect of contemporary urban development in Africa more generally. Watson and others have theorized world-class cities in Africa as the localization of international ideas, where mobile urbanisms are adjusted to local context but ultimately represent a convergence on a shared, homogenous ideological vision.[160] This article goes further: terms that on the surface allude to the universalizing and homogenizing nature of 21st century urban development—such as world class, global and modern—are simultaneously constructed through ethnically particularistic repertoires of meaning.

Indeed, whilst the Africanist literature has emphasized the role of pan-continental 'Africa Rising' aspirations in driving urban renewal,[161] the genealogy of urban renewal in Ibadan shares more with the urban ambitions informed by Sinhala nationalism in Columbo[162] and Hindutva in Indian cities[163] in that it demonstrates the possibility that the universal sounding aspiration to world-class cities can be coupled with a highly situated, ethnically inflected conception of the valued political community, albeit in a less antagonistic form. Thus, the case of Ibadan invites us

159. Radicati, 'Hub city', p. 13.
160. Watson, 'Policy mobility and urban fantasies'; Ogunyankin, 'The city of our dream'.
161. Manji, 'Bulldozers, homes and highways'; Côté-Roy and Moser, 'Does Africa not deserve shiny new cities?'.
162. Radicati, 'The unstable coastline'.
163. Renu B. Desai, *The globalizing city in the time of Hindutva: The politics of urban development and citizenship in Ahmedabad, India* (University of California, Berkeley, CA, unpublished PhD dissertation, 2008).

to probe deeper into the ideological accompaniments of urban renewal in Africa. Beyond commonalities across the discourses used to legitimize neoliberal urban development, future research should look beyond Nigeria to explore the distinctive political projects that leverage these generic sounding imaginaries.