

The Impact of Globalisation on Traditional Architecture in Nigeria: A Case Study of Lagos Island

Luqman Owamoyo, Baharak Tabibi

Department of Architecture, Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture, Okan University, Istanbul, Turkey
Email: Luqmanowamoyo@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of globalisation on traditional architecture and the preservation efforts for traditional architecture on Lagos Island, Nigeria. The architectural landscape of Lagos Island reflects a rich cultural and historical heritage influenced by Portuguese, British, and indigenous Yoruba architectural styles. However, globalisation has led to significant changes in architectural practices, materials, and preferences, displacing traditional architecture in urban areas. A qualitative research approach was employed in this study, and data were collected from eight participants who are architects using semi-structured interviews. This study employed thematic analysis for the interview transcript and developed five themes. The findings reveal that globalisation has shifted from traditional building practices and materials to modern ones, such as reinforced concrete and steel, glass facades, and sleek designs. This shift is driven by the desire to adopt Western architectural styles associated with modernity and progress. As a result, traditional architecture has been relegated to rural areas and is no longer viewed as relevant in urban settings. Imported materials and technologies further erode traditional architecture and cultural values. Cultural identity erosion is a significant concern as traditional architecture loses its distinctiveness to global styles, leading to a homogenised architectural landscape. Loss of intangible cultural values exacerbates this erosion. However, globalisation also brings positive impacts, including new ideas, materials, and construction techniques that foster innovation and diversity in architectural styles. However, efforts to preserve and promote traditional architecture on Lagos Island face several challenges, including rapid urbanisation, the lack of awareness and appreciation among the younger generation, inadequate maintenance and funding, and the absence of comprehensive legal protection and planning policies. Recommendations for preserving traditional architecture in response to these challenges include im-

plementing strict preservation laws, financial incentives for property owners, education and awareness campaigns, integrating traditional elements into modern designs, and community engagement in decision-making processes. The study emphasises the need for a balanced approach that values both tradition and modernity, recognising the cultural and social significance of traditional architecture while incorporating global influences.

Keywords

Architecture, Globalisation, Lagos Island, Traditional

1. Introduction

The architectural works created by different ethnic groups in Nigeria hold profound insights into the time and culture that shaped them. Consequently, each ethnic group in the country possesses a distinct and unique style of traditional architecture that embodies their heritage (Emusa & Nduka, 2018). It was also observed that ethnic nationalities that make no deliberate and conscious effort to retain and preserve their cultural and architectural identities easily get assimilated by other more vibrant and dominant cultures (Chukwuali, 2005).

Lagos Island is the commercial and financial hub of Lagos, Nigeria, and a melting pot of architectural styles that have evolved under the forces of globalisation (Al-Kodmany, 2018; Adesina et al., 2019). Lagos Island is in the south-western part of Nigeria, and it has a rich historical background that dates to the pre-colonial era. Subsequently, the history of Lagos Island architecture can be traced back to the colonial era when European traders and missionaries introduced a new style of building that blended European and African elements (Bigon & Home, 2016). This style, known as the “Brazilian House”, featured flat roofs, verandas, and colourful facades that reflected the city’s cosmopolitan nature (Oduwaye, 2006).

In the post-colonial era, Lagos Island witnessed a boom in high-rise construction as the city grew rapidly, and foreign investors flocked to its shores. This led to a new architectural style that combined modernist and traditional elements, such as concrete and glass, alongside local materials like timber and mud (Ogunrin, 2019). However, the island’s traditional architectural forms and styles have undergone significant transformations over time, particularly due to the influence of globalisation (Sarkar et al., 2020).

