

Review

The anatomy of urban regeneration-led gentrification in the middle east and north Africa—A systematic literature review

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Abstract: Urban regeneration and gentrification are complex, interconnected processes that significantly shape cities. However, these phenomena in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region are often understudied and typically viewed through a Western lens. This systematic review of literature from 2010 to 2024 addresses this gap by synthesizing a comprehensive framework for understanding urban regeneration-led gentrification in MENA countries. The review delves into key themes: Gentrification contexts, the regeneration process, gentrification accelerators, and the aftermath of gentrification. It explores the diverse motives behind urban regeneration, identifies key stakeholders, and analyzes catalysts of gentrification. Findings reveal that informal areas and deteriorated heritage sites in major cities are most susceptible to gentrification. The study also highlights the critical issue of insufficient community participation and proposes a participation evaluation framework. The unique socioeconomic and political factors driving gentrification in the MENA region underscore the necessity of context-specific approaches, facilitating the identification of regional similarities and differences. Conclusively, the review asserts that gentrification is a cyclic process, necessitating core interventions through enhanced regeneration strategies or displacement plans to mitigate its effects.

Keywords: gentrification; urban regeneration; segregation; urban regeneration; urban policy; middle east; Middle East and North Africa; MENA

1. Introduction

Cities are dynamic systems that continually adapt to various external forces and internal pressures, driving physical, social, environmental, and economic changes (Roberts et al., 2000). Urban regeneration strategies are crucial for responding to these changes, defined as comprehensive and integrated efforts aimed at resolving urban issues and achieving lasting improvements in economic, physical, social, and environmental aspects of areas undergoing change (Donnison, 1993; Diamond and Liddle, 2005; Hausner, 1993; Lichfield, 1992; Tallon, 2010). These strategies are essential for guiding the development and revitalization of urban areas, ensuring their resilience and ability to meet the needs of their populations.

However, such regeneration projects often lead to gentrification (Leccis, 2019). Gentrification is characterized by the influx of higher-income residents and increased property values, which can result in the displacement of long-standing, lower-income residents (Carmon, 1999; Chapple and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2019; Griffith, 1996; Glass, 1964). This phenomenon highlights the dual nature of urban regeneration, where efforts to revitalize and improve neighborhoods can simultaneously create challenges related to social equity and community displacement. As such, gentrification can be

seen as the other side of the regeneration coin (Lees and Phillips, 2018), necessitating careful consideration and management to balance development and inclusivity.

With gentrification becoming an increasingly international issue led by global neoliberal urban policy (Smith, 2002), the urgency to understand its causes, consequences, and why it persists increases. This is reflected in the increasing number of publications on the issue, the multidisciplinary nature of the topic, and the multidimensionality by which it could be approached (Brown-Saracino, 2013). These dimensions range from defining gentrification to identifying the gentrifier, studying the consequences of gentrification, as well as investigating alternative practices (Brown-Saracino, 2013; Smith, 2002).

A chapter in *Handbook of Gentrification* comparing the global North and South highlights how gentrification can take different forms in different contexts despite the similar consequences (Can, 2019). While gentrification has been extensively studied in Western nations, its impact in the Middle Eastern region, including North Africa, remains underexplored. Middle Eastern cities such as Cairo, Damascus, and Istanbul are often analyzed through essentialist paradigms, which reduce their complexity to static, culturally, or historically determined attributes (Shechter and Yacobi, 2020). Lee (2012) consequently calls for the decolonization of gentrification literature from Euro-American perspectives. Recent studies suggest that in the MENA region, gentrification often serves unique purposes; for example, it is not merely an economic process but also a governmental tool for achieving territorial control and strengthening national presence (Shmaryahu-Yeshurun and Ben-Porat, 2020). This underscores the need for a closer examination of the region's unique socio-political, economic, and cultural dynamics. Addressing this gap not only contributes to a more inclusive understanding of urban regeneration and gentrification but also highlights the interplay of local and global forces, providing valuable insights for both regional and global urban policies.

This systematic literature review aims to develop a normative framework to comprehensively study gentrification in the context of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). For the purposes of this review, acknowledging that there is no universally accepted definition of the MENA region, the study considers the following countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine/ Israel, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. Throughout this review, the term "Middle East" will be used interchangeably with "MENA" to refer to this group of countries. The specific and universal results of this review aim to assist researchers, planners, and policymakers in viewing the multifaceted implications of urban regeneration projects to mitigate or prevent its gentrification effects.

This review is organized as follows: Section 2 introduces the methodology followed to select the studies for this review. Section 3 details the thematic framework followed to categorize and analyze the literature. Section 4 discusses how the literature tackles each of the 4 identified themes. This includes 'gentrification contexts', which examines where gentrification occurs; 'the regeneration process', which details the motives and methods behind urban regeneration projects that often lead to gentrification; 'gentrification accelerators', which identify the exacerbating factors that result in gentrification; and 'the aftermath of gentrification', which explores the

consequences and impacts of gentrification. The findings under these themes are synergized in the discussion in Section 5, followed by a brief conclusion with highlighted gaps and implications for future studies in Section 6.

2. Methodology

2.1. Database selection

This study follows a database search approach similar to those used in earlier studies (Maghelal, 2008). ScienceDirect was chosen due to its extensive collection of high-quality, peer-reviewed journals across various disciplines, including urban studies, social sciences, and regional planning. This diversity allows for a comprehensive examination of the topic from multiple angles, providing a more holistic perspective on urban regeneration and gentrification. It offers comprehensive full-text access to articles, facilitating an in-depth review of the literature.

2.2. Search period

The search period was defined as the years from 2010 to 2024. While literature reviews typically cover the last decade, this timeframe was extended to 2010 to capture major changes in the region, such as the Arab Spring, which had significant impacts on many MENA countries. This extended period allows for an in-depth analysis of recent trends, innovations, and the evolving impacts of urban regeneration projects on gentrification. Furthermore, focusing on this period ensures that the findings are directly applicable to current urban planning and policymaking, providing insights that reflect the latest changes and challenges in the field.

2.3. Search strategy

A systematic search was conducted using keywords related to urban regeneration, gentrification, and the MENA region. The search strategy included Boolean operators and was implemented in the following stages:

General keywords: The initial search used the general keywords ‘urban regeneration’ and ‘gentrification’. This broad search aimed to capture a wide range of literature discussing the overarching concepts and theories related to the topic.

Country-Specific focus: The second search focus involved combinations of each identified country with ‘gentrification’. For example, “Egypt AND gentrification”. This stage ensured that the search captured country-specific studies, providing insights into how gentrification manifests in different national contexts within the MENA region.

Thematic focus: The third search introduced keywords to explore the intersection of gentrification with analysis tools, policies, and sustainable development. The keywords used were ‘urban regeneration and tools and Middle East’ as well as ‘sustainable and regeneration and gentrification and urban policy and Middle East’.

This multi-stage approach ensured a comprehensive retrieval of relevant studies, covering a broad spectrum of topics and perspectives related to urban regeneration and gentrification in the MENA region.

2.4. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

To ensure the relevance and quality of the selected studies, predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied:

- Inclusion criteria:
 - Studies must address urban regeneration and gentrification in the MENA region.
 - Studies published between 2010 and 2024.
 - Studies published in English.
 - Research articles published in peer-reviewed journals.
- Exclusion criteria:
 - Studies not directly address the research questions or themes of the review.
 - Studies published outside the specified time frame.
 - Studies not published in English.

Books, review papers, commentaries, editorials, non-peer-reviewed articles, and studies with poor methodology or insufficient data.

2.5. Search results

The search process began with each of the keyword searches, followed by an assessment of title relevance. Relevant titles were first checked to determine if they mentioned any location. If the title specified a location within the MENA region or if the location was unspecified, the abstract was reviewed. Abstracts were examined to identify the study location; if the location was relevant to the MENA region or unmentioned but relevant, the full text was reviewed. Articles clearly unrelated to the MENA region based on title or abstract were excluded. This practical approach ensured that only pertinent articles were included for full-text review and subsequent analysis. The filtering process resulted in a total of 57 articles. The process is summarized in the PRISMA flow diagram in **Figure 1**.