2. Traditional Architecture in Nigeria

Traditional architecture in Nigeria reflects the country’s rich cultural heritage and the historical context in which it was developed. According to Agboola and Zango (2014), the traditional architecture in Nigeria can be traced back to the pre-colonial era when various ethnic groups such as the Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo developed unique architectural styles that were influenced by their culture,

religion, and environment. For instance, Hausa architecture is characterised by using mud and clay in building mosques and houses with tall and pointed minarets to signify their Islamic faith. Similarly, Yoruba architecture is identified by using wood, mud, and thatch in building homes with courtyards and verandas that reflect their social and cultural values (Agboola & Zango, 2014). On the other hand, Igbo architecture is known for its use of earth and clay in building houses with steeply sloping roofs suited for their mountainous terrain. Therefore, the historical context of traditional architecture in Nigeria is rooted in the cultural, religious, and environmental influences of various ethnic groups, which have shaped the development and evolution of their unique architectural styles over the centuries (Agboola & Zango, 2014).

2.1. Pre-Colonial Architecture of Lagos Island

Lagos Island, and Nigeria as a whole, have a rich history of traditional architecture that reflects its people's indigenous customs and culture. Historical architecture in Nigeria was influenced by environmental, social, and cultural conditions, and the people that dominated Lagos Island with their way of life were the Yoruba people. In the pre-colonial era, the Yoruba people lived in urban clusters, small houses built together that formed a circular pattern. The architectural forms were hollow squares or circles. A unit can be seen as a compound consisting of several small units arranged in a quad shape surrounding an open courtyard; this open space serves as the point of social interactions (Ojo, 1968; Arenibafo, 2017). Moulded mud obtained from laterite soils is the main material used for building walls of houses without windows (Ojo, 1968; Arenibafo, 2017; Akin-Otiko, 2021). Like Lagos Island, areas near the Atlantic coast use raffia palm leaves, unlike other parts of the country that use palm fronds (Figure 1).

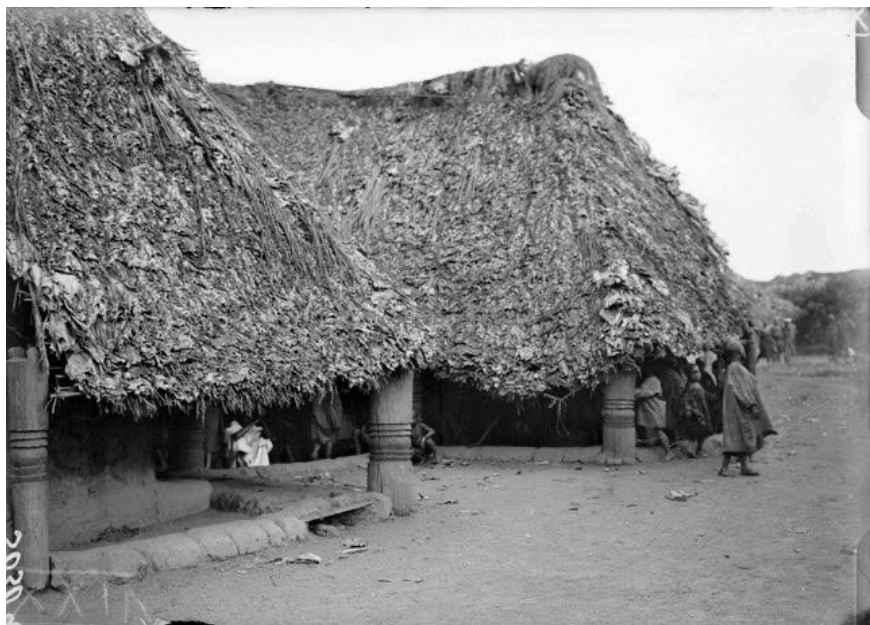


Figure 1. The traditional building on Lagos Island in the pre-colonial era.

2.2. The Colonial Architectural Style

The earliest form of colonial architecture in Lagos was the mission houses that housed missionaries built from timber and prefabricated materials imported from England (Adeola, 2021). The early missionary churches introduced Gothic revival architecture that can be seen in the designs of the Bethel Cathedral on Broad Street, Christ Church Cathedral, Lagos, and St Paul's, Breadfruit, Lagos (Adeyemi, 2015). The civilisation that came with colonialism paved the way for construction of many new structures. Between 1860 and 1870, Lagos Island was extended (Oloruntoba, 2022). Different types of buildings were erected with different types of architectural designs. The colonial officials that worked for the Public Works Department built barracks, hospitals, post offices, court houses, and other government houses largely in Neoclassical architectural style, like the Supreme Court building built in old Tinubu Square in 1904. These officials lived in secluded government reservation areas with large houses made from prefabricated components. These houses had deep verandas, overhanging windows, and very big compounds. The Old Secretariat on Marina and the State House were also built in this style with massive columns and other unique features (Figure 2).

2.3. The Post-Colonial Era Modernisation.

The government, in this era, made plans to introduce tall and modern buildings to its citizens after the end of World War II. At the same time, European architects working in various parts of the country began to think of innovative ways to create modern designs that consider the tropical climate. Along with globalisation came climatic problems, and in solving part of the climatic problems, Fry



Figure 2. Building during the colonial era, during the first few stages of globalisation.

and the Drew's University of Ibadan and Kenneth Dike's library were one of the early buildings built with environmental solutions in mind (Immerwahr, 2007). The need for shade and proper cross ventilation was also considered, a huge upgrade compared to the former houses with no windows. In addition to this, large concrete grilles and fly gauze were added to protect against heat and insects. All these changes did not alter the people's cultural imprints as the modern architects adopted African handicrafts, murals, and mosaics to the structures (Immerwahr, 2007).

3. Globalisation

Globalisation has profoundly impacted various aspects of modern society, including the architecture of cities worldwide (Bahga & Raheja, 2019). Lagos Island in Nigeria is no exception (Akindeju et al., 2022). This bustling city has undergone significant changes in its architecture and urban landscape due to globalisation. Oduwaye (2006) observes that globalisation has introduced new building materials, construction techniques, and architectural styles, which have influenced the design of buildings on Lagos Island (Oduwaye, 2006; Oduwaye, 2013). For instance, using reinforced concrete, steel, and glass in modern buildings has replaced traditional materials such as mud, thatch, and bamboo (Sharma, 2020; Iheanacho, 2020; Srivastava & Das, 2023). As a result, traditional architecture has lost its relevance and importance in the face of modernisation (Tang, 2023). Furthermore, globalisation has led to the adoption of foreign architectural styles, such as the postmodernist style, which emphasises ornamentation and decoration rather than function (Giamarelos, 2022). This has led to a decline in local architectural styles better suited to the local climate and culture. Additionally, the increasing demand for modern buildings has led to demolishing traditional buildings, which are seen as outdated and inefficient. Consequently, traditional architecture has become less visible in Lagos Island, and its significance has been eroded by globalisation (Adenaike et al., 2020). Various factors, such as economic, social, and cultural changes, have influenced contemporary approaches to Lagos Island architecture (Adenaike et al., 2020).

Lagos Island is transforming its architecture due to the influx of foreign investments, tourism, and urbanisation (Immerwahr, 2007; Asouzu, 2013). This transformation has resulted in the adoption of modern architectural styles that reflect the city's changing needs (Oduwaye, 2013). For instance, the use of glass, steel, and concrete materials in constructing skyscrapers and high-rise buildings is becoming increasingly popular (Al-Kodmany, 2018).

Effects of Globalisation on Traditional Architecture in Nigeria

While globalisation brings numerous opportunities, it also poses challenges and potential drawbacks. One concern is the homogenisation of architectural styles and the loss of cultural identity. As global influences shape design choices, there is a risk of eroding local architectural traditions and heritage (Harrison, 2013).