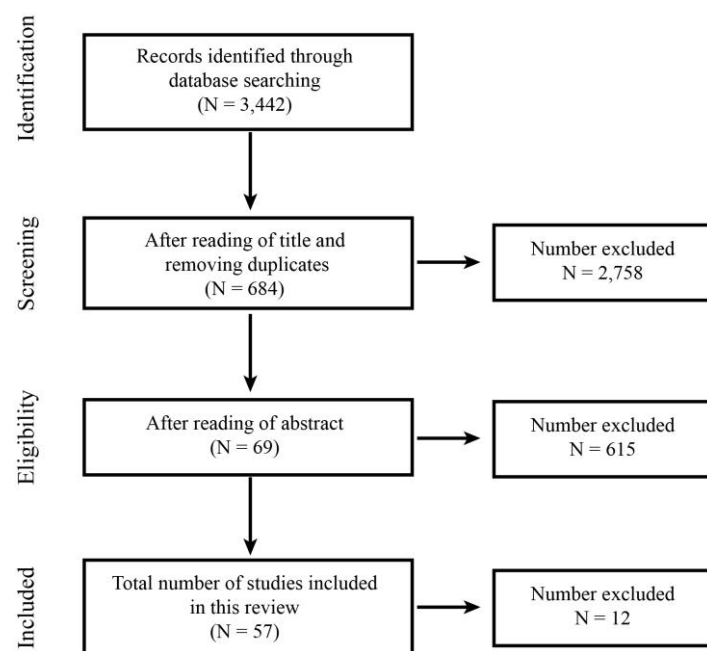


Figure 1. Flowchart of the article selection process.

2.6. Initial reflections on search results

General information such as journal, year of publication, case study location (by country and city) as well the main aim of the study was noted for the 57 studies. Based on that, a few trends were identified:

Increasing interest: While the number of publications fluctuates every year, there is an increasing trend in publication which indicates increasing interest in the topic of gentrification in the MENA region.

Multidisciplinary interest: The interest in gentrification is multidisciplinary, with publications appearing in various journals across urban planning, policy, geography (e.g., *Geoforum*, *Political Geography*), engineering, and social and behavioral sciences.

Widespread phenomenon: Gentrification is a widespread phenomenon in the MENA region, with publications on the topic in 10 of the 15 countries under study.

High research activity in turkey: Turkey stands out as the country with highest level of research on gentrification, with 21 of the 57 publications focusing on different cities in Turkey.

3. Thematic framework

3.1. Definitions and identification of themes

The thematic framework for this review was developed through a systematic analysis of the literature, identifying recurring patterns and key areas of focus. Four main themes were identified:

Gentrification contexts: Focuses on areas prone to gentrification, such as informal settlements, deteriorated heritage areas, segregated communities, and new developments.

The regeneration process: Examines the motives behind urban regeneration, the types of projects (physical, social, economic, cultural, people-oriented), and the role of community participation.

Gentrification accelerators: Identifies factors that can turn a regeneration project into gentrification, categorized into physical (e.g., increased land value, physical segregation), socioeconomic (e.g., social segregation, fragmented ownership), and political (e.g., policies, governance, political history) factors.

The aftermath of gentrification: Analyzes the consequences of gentrification, focusing on the impact on displaced residents, such as the disruption of social bonds, recreation of segregation in new areas, and the perpetuation of a gentrification cycle.

By organizing the literature into these themes, the framework ensures a logical progression from identifying contexts of gentrification to understanding the regeneration process, examining accelerators, and assessing the aftermath. This structured approach provides a holistic view of gentrification, highlights research gaps, and facilitates future studies, offering a robust foundation for understanding and addressing gentrification in the Middle Eastern context.

3.2. Articles by theme

Table 1 categorizes the reviewed articles according to the identified themes, showing the distribution of research across different aspects of gentrification studies.

Each paper was primarily marked by its main aim and discussions, although other aspects of gentrification might be addressed in passing.

Table 1. Primary themes covered by the papers in this review.

Articles by Country	Context	Process	Accelerators	Aftermath
Egypt				
Hu et al. (2017)	-	-	-	X
Mahmoud (2017)	X	-	X	X
Tawakkol (2020)	-	-	X	-
Elsorady (2018)	-	X	X	-
Elrefai (2024)	X	X	-	-
Iran				
Dadashpoor and Ghazaie (2019)	-	-	X	X
Saedi (2018)	X	-	-	-
Sarvarzadeh and Abidin (2012)	-	X	-	-
Pourzakarya and Fadaei Nezhad Bahramjerdi (2019)	-	X	-	-
Pourzakarya and Bahramjerdi (2021)	-	X	-	-
Chahardowli and Sajadzadeh (2022)	X	X	-	-
Forouhar (2022)	-	X	-	X
Ghadiri and Mozaffa (2022)	-	X	-	-
Mirzakhani et al. (2021)	-	X	-	-
Forouhar et al. (2022)	-	-	-	X
Kamjou et al. (2024)	X	X	X	-
Jordan				
Al-Nammari (2014)	-	X	-	-
Lebanon				
Yassin (2012)	-	-	X	X
Al-hagla (2010)	-	X	-	-
Morocco				
Charney (2015)	-	X	X	X
Palestine/Israel				
Monterescu (2011)	-	X	X	-
Modai-Snir and van Ham (2018)	-	-	X	X
Geva and Rosen (2018)	X	-	X	-
Rizzo (2014)	-	X	-	-
Shamai and Hananel. (2022)	-	X	X	X
Nachmany and Hananel (2023)	-	X	-	-
Ahn and Juraev (2024)	X	-	X	-
Shmaryahu-Yeshurun (2022a)	-	-	-	X
Shmaryahu-Yeshurun (2022b)	X	X	X	-
Schwake (2020)	X	X	X	-

Table 1. (Continued).

Articles by Country	Context	Process	Accelerators	Aftermath
Qatar				
Saeedi (2018)	-	X	X	-
Abdulaal (2012)	-	X	-	-
Al-Mohannadi et al. (2023)	X	X	-	-
Saudi Arabia				
Mandeli (2019)	-	-	X	X
Cin and Egercioğlu (2016)	-	X	-	-
Throsby and Petetskaya (2021)	X	X	-	-
Turkey				
Cin and Egercioğlu (2016)	-	X	X	X
Eraniil Demirli et al. (2015)	-	-	X	X
Ozdemirli (2014)	-	X	X	-
Uysal (2012)	-	X	X	X
Akkar Ercan (2011)	-	X	-	-
Gunay and Dokmeci (2012)	-	X	-	-
Ay (2019)	-	X	X	-
Özdemir and Selçuk (2017)	-	X	X	X
Turk and Korthals Altes (2010)	-	X	-	X
Korkmaz and Balaban (2020)	-	X	-	-
Güzey (2016)	X	-	-	-
Uzun and Celik Simsek (2015)	-	X	X	-
Akçalı and Korkut (2015)	-	-	X	-
Özbay Daş and Özşahin (2020)	-	-	X	-
Salihoglu et al. (2021)	X	X	-	-
Grocer et al. (2021)	X	-	X	X
Kocabiyik and Loopmans (2021)	-	-	X	X
Pala and Acar (2023)	-	-	X	X
Avar et al. (2024)	-	X	-	-
Ökten et al. (2021)	-	-	-	X
UAE				
Alawadi et al. (2018)	-	-	-	X
Percent	25%	63%	49%	37%

3.3. Observations on themes

Overall, the ‘Regeneration Process’ is the most heavily discussed theme in the literature of the MENA region, covered by literature from all countries except the UAE, as shown in **Table 1**. In contrast, the theme receiving the least attention is ‘Gentrification Contexts’, with only 25% of the articles exploring the role of specific locations in exacerbating gentrification. While most articles are case studies of specific cities, the context is often presented as complementary to the main theme rather than the primary focus. For instance, studies by Mahmoud (2017) and Saeedi (2018)

discuss contexts but also link them to accelerators and the aftermath of gentrification. This indicates that while the context is acknowledged, the primary emphasis often lies in understanding the processes and consequences of gentrification.

None of the reviewed studies concurrently discuss all four themes comprehensively, suggesting a fragmented approach in the current gentrification literature. Most studies focus on up to three themes, which highlights the complexity of gentrification and the need for a more integrated approach in future research.

4. Results

4.1. Theme 1: Gentrification contexts

The vast majority of articles reviewed discuss regeneration and gentrification in capital or major cities, showing a trend of urbanized gentrification. Within the existing literature, most case studies can be grouped into four specific contexts: Informal settlements, deteriorated heritage areas, segregated communities, and new developments.

Informal settlements: These areas are characterized by housing built in life-threatening or health-threatening conditions, often with disputed ownership.

Deteriorated heritage areas: These include historic districts, downtowns, waterfronts, and areas of historic or cultural value that have decayed over time due to neglect and require comprehensive regeneration strategies.

Segregated communities: These areas are segregated by income, religion, or identity, facing challenges such as discrimination, reduced opportunities, and low-quality services.

New developments: These projects, such as transportation infrastructure and megaprojects, often replace robust urban land and can lead to demographic changes and gentrification.

1) Informal settlements

One significant reason for urban regeneration discussed in the articles is the need to address the poor conditions of widespread informal settlements. Elfaramawy (2013) classifies informal settlements as housing that is built in life-threatening areas, built of inappropriate materials, built in health-threatening areas with limited infrastructure support, or built in tenure-lacking areas called 'gray areas'. These areas face complexities related to land governance, tenure patterns, and housing supply and demand (Rafieian and Kianfar, 2023; Rafieian and Kianfar, 2024). While some of these illegal settlements are occasionally legalized through amnesty laws or other regularization efforts, they often remain disaster-prone due to inadequate infrastructure and poor construction standards (Güzey, 2016; Turk and Atlas, 2010).

Such informality is attributed to rapid urbanization and internal migration from rural areas to city centers where services and employment opportunities are more prevalent, coupled with the unavailability of affordable housing (Güzey, 2016; Hu et al., 2017; Korkmaz and Balaban, 2020; Özdemir and Selçuk, 2017; Yassin, 2012). Additionally, rapid leap-frog suburbanization encouraged the formation of squatter settlements in the in-between vacant lands (Monterescu, 2011).

The prevalence of informality in the Middle East is evident in Greater Cairo where two-third of population living in informal settlements (Elrefai, 2024; Hu et al.,

2017). Similarly, five million people living in the slums of Morocco (Atia, 2019) and 29% of the Turkish population living in squatters (Turk and Korthals Altes, 2010). Consequently, informal settlements are the second most discussed context in the literature.

2) Deteriorated heritage areas

The second context encompasses aged areas which have historic, social, or cultural value. Based on the literature assessment, these contexts are the primary focus of most regeneration efforts. These include historic districts, downtowns, public spaces, and waterfronts that have deteriorated over time due to industrialization and city center abandonment. These areas often feature multiple urban voids, surrounded by piece-meal interventions focused on new buildings and wider streets that devalue them (Al-Mohannadi et al., 2023; Ghadiri and Sarafi, 2022). Such deterioration is reflected as urban decay, defined as the transformation of the urban or social morphology and socioeconomic decline (Hu et al., 2017).

Characteristics of deteriorated areas include the burdening of infrastructure, lack of access to public transportation and appropriate pedestrian routes, pollution, low building quality (Ozdemirli, 2014). Additionally, these areas suffer compromised vitality, safety, and health (Gunay and Dokmeci, 2012). Beyond physical decay, deteriorated areas also reflect changed or unmet user requirements, a demographic loss of population, economic depression (Elsorady, 2018), fragmentation, polarization, and lack of management (Mandeli, 2019).

3) Segregated communities

Segregation in the Middle East is by income (Ay, 2019; Dadashpoor and Ghazaie, 2019), religion (Yassin, 2012), identity (Modai-Snir and van Ham, 2018; Uysal, 2012), or all three (Monterescu, 2011). This segregation can vary in intensity on the urban ethnic spectrum ranging from assimilation to pluralism, segmentation, polarization, and cleansing (Monterescu, 2011). While segregated communities often exhibit strong social cohesion, they tend to suffer from social, infrastructural and physical drawbacks, including discrimination, reduced job opportunities, increased drug abuse and crime, higher prices, political isolation, low quality of services, aging buildings, and inefficient access (Saeedi, 2018). According to Ahn and Juraev (2024), such isolated enclaves' impact social-economic and cultural dimensions profoundly. This categorizes segregated communities as a specialized type of deteriorated areas, often differentiated by not sharing historic, social, and cultural value.

Segregation appears as both a driver for regeneration and a trigger for gentrification. For instance, income-based segregation in the form of inadequate social housing indirectly leads to displacement and internal migration (Ay, 2019; Dadashpoor and Ghazaie, 2019). Similarly, sectarian social segregation can result in direct physical segregation through forced displacement (Monterescu, 2011) or require regeneration due to discriminatory deterioration of services (Uysal, 2012). Finally, physical segregation is studied as a consequence of gentrification, which recreates minority stratification (Cin and Egercioğlu, 2016; Dadashpoor and Ghazaie, 2019; Monterescu, 2011). Across the reviewed countries, the interplay of segregation is discussed most profoundly in Palestine-Israel.

4) New developments

The final context discussed in the literature is new development projects such as

new transportation infrastructure (Beyazit, 2015; Furlan et al., 2019) and megaprojects replacing robust, urbanized land (Alawadi et al., 2018; Charney, 2015; Modai-Snir and van Ham, 2018; Rizzo, 2014). Additionally, Mahmoud (2017) introduces the concept of pre-urban gentrification, where developments on vacant land change the planned demographics of an area. This can be seen in the large developments in the vacant lands in Jeddah (Abdulaal, 2012).

4.2. Theme 2: The regeneration process

Having examined the various contexts in which gentrification takes place, we now turn our attention to the process of urban regeneration itself. This section will explore the motives behind urban regeneration, the types of projects undertaken, the role of community participation, and the negotiation complexities inherent in the regeneration process.

1) Regeneration motives

Urban regeneration projects involve a diverse range of stakeholders, including the state and state advisory, investors, private developers, residents and tenants, shop owners and tenants, and the general community including tourists (Elsorady, 2018; Özdemir and Selçuk, 2017; Uzun and Celik Simsek, 2015). These stakeholders can be broadly categorized as state, developers, and inhabitants.

Private developers play a crucial role due to the high cost associated with regeneration projects. States encourage private investments by easing policies, reducing risks, providing infrastructure, increasing minimum lot sizes, and granting tax waivers (Adair et al., 1999; Charney, 2015; McGreal et al., 2000; Özdemir and Selçuk, 2017; Verhage, 2005). In the MENA region, the motives of these stakeholders range from economic to political, social, ecological, and physical.

Economic motive: Stakeholders aim to capitalize on high land value (Atia, 2019; Charney, 2015; Geva and Rosen, 2018; Harvey, 2010; Lees and Phillips, 2018; Tawakkol, 2020), benefit from property taxes (Greenberg, 2003), relocate labor to places where they can be strategically exploited (Bourdieu and Nice, 1979; Tawakkol, 2020), and resolve housing shortages (Atia, 2019).

Political motive: Regeneration can be used to achieve political goals such as depoliticizing areas that are a revolutionary symbol (Tawakkol, 2020) or creating an urban iconicity to encourage tourism (Ghannam, 2002; Kaika and Thielen, 2006; Özdemir and Selçuk, 2017).

Social motive: Efforts are made to promote urban liveliness (Charney, 2015; Satterthwaite, 1997) and attract the middle class in dwindling neighbourhoods (Akpınar, 2008).

Ecological motive: Regeneration aims to restrain urban sprawl, conserve environmental assets, reduce traffic, and mitigating urban voids that impact liveability and connectivity (Al-Mohannadi et al., 2023; Furlan et al., 2019).

Physical Motive: Projects focus to reduce traffic (Forouhar, 2022; Furlan et al., 2019), modernize the city, build safer and enhanced infrastructure, or simply adjust building interiors (Ghannam, 2002; Özdemir and Selçuk, 2017; Satterthwaite, 1997).

These motives can be achieved through various forms of urban regeneration projects, as discussed in the next subsection.

2) Types of regeneration

Urban regeneration projects encompass various approaches, each targeting specific aspects of the urban environment. These approaches can be combined to create more comprehensive and holistic regeneration strategies.