This can result in a loss of diversity and a more uniformly built environment worldwide. Moreover, the global exchange of construction materials and equipment raises environmental and ethical concerns. The transportation of building materials over long distances contributes to carbon emissions and can be environmentally unsustainable (Sandanyake et al., 2022). It is crucial to balance the benefits of globalisation and the need for sustainable, socially responsible practices in the building industry.

Despite the challenges of globalisation, the changing perception of conventional architecture, the incorporation of modern elements in design and construction, the use of imported materials, the shift in construction techniques and skills, and the changing values towards preservation and conservation have all been influenced by globalisation. The connection between Lagos, Nigeria, and other countries across the globe brought globalisation to this part of Lagos. Older two-storey houses and hotels evolved into skyscrapers built with concrete, steel, and glass, influenced by modern architectural styles. At Marina, the National House, now known as Shell House, was designed by Philip Cranswick, and on Broad Street, Fry, Drew, and Partners designed a Cooperative bank building; these two were the earliest tall modern buildings in Lagos. Major changes occurred in this era due to the shift from traditional architecture to modernised buildings on Lagos Island. These changes occurred in the residents' lifestyle, livelihood, and culture, and they include:

- 1) Before modernisation on Lagos Island, buildings were generally constructed with mud, and the walls were finished with mud. Apart from economic reasons, the mud floors and walls controlled interior temperature. But modernisation brought concrete floors that were finished with cement or sand screed. The walls were also plastered with cement/sand and finished with paint. These modern finishing techniques differed from the area's climate, thereby calling for introducing a heat ventilation and cooling system, which the people could not afford.

- 2) The traditional Lagos Island houses in the pre-colonial era did not incorporate toilets. Toilets were considered unclean to be located in the dwelling area. Bushes and farmlands were used for defecation, providing manure for the farms. But modernisation in this era introduced pit toilets as part of the house, and much later, modern toilets such as water closets were incorporated in dwelling buildings.

- 3) The arrangement of windows in a building increased in number and size due to modernisation. It was aided by introducing metal doors, windows, and steel bars as a lintel. In traditional architecture before modernisation, the windows and doors were very limited in number and small in size. The windows were very small if there were any at all. This provided security and privacy as required by the people's culture and tradition. The traditional buildings provided good heat ventilation and cooling system, so they did not need large windows.

- 4) Corrugated iron roofing sheets replaced thatch roofs in traditional buildings. In addition to economic reasons, which made it difficult for most people to afford corrugated iron roofing sheets as they do thatch roofs, the thatch roof pro-

vided good heat ventilation and cooling. Traditional building materials were replaced with expensive imported materials that were not sustainable for the locals.

4. Factors that Influenced Globalisation on Lagos Island

4.1. Slave Trade

In Africa, traditional architecture has been transformed significantly over time because of the slave trade and colonisation. Apart from the British's direct intervention in imposing their architecture in Nigeria, they were also responsible for creating the enabling environment for other influences and their way of life to come into play. The abolition of the slave trade in the 17th century brought to Nigeria a style of architecture known as "Brazilian Architecture", which started on the island. These houses possess formal and symbolic characteristics that have emerged through a comprehensive cultural synthesis (Osasona, 2007). Marafatto (1983) in his "Nigerian Brazilian Houses" stated that Portuguese functional stylistic concepts were modified in Brazil before importation to West Africa and that the Yoruba conception of spatial relationship linked to the traditional family organisation was incorporated into the imported architectural style to create a new model of residential architecture known as the Nigerian Brazilian House (Emusa & Nduka, 2018).

4.2. Colonial Administrative Policies

To carry out their administration, the British colonialists built various institutional and physical infrastructures such as warehouses, banks, schools, hospitals, residences, etc. Rail, roads, bridges, piped water, electricity, and other social amenities serviced these buildings. The architectural forms, completely different from what was on the ground, were variously expressed as timber-framed buildings, masonry structures, or composite construction (Osasona, 2008). These new architectural designs and forms gradually integrated into the Nigerian system. Lagos Island residents were among the first and major beneficiaries of these developments.