Physical revitalization is the enhancement of the built setting (Elsorady, 2018; Tyler et al., 2018). This includes modernist regeneration intending to increase hygiene and sanitation (Sarvarzadeh and Abidin, 2012), as well as neighborhood greening strategies (Kamjou et al., 2024). Physical revitalization is often associated with gentrification (Ghadiri and Sarrafi, 2022).

Social revitalization aims to attract new populations to urban areas, revitalizing communities and fostering social cohesion (Elsorady, 2018).

Economic revitalization involves introducing new or expanding existing functions such as retail and commercial activities to increase land value and employment rates (August, 2014; Doratli, 2005; Elsorady, 2018; Hoernig and Seasons, 2004).

Cultural revitalization focuses on creating cultural districts, preserving historic areas, and initiating cultural activities. This can include simple regeneration of cultural settings, using cultural events to catalyze urban regeneration, or leveraging culture for socioeconomic development (Evans, 2005; Gunay and Dokmeci, 2012). An example is the tourism-based economic approach proposed by Chahardowli et al. (2020) for Hamedan City’s historical core in Iran.

People-oriented revitalization prioritizes the public as the main audience for planning, ensuring that regeneration projects meet the needs and aspirations of the community (Sarvarzadeh and Abidin, 2012).

These types of regeneration can be combined in various ways to achieve broader goals as shown in **Figure 2**. While some projects do this intentionally, often one regeneration type leads to the other. For example, physical revitalization can result in social and cultural revitalization (Elsorady, 2018). Popular combinations in the literature include:

Postmodernist: combines cultural and physical factors (Sarvarzadeh and Abidin, 2012).

Comprehensive: Combines cultural, physical, economic, people-oriented, and social factors (Al-hagla, 2010).

Sustainable: Combines physical, cultural, economic, social, people-oriented, and ecological factors (Korkmaz and Balaban, 2020; Wheeler and Beatley, 2008).

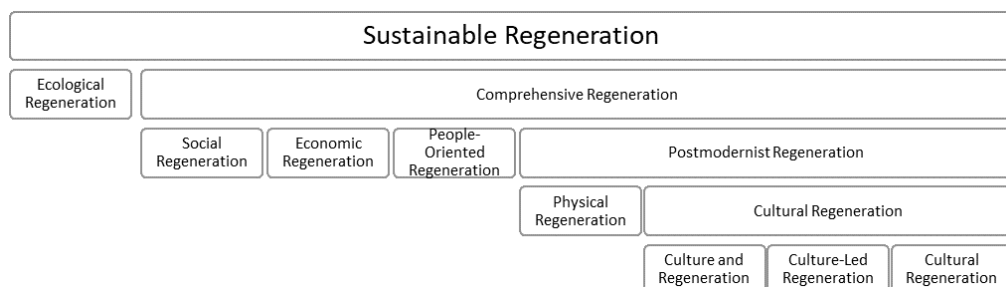


Figure 2. Types of regeneration.

Determining the optimal regeneration strategy is a complex task, heavily

discussed in recent literature in the MENA region. The importance of place-specific regeneration plans is reiterated by Ghadiri and Sarafi (2022). Building on this, in his 2024 study, Elrefai introduces a tool designed to assist governments and developers in selecting the right intervention methods for informal settlements. This tool quickly diagnoses these areas, providing insights into their physical, social, and economic complexities, which in turn helps in formulating more sustainable intervention strategies. A similar study in Tel Aviv was used to develop a methodology to assess the social, economic, and physical outcomes of renewal projects on households, challenging the presumption that these projects are win-win projects (Nachmany and Hananel, 2023). Likewise, Throsby and Petetskaya (2021) propose a methodology to assessing the social, economic, cultural, and sustainability impacts of regeneration projects in historic sites in Saudi Arabia. For Earthquake prone sites in Turkey, Salihoglu (2021) proposes a methodology that factors in the disaster risk, problems in the built environment, and lack of urban services to determine urban transformation areas.

Overall, there is a consensus that regeneration approaches need to be holistic, taking into account the unique characteristics and needs of each urban area to formulate sustainable intervention strategies.

3) The role of participation

Multiple studies place community involvement at the forefront of comprehensive, sustainable, and successful regeneration. Participation can empower communities, making them more active and responsible towards regeneration efforts (Ball, 2004; Doering, 2014). Additionally, community residents are the ideal source of data on the neighbourhood structure and conditions (Ball, 2004). According to a study in Oudlajan in Tehran, Iran, regeneration strategies that involve deep understanding of the community's capabilities and capacities are more successful (Ghadiri and Sarafi, 2022). This is because engaging residents with other stakeholders can eventually contribute to creating a more cohesive regeneration strategy (Lawson and Kearns, 2010).

Despite its importance, there is limited emphasis on the participatory approaches in regeneration projects (August, 2014; Geva and Rosen, 2018). There is often a lack of trust between authorities and residents: authorities question if they can trust the community to engage in decision-making and residents question whether their efforts will have any major impact on their communities (Pourzakarya and Bahramjerdi, 2021). These pessimistic viewpoints arise from negative experiences often associated with regeneration project where participation comes too late in the regeneration process to have any true impact (Uzun and Celik Simsek, 2015), and budget rigidity prevents the incorporation of residents' input (Akkar Ercan, 2011). Additionally, there is often an absence of policies requiring mechanisms of community participation (Elsorady, 2018; Sarvarzadeh and Abidin, 2012). Further challenges include the community's possible lack of specific knowledge, selflessness, and a broader rationale required in a regeneration strategy (Ball, 2004; Doering, 2014). Where community representation is present, it is often weak (Sarvarzadeh and Abidin, 2012) or lacks political support (Al-Nammari, 2014). This compromises the participation necessary to achieve comprehensive or sustainable regeneration, creates contextually insensitive and discriminatory solutions, and fails to generate the awareness necessary for public

acceptance (Cin and Egercioğlu, 2016; Elsorady, 2018; Özdemir and Selçuk, 2017; Ozdemirli, 2014; Pourzakarya and Fadaei Nezhad Bahramjerdi, 2019). An example of this can be seen in the neighbourhood of Okmeydanı in Istanbul, where the legacy of informal settlement and inconsistent government policies have led to significant trust issues. The complex political and social dynamics, including ethnic and religious diversity, further complicate civic engagement, resulting in low levels of resident participation in urban redevelopment projects (Ökten et al., 2024).

This highlights the need for a clear framework for successful community involvement. Pourzakarya and Bahramjerdi (2021) present a 10-step bottom-up approach to community-led regeneration developed by the Urban Development and Revitalization Corporation (UDRC) in Iran, applied in cities like Rasht, Varamin and Nain. Key lessons include the importance of cultural events, community activities, and involving children through training. In Nain, these efforts led to the return of religious and social events. Another important aspect is the use of community facilitators (Pourzakarya and Bahramjerdi, 2021). Studies by Ghadiri and Sarafi (2022) and Mirzakhani et al. (2021) conclude that local management entities in Iran play a vital role in integrating stakeholders and enabling genuine community involvement. Al-Nammari (2014) discusses successful participation, noting it ranges from 'closed spaces' with isolated actors to 'invited spaces' with selected representatives and 'created spaces' for community-initiated participation (Gaventa, 2005). She differentiates between participation, which involves community inclusion, and empowerment, which involves training and mobilization to enable communities to voice concerns, impact policies, and achieve tangible results (Cornwall, 2002; Cornwall et al., 2011; Schilderman and Ruskulis, 2005).

Taking small steps towards effective community participation can significantly enhance the success and sustainability of regeneration projects. As we proceed, it's crucial to consider the agreements made with, ensuring their needs and voices are adequately represented.

4) The regeneration deal

Negotiating the regeneration deal is one of the toughest aspects of regeneration (Akkar Ercan, 2011) as it is a risky and lengthy process with possible complications such as fragmented ownership and unforeseen costs (Geva and Rosen, 2018). These deals can be initiated by CEOs of small firms, mediators in contact with developers, or mediators hired by residents (Geva and Rosen, 2018). In the Middle East, such deal-making can fall under one of the six regeneration deals summarized in **Table 2**.

However, all six regeneration deal types can eventually lead to gentrification. This poses the threat of displacing residents to economically isolated and socially incompatible areas (Cin and Egercioğlu, 2016; Eranil Demirli et al., 2015). For instance, upgrading increases the land value without improving the socioeconomic status of the place, making it unaffordable for residents (Atia, 2019). Rehousing, resettlement, and transformation are direct displacement strategies often met by resistance from residents (Atia, 2019). Finally, redevelopment and land readjustment bear the risk of social segregation due to demographic changes and might eventually lead to displacement (Turk and Korthals Altes, 2010).

Table 2. Regeneration deals opportunities and threats.

Deal	Examples	Terms	Threats
Upgrading/Re-structuration/Redevelopment	(Hu et al., 2017)	Improvement of basic infrastructure	Financially burden—Some for residents (Atia, 2019)
Rehousing/Re-lodgment	(Cin and Egercioglu, 2016; Eranil Demirli et al., 2015; Korkmaz and Balaban, 2020)	The relocation of informal residents to urban peripheries where they are charged the price difference with a loan repayment plan (Atia, 2019)	Economic isolation, social incompatibility, unresolved ownership issues (Cin and Egercioglu, 2016)
Resettlement/Re-casement	(Atia, 2019; Uysal, 2012)	Providing resident with land to develop at their own pace and on their own accords (Atia, 2019)	Unavailability of land (Atia, 2019)
Urban Transformation/Traditional Renewal	(Eranil Demirli et al., 2015)	Changing the built environment and altering its demographics, from the urban poor to middle class residents, through land acquisition or forced expropriation (Atia, 2019)	Direct gentrification
Regeneration/Traditional Renewal/Redevelopment	(Eranil Demirli et al., 2015; Uysal, 2012)	The enhancement of affordable housing for disadvantaged groups through loan plans within a development scheme (Ozdemirli, 2014)	Limited to areas attractive to investors (Ozdemirli, 2014) and might lead to social segregation
Land Readjustment		Temporarily transferring ownership to the developer for unified planning, saving on acquisition costs, and then redistributing to single or shared landowners in the form of smaller land for cost recovery, and sharing the profitability of the project (Ozdemirli, 2014)	Cost of temporary relocation and social segregation

4.3. Theme 3: Gentrification accelerators

Urban regeneration-led gentrification manifests in many ways, such as displacing people from their homes, changing demographics through rezoning (Charney, 2015), replacing long-established businesses (Beyazit, 2015; Özdemir and Selçuk, 2017), and privatizing public spaces (Mandeli, 2019). Factors that make regeneration more likely to turn into gentrification include physical, socioeconomic, and political elements detailed in **Figure 3** and the following subsections.

1) Physical gentrifiers

Physical factors play a crucial role in accelerating gentrification. These spatial factors include increased land value, physical segregation, and internal migration.

Land value: The primary cause of gentrification discussed in the literature is the increase in land values due to regeneration efforts, driving the local community which can no longer afford it out. This is further exacerbated by not providing employment or profit-generating opportunities for the locals (Akkar Ercan, 2011). Land values increase in regeneration projects due to the enhancement of decayed land, the introduction of services and green spaces for higher class demographics and tourists in places near low income communities (Al-hagla, 2010; Elsorady, 2018; Kamjou et al., 2024; Mahmoud, 2017; Turk and Korthals Altes, 2010). In Istanbul, the greening strategy resulted in 10 of the 12 Nation’s Gardens causing gentrification (Pala and Acar, 2024). Such regeneration strategies are further exacerbated by the absence of participatory methods to consider the needs of the existing community. This is particularly true in the new developments proposed in immigrant-rich areas such as Qatar and Dubai (Alawadi et al., 2018; Rizzo, 2014).

Gentrification Causes	Physical	Increased Land Value	Urban Regeneration	Urban Decay	Informal Settlements	
					Segregated Areas/ Crime	
					Historic Centers/ Inner Cities	
					Disaster Zones	
		Physical Segregation	Pre-Urban Gentrification	Introduction of high-status figure		
				High end gentrification nodes		
			Megadevelopments	Gated communities		
				Land unavailability		
			Suburbanization	Relaxed UGB - Vacant Land (Lack of regulation)		
		Internal Migration		Leapfrog Development		
			Unplanned Land (Lack of regulation)			
	From Rural Areas		Centralized capital and resources (urbanization)			
			Negligence			
	Socioeconomic		From New Towns	Absence of Infrastructure		
				Inappropriate Location		
		Fragmented Ownership				
		Social Segregation		Religion		
				Identity		
				Culture		
		Economic		Government acquiring high value lands		
				Global Neoliberalism/ Capitalism		
			Increased real-estate investment			
	Reduction of oil prices - deterioration of public spaces and facilities					
Political	Policies		Absence of Rental Law			
			Minimum Area			
			Density Law			
			Absence of development restriction			
	Governance		Political Structure (Centralization, Neoliberal Authoritarianism, Neopatrimonialism)			
			Lack of representation			
			Change in authority			
	Political History		Revolutions			
			Internal Conflict or Civil War			

Figure 3. Summary of gentrification accelerators.

Physical Segregation: Class-based developments aggravate spatial polarization (Modai-Snir and Van Ham, 2018). This is seen in the leapfrog developments of Jeddah that turn its urban fabric into patches of inaccessible, gated mega developments with slum dwellers settling in the unregulated in between spaces, polarizing the urban fabric and breeding decay (Abdulaal, 2012; Kirby and Glavac, 2012; Le Goix, 2005). Similarly, focusing on creating gated communities can eventually leave limited land space for affordable housing for the middle-income and low-income class as in Dubai (Alawadi et al., 2018).

Internal Migration: The centralization of capital and resources paralleled by the negligence of rural areas are factors leading to the internal migration from rural areas (Fanni, 2006; Yassin, 2012). These migrants are housed either in affordable housing offered by the state or in informal areas. If the provided housing is too urban peripheral or is inadequate, residents tend to relocate informally to the urban center near services and employment opportunities (Cin and Egercioğlu, 2016; Geva and Rosen, 2018; Ghazaie, 2018).

Ironically, the reverse of this phenomenon, counter-urbanization, has recently become another driver of gentrification. Higher-income populations are increasingly

targeting suburbs and countryside communities for prestigious permanent and seasonal housing (Kocabiyik and Loopmans, 2021). Meanwhile, developers are turning these areas into historic, cultural, and touristic attractions, as seen in Behramkale, Turkey, leading to shifts in class structure and the local economy (Grocer et al., 2021). This increased demand raises housing costs in rural areas, resulting in the gentrification and displacement of original communities (Grocer et al., 2021; Kocabiyik and Loopmans, 2021; Okten et al., 2021).

2) Socioeconomic gentrifiers

Socioeconomic factors, such as social segregation, fragmented ownership, and economic conditions, can further accelerate gentrification in urban regeneration projects.

Social Segregation: Social segregation leads to physical segregation either by forced displacement or by the formation of preferred segregated homogeneous communities (Monterescu, 2011; Yassin, 2012). Segregated communities are identified as locations of decay and gentrification (Yassin, 2012). This is present in the Middle East in the case of Beirut where religious differences led to the homogenization of space (Yassin, 2012) and in Palestine-Israel where even cities of mixed ethnicity are characterized by tension and disintegration (Monterescu, 2011). Similarly, residents of the Romani settlement in Turkey experienced discrimination and resultant unemployment which accelerated the area's decay and led to its gentrification (Cin and Egercioğlu, 2016; Eranil Demirli et al., 2015).

Fragmented Ownership: Developers often resort to relocating residents due to the difficulty of reaching consensus in areas of fragmented ownership (Geva and Rosen, 2018). This is seen in Downtown Khedive Cairo (Elsorady, 2018) where family growth over the years has fragmented the ownership over multiple family members, disabling regenerators from negotiating any alternative to selling or expropriating the land.

Economic: Neoliberal urban policy is the most quoted reason behind gentrification in the articles reviewed. Due to current global trends of capitalism and neoliberal policies, the interests of the community are compromised to encourage the commodification of high value land by governments and profit-oriented private developers (Gündoğdu and Gough, 2008) which inevitably leads to gentrification. On the other hand, contextual economic factors can also exacerbate gentrification. For instance, the economic shifts in Egypt after the 2011 revolution has led to increased investment in the real-estate market as a safe investment which accelerated the gentrification of land (Mahmoud, 2017). Similarly, the reduction of oil prices in Saudi Arabia has led to the deterioration of public facilities and public space, encouraging their privatization making them inaccessible to low-income individuals and hence gentrifying public space users (Mandeli, 2019).

3) Political gentrifiers

Political factors can create conditions that either encourage or discourage gentrification in urban regeneration projects. These factors include policies, governance structures, and the political history of the region.

Policies: Certain laws can encourage or discourage private investment and hence the regeneration of urban areas. For example, according to Elsorady (2018), the Old Rent law of 1960 in Egypt restricts the rent gap by disallowing the increase in rent

beyond the contractual agreement, which in turn discourages the regeneration of land. Similarly, the Building Law No.119 of 2008 sets a limit to downtown building height as a ratio to the street width, disabling the construction of towers which would otherwise heavily attract private regeneration investment. On the other hand, some policies encourage gentrification. For example, the article on Tehran (Dadashpoor and Ghazaie, 2019), shows how the density policy which relaxed density limits to encourage private investment was used as a tool to gain funding and enable further urban development efforts. Finally, Dadashpoor and Ghazaie (2019) show how some policies indirectly contribute to polarization and the resultant urban decay. This includes the minimum land dimension policy which set a large minimum which the poor cannot afford, leading them to accept displacement as their lot equivalent breaches the dimension policy.

Governance: The governance structure has major control over the outcomes of regeneration projects. This is reaffirmed by Akçalı and Korkut (2015) who states in their study that neo-authoritarianism promotes gentrification by forcing the adoption of the authority's view on nationhood in the urban environment through top-down development strategies. Similarly, the neopatrimonialism political structure of the United Arab Emirates allows for the singularity of politics and business which makes the outcome of the regeneration process on both the social and economic level dependent on those in authority (Alawadi et al., 2018). Finally, centralization impacts community involvement (Sarvarzadeh and Abidin, 2012). According to a case study on Turkey, centralized governments misrepresent the community when their interests do not align with them (Ay, 2019). As seen in many case studies, residents who oppose these undemocratic development decisions often face legalized expropriation. Protesting these decisions can feel like appealing to the very authorities who enforce and benefit from them, making it a challenging and often futile endeavour.

Political Polarization: Finally, the individual context's political situation can influence the occurrence of gentrification. Examples discussed in the literature reviewed are: The Civil War of Beirut leading to physical segregation (Yassin, 2012), the Israeli-Palestinian conflict causing forced displacement and social tension (Monterescu, 2011), the Casablanca bombing alerting authorities against crime areas requiring regeneration (Atia, 2019; Zemni and Bogaert, 2011), the Arab Spring discouraging the empowerment of grassroots organizations which are integral to sustainable regeneration (Al-Nammari, 2014; Tawakkol, 2020), and people in Istanbul choosing to reside in clusters depending on the political parties they support leading to higher gentrification in opposition zones (Das and Ozsahin 2020).

Israel sets an interesting example of political gentrifiers synergizing towards state-led gentrification. Weizman (2012) describes Israeli generals and settlers as "architects of occupation," shaping urban spaces to exert control. This is facilitated by the governing entity's control over policies, used for political purposes rooted in the country's history. These policies, including settlement expansion, land confiscation, spatial segregation, institutionalized discrimination, and manipulation of the educational system, contribute to the displacement and fragmentation of Palestinian communities, intensifying their struggle for dignified living space (Blatman-Thomas, 2017; Ahn and Juraev, 2024). Recent studies have further emphasized the role of state-led ethno-gentrification in Israel's contested cities, where policies are strategically

designed to strengthen Jewish presence. This process involves mechanisms such as the establishment of religious neighbourhoods, privatization of public housing for Zionist settlement associations, and selective governmental budgeting (Shmaryahu-Yeshurun, 2022a, Shmaryahu-Yeshurun, 2022b). A case-study of this strategy is seen in the bourgeoisification along the Green Line, where exclusive spatial rights and policy privileges attracted affluent Jews to reinforce Israel's political legitimacy (Schwake, 2020). These actions are not merely economic but are driven by deliberate ethnonational motives to reshape urban spaces in favour of the Jewish population, thus intensifying ethnonational conflicts and exacerbating social inequalities.

4.4. Theme 4: Gentrification aftermath

The previous sections covered the contexts, processes, and factors contributing to gentrification in the MENA region. This section examines the consequences of gentrification, focusing on its multidimensionality and complexity.

Generally, it is difficult to quantify the impacts of gentrification as they are not entirely economic consequences. For instance, one of the consequences of gentrification discussed in the literature examines the impact on residents' social resilience (Mahmoud, 2017). Social bonds enable the community to absorb impact without major change. If a community must be displaced to avoid decay and risks, then it is only natural that "a place cannot develop community efficacy where residents change constantly" (Güzey, 2016; Mahmoud, 2017). To address this complexity, Pala and Acar (2024) utilize GIS methods to map and analyse changes in social, economic, and demographic structures to understand the gentrifying impacts of Istanbul's greening initiatives. Similarly, a study by Frouhar et al. (2022) employs a mixed-method approach, including semi-structured interviews, field surveys, impact ranking, origin-destination (O-D) surveys, and parking surveys, to analyze the socio-economic and physical changes driven by commercial gentrification and land-use policies in Tehran. The study confirms the multitude of gentrification impacts including degrading privacy, socio-cultural homogeneity, and physical quality.

Another difficulty in assessing the aftermath of gentrification is the variability and polarity of its impacts, which can differ greatly depending on the context. For instance, in an assessment of rail transit station projects in Tehran, they led to depopulation in more affluent areas and densification in low-income areas despite increased land values due to the increased need for transportation (Frouhar, 2022). Similarly, in Istanbul, the implementation of the Nation's Gardens has shown that green gentrification can have unique impacts, such as an unexpected increase in the elderly population around some gardens (Pala and Acar, 2024). These examples illustrate how gentrification can manifest differently based on population needs and specific urban projects.

Furthermore, stakeholders also perceive and experience the impacts of gentrification differently, adding to the complexity. According to Mahmoud (2017), developers and investors view the demographic, cultural, and physical changes in the built environment of regeneration projects as an interesting progression while to indigenous residents it is a great loss. Similarly, Kamjou et al. (2024) presents how stakeholders view greening projects differently based on their priorities. Thus,

assessment measures may only capture the overall effect rather than the distributed effects, which are core to the issue of gentrification (Akçalı and Korkut, 2015).

An interesting aspect that makes the impacts of gentrification difficult to fathom, is the different timescales of impact. Shamaï and Hananel (2022) studied the impact of TAMA 38 policy in Israel which allows for the redevelopment of buildings to meet strict earthquake codes. Results of the study show that these redevelopment efforts initially cause an increase in social mix; however, on the long run the gentrifying nature of the project would lead to reduced social diversity. Similarly, a study on seasonal gentrification in Ağlasun, Turkey, highlights how different groups of seasonal gentrifiers—such as second home users, tourists, and students—impact the local community over varying timescales. This cyclical form of migration leads to different rhythms of displacement and social change, complicating the assessment of gentrification’s long-term effects (Ozgun et al., 2021).

Finally, the literature also emphasizes how gentrification perpetuates further gentrification. Once displaced, low-income communities increase the demand for affordable housing (Abdulaal, 2012). Whether relocated into specialized neighborhoods or forming informal settlements, gentrification segregates communities and recreate unresolved spatial facts, disabling the establishment of social integration and urban order (Monterescu, 2011). This is evident in how state-led gentrification in Acre, Israel not only creates a social divide between Arabs and Jews, but also resulted in intra-community tensions and further collateral polarization amongst the Arab minority themselves based on their economic standing (Shmaryahu-Yeshurun, 2022a). Once these communities are displaced, alternate housing is often provided away from employment centers, require high transportation costs, and is constructed based on modern designs which do not cater for residents’ socio-cultural needs. Consequently, this urban inequity results in socioeconomic, infrastructural, environmental and physical decline, turning the new location into a decayed, regeneration hotspot. This indicates that gentrification initiates a continuous cycle of discrimination and displacement (Cin and Egercioğlu, 2016; Eranil Demirli et al., 2015; Güzey, 2016). The gentrification cycle is visualized in **Figure 4**.

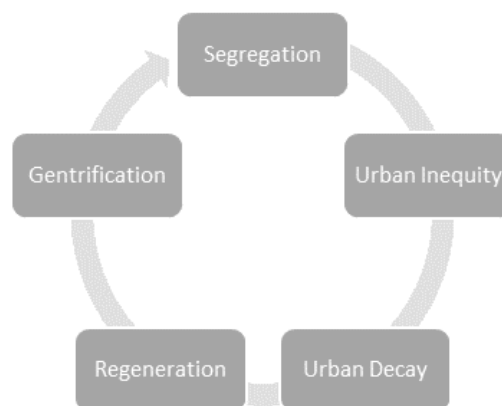


Figure 4. The gentrification cycle.

5. Discussion: Demystifying gentrification in the MENA region

The thematic analysis of gentrification in the MENA region has revealed the

complex and multifaceted nature of this phenomenon. Building upon the key findings from the analysis of gentrification contexts, the regeneration process, gentrification accelerators, and the aftermath of gentrification, this discussion section aims to synthesize these insights and provide a more nuanced understanding of gentrification in the MENA region. The following subsections explore patterns and variations in gentrification contexts, the interplay between urban regeneration and gentrification, the need for sustainable approaches, and the policy implications derived from these insights.

5.1. Context patterns

Based on the 57 articles reviewed, gentrification locations can be classified as proactive and reactive. Proactive locations are new developments that, while initially created to boost economic growth or improve urban aesthetics, often bring changes to the surrounding areas that lead to gentrification. Reactive locations, on the other hand, are areas whose status calls for urban regeneration due to their deteriorated condition, which often leads to gentrification. These include land of cultural, historic, and social value, as well as poor, segregated areas whether formal or informal.

Reactive gentrification locations are more diversely and deeply explored in the literature. The article distribution (as shown in **Table 3**) show that deteriorated heritage locations and informal settlements are most extensively researched. The remaining contexts receive equivalent attention. Heritage sites are a primary concern for Turkey and Iran. Conversely, in North African countries, while Morocco has only one publication and is related to informal settlements, in Egypt, three out of four studies focus on this context. There is a heavy focus on segregated communities in Palestine-Israel owing to the ongoing political conflict. As for proactive gentrification, discussions on new developments are most common in gulf countries such as Qatar, Saudi, and UAE.

Table 3. Context of case studies discussed by country.

Region	Country	Reactive			Proactive	Other
		Informal Settlements	Segregated Communities	Deteriorated Areas	New Developments	
North Africa	Egypt	3	-	1	1	-
Levante	Iran	1	1	7	1	2
Levante	Jordan	1	-	-	-	-
Levante	Lebanon	-	1	-	-	1
North Africa	Morocco	1	-	-	-	-
Levante	Palestine/ Israel	1	6	-	-	1
Gulf	Qatar	-	-	1	2	-
Gulf	Saudi	-	-	1	2	-
Levante	Turkey	8	1	8	2	2
Gulf	UAE	-	-	-	1	-
Total		15	9	18	9	6

The thematic analysis of gentrification contexts in the MENA region reveals the need for context-specific approaches, proactive urban planning, and consideration of

political, social, and economic factors in addressing gentrification. The classification of gentrification locations as proactive and reactive can guide policymakers and urban planners in mitigating the negative impacts of gentrification. However, the literature on gentrification contexts in the MENA region lacks comparative studies examining the similarities and differences across different countries or sub-regions, as well as limited research on proactive gentrification contexts. Future research should focus on addressing these gaps to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse contexts in which gentrification occurs in the MENA region.

5.2. Interplay of urban regeneration and gentrification in the MENA region

Urban regeneration projects in the MENA region are driven by a diverse range of motives, including economic, political, social, ecological, and physical factors. These projects can take various forms, such as physical, social, economic, cultural, and people-oriented revitalization, each targeting specific aspects of the urban environment. However, in the MENA region, studies revealed that most urban regeneration deals pose a threat of gentrification.

By exploring case studies, one can infer that urban regeneration in the MENA lack transparency in the selection process for regeneration sites. The premises by which governments prioritize neighborhoods for intervention are not thoroughly discussed, and there is an absence of clear methodologies for identifying and prioritizing areas in need for regeneration. For instance, Turkey's regeneration law does not list concrete risk factors for the regeneration of disaster-prone areas and lacks a clear methodology for mapping risk areas (Güzey, 2016). This poses a problem, particularly under authoritarian and capitalist regimes, where regeneration efforts can intensify marginalization and social disparity in favour for achieving political and economic goals. This problem is indicated in *Alternative Strategies for Urban Redevelopment* where Senyapılı (1996) stated that slum regeneration was only successful for areas in advantageous locations and in plots large enough to attract investors (Ozdemirli, 2014). On occasions where benefiting the community residents is not possible, the regeneration projects can lead to opposition and mass protests. For example, urban social movements in Turkey have protested the differential treatment of residents and tenants, as well as the relocation to socioeconomically incompatible locations that breach their housing rights (Cin and Egercioğlu, 2016; Uysal, 2012). Similar protests have occurred in Egypt (Tawakkol, 2020) and Morocco (Atia, 2019).

Several other factors contribute to accelerating gentrification in the MENA region, including segregation, urbanization, internal migration, fragmented ownership, embedded social tension, capitalism, economic risks and opportunities, policy loopholes, political structure, and political conflicts. While some of these factors, such as land value, urbanization, and capitalism, are global in nature, others, like segregation, political conflict, policies, and power structure, are highly context dependent. Neoliberal urban policy, informal settlements, and increased land value emerge as the most prominent causes of gentrification in the region.

Moreover, the cyclical nature of gentrification becomes evident as these processes often create conditions that lead to further regeneration efforts. For instance,

the displacement of low-income residents can lead to the formation of new informal settlements or the decay of relocated areas, which then become targets for future regeneration projects. This perpetuates a cycle of displacement and redevelopment. To break this cycle, it is crucial to address the underlying issues at their core, such as ensuring affordable housing, equitable urban policies, and inclusive planning processes. This transition to sustainable regeneration emphasizes the importance of addressing the root causes to prevent displacement and promote long-term, inclusive urban development.

5.3. The way forward—A pursuit of sustainability

To mitigate the risks of discriminatory gentrification, sustainable regeneration must be prioritized. Sustainable regeneration is a comprehensive approach that encompasses social, economic, cultural, physical, ecological, and participatory dimensions. One main driver of sustainable regeneration is multi-stakeholder management. As shown in **Figure 5**, each stakeholder has a different motive for regeneration which might conflict with other stakeholders. One example is the conundrum between offering affordable housing versus benefiting off the land value, enhancing the urban image, or acquiring profit. Other conflicts arise between depoliticizing urban areas versus offering residents the freedom to participate, cultural expression versus the expression of modernity, as well as maintaining social homogeneity and place identity versus attraction of the middle class.

Such conflicting interests necessitate the inclusion of an unbiased moderator and facilitator in the regeneration process, as well as a clear encompassing participatory framework as presented in **Figure 6**. Participatory methods can help ensure that the needs and aspirations of local communities are prioritized and that the benefits of regeneration projects are equitably distributed.

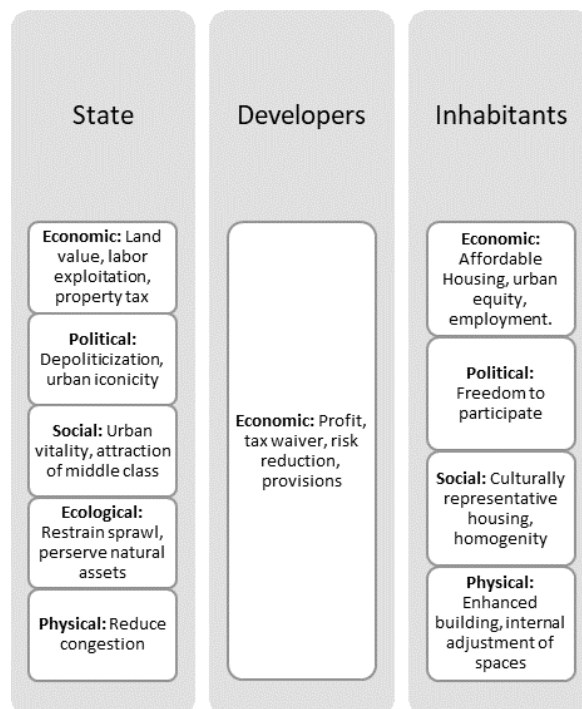


Figure 5. Regeneration motives by stakeholder.

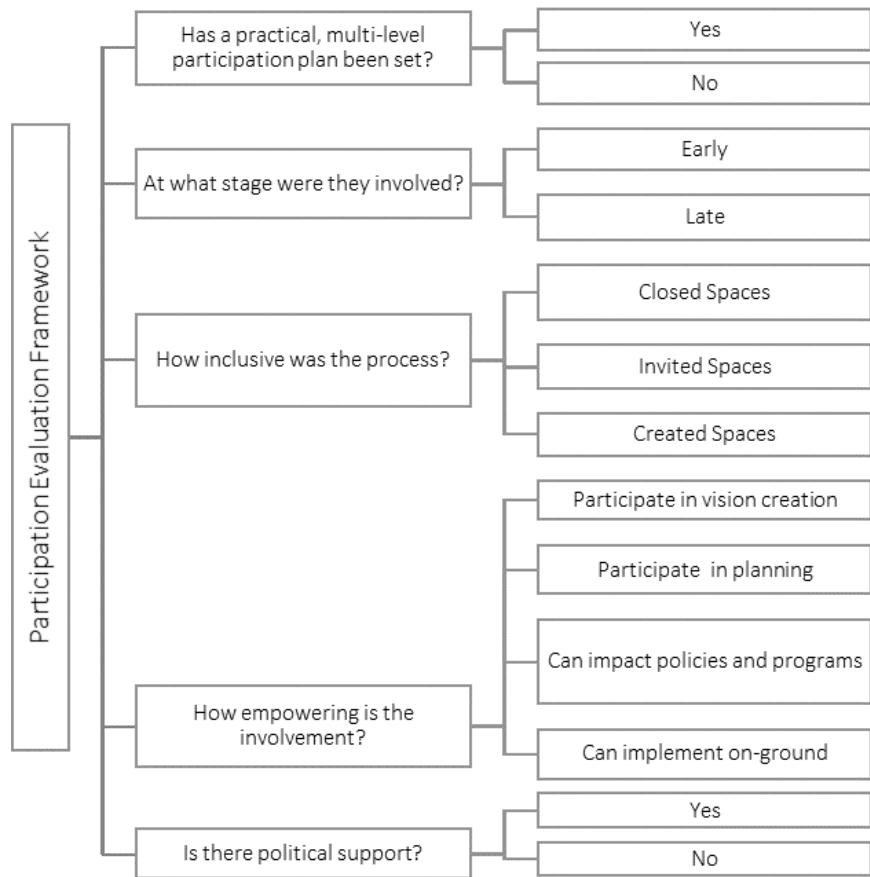


Figure 6. Participation evaluation framework.

Besides streamlining the negotiation process, sustainable regeneration can be made possible by deepening our understanding of the complex phenomena and the interplay of factors. Hence, researchers can help by focusing their efforts on addressing the following gaps in the literature:

- **Limited comparative studies:** There is a lack of studies that examine the similarities and differences in gentrification processes and outcomes across different countries or sub-regions within the MENA region. Comparative research would provide valuable insights into the context-specific factors that shape gentrification in different settings. Addressing this gap is essential for developing tailored strategies that can promote sustainable regeneration across diverse contexts.
- **Insufficient research on proactive gentrification contexts:** The literature on gentrification in the MENA region focuses more on reactive contexts, such as informal settlements and deteriorated areas, while proactive gentrification contexts, such as new developments, have received less attention. More research is needed to understand the drivers, mechanisms, and impacts of gentrification in these proactive contexts. Understanding these proactive settings is crucial for planning sustainable development initiatives that pre-emptively address potential gentrification impacts.
- **Lack of longitudinal studies:** There is a scarcity of studies that track the evolution of gentrification in specific contexts over time. Longitudinal research would help to better understand the long-term impacts of gentrification on communities and

the effectiveness of interventions aimed at mitigating its negative consequences. This understanding is vital for creating sustainable regeneration policies that are effective in the long run.

- **Need for interdisciplinary research:** The complex nature of gentrification requires a more interdisciplinary approach that integrates perspectives from urban planning, sociology, economics, and political science. Interdisciplinary research would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the various factors that shape gentrification processes and outcomes in the MENA region. Such an approach is fundamental for formulating holistic and sustainable regeneration strategies that address multiple dimensions of gentrification.
- **Limited research on community perspectives and experiences:** There is a lack of studies that focus on the perspectives and experiences of communities affected by gentrification in the MENA region. More participatory and community-engaged research approaches are needed to amplify the voices of those most impacted by gentrification and to inform more equitable and inclusive regeneration strategies. Including community perspectives is essential for ensuring that regeneration efforts are sustainable and aligned with the needs and aspirations of local populations.

5.4. Implications for policy and practice

The findings of this systematic literature review have significant implications for policymakers, urban planners, and communities in the MENA region. The study underscores the need for:

Context-specific approaches to urban regeneration that prioritize the needs and aspirations of local communities.

Transparent and participatory decision-making processes that involve all stakeholders, including residents, in the planning and implementation of regeneration projects.

Clear methodologies and criteria for identifying and prioritizing areas in need of regeneration, considering social, economic, and environmental factors.

Policies and regulations that prevent discriminatory gentrification and ensure the equitable distribution of benefits from regeneration projects.

Capacity building and empowerment of local communities to actively participate in shaping the future of their neighbourhoods.

By addressing these implications, policymakers and urban planners can work towards more inclusive, context-sensitive, and sustainable approaches to urban regeneration that prioritize the well-being of local communities and mitigate the risks of gentrification.

6. Conclusion

This systematic literature review has explored the topic of urban regeneration-led gentrification in the MENA region between the years 2010 to 2024. The analysis of the reviewed publications revealed four major themes: the gentrification context, the regeneration process, gentrification accelerators, and the aftermath of gentrification. These four dimensions can serve as a framework for assessing gentrification case

studies and understanding the interconnected factors that shape urban transformation in the region.

Regeneration efforts in the MENA region primarily focus on major cities and reactive contexts, such as informal settlements, deteriorated heritage sites, and segregated areas. However, these efforts often lack transparency, particularly due to the absence of clear site-selection criteria and methodologies. Stakeholder motives were found to play a significant role in location prioritization, often leading to conflicts of interest between state, inhabitants, and developers. Implementing project management strategies with stakeholder conflict resolution guidelines is recommended to balance these interests in regeneration projects.

The exploration of the regeneration process emphasized the importance of participation in achieving sustainable regeneration. The analysis revealed that all types of regeneration projects carry the risk of gentrification, especially when community participation is lacking. A synthesized participation assessment framework was proposed to maximize the benefits of regeneration and minimize its negative impacts.

Three main classes of gentrification accelerators were identified: physical, socioeconomic, and political factors. While these categories were common across the reviewed articles, their specific manifestations varied by local context. The cyclic nature of gentrification was also highlighted, with a lack of urban resilience contributing to community decay and further perpetuating the cycle of displacement and redevelopment.

The analysis of gentrification in the MENA region underscores the importance of studying contextual factors, adopting clear methodologies involving participatory techniques, and implementing preventive measures to curb the gentrification cycle. Furthermore, the review identified several gaps in the current literature on urban regeneration and gentrification in the MENA region. These include limited comparative studies, insufficient research on proactive gentrification contexts, lack of longitudinal studies, the need for interdisciplinary research, and limited research on community perspectives and experiences. Addressing these gaps is crucial for deepening our understanding of the complex phenomena and informing sustainable regeneration practices.

In conclusion, this systematic literature review contributes to a more nuanced understanding of urban regeneration and gentrification in the MENA region. It highlights the complex interplay of global and context-specific factors that shape these processes and their impacts on communities. The study calls for further research to address the identified gaps and for policymakers and urban planners to adopt more inclusive, context-sensitive, and sustainable approaches to urban regeneration that prioritize the well-being of local communities and mitigate the risks of discriminatory gentrification.

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