4.3. Introduction of Western Religion and Culture

Since the colonial invasion, the culture of the Lagosians has witnessed rapid change; their traditional culture is now merely a mixture of traditional elements and foreign features. The activities of missionaries in Nigeria had a significant influence on the indigenous people as it became largely incidental to the establishment of colonial rule in Nigeria. In this period, the missionaries had a greater measure of initiative, and their work had a decisive influence on Nigerians apart from the colonial power. One of the major areas that was influenced was the design of houses; the architectural designs of residential houses are also part of this movement. Only in the most remote parts of Nigeria today do people still build houses with sticks, red sand, elephant grass, and palm fronds instead of block,

cement, and zinc.

5. Materials and Methods

5.1. Materials

A total of 8 participants practising the architecture profession and registered with the Architects Registration Council of Nigeria (ARCON) were used in this study, comprising 2 females and 6 males. The participants were above 18 years of any ethnic group or religion and must have practised architecture profession for at least 5 years. Semi-structured interview questions were administered to the participants online. The participants were asked open-ended questions which encouraged them to share their knowledge, observations, and personal narratives related to the topic, which were used for qualitative data collection. The participants were recruited ethically via social media and interested participants were informed about the study and that their information was to be used for research purposes.

5.2. Study Design

The qualitative approach was chosen for this study as it allows for a detailed exploration and understanding of the impact of globalisation on traditional architecture in Lagos Island, Nigeria. By conducting interviews, the study gathered rich and in-depth data from architects involved on Lagos Island. Interviews were selected as the primary data collection method because they offer the opportunity to engage directly with participants and gain insights into their experiences, perspectives, and opinions regarding the influence of globalisation on traditional architecture.

5.3. Materials

This study used semi-structured interviews for data collection. The interview questions were open-ended and consisted of 14 questions to gain insights into the subject, allowing participants to provide comprehensive and detailed responses. The 14 questions were aligned with the research objectives and aimed to cover a range of relevant themes. These questions were carefully crafted to ensure clarity and coherence and stimulate participants to reflect on various aspects of traditional architecture and globalisation. During the interview, while there was a predetermined set of questions, the researcher was free to ask follow-up questions or explore emerging themes that arose during the interview process. This approach enabled a deeper exploration of participants' perspectives and ensured no valuable insights were overlooked.

5.4. Data Analysis

In this study, the primary data collected was the transcribed audio recordings of the interview sessions. The transcripts served as the primary source of data for analysis. Thematic analysis was the chosen approach for analysing the interview

transcripts in this study. The first step of the analysis process was familiarisation with the interview transcripts, which is followed by engaging in coding, which involved systematically labelling or categorising sections of the data that represented specific concepts or ideas. The next step is data reduction (theme generation), where similar codes were grouped to form broader categories or themes. These themes represented the key findings and insights related to globalisation's impact on Lagos Island's traditional architecture. The themes were then refined and revised through an iterative analysis process, comparing and contrasting them with the data and ensuring they accurately captured the participants' perspectives. The NVIVO software was then used to manage and organise the codes and themes, making navigating and retrieving specific sections of the transcripts easier.

5.5. Ethical Considerations

The ethical implications of using humans in the research were considered. The study was conducted by adhering to the code of conduct of research and ethical approval for the study was obtained from the University ethics board before the commencement of this study. The Architects Registration Council of Nigeria (ARCON) was also made aware of the study since its members are the sample class. Participants were duly informed about their participation and were not bribed, coerced or promised rewards for participating. Participants' consent was obtained, and data was collected anonymously.

6. Results

The result of the demographic information of the participants is presented in **Table 1**, showing that six out of the eight participants were males, with the remaining two being females. Also, the result shows that the participants had at least five years of industry experience, with the least being eight years from only one participant, and two participants had the highest years of experience (20 years). The age of the participants was also presented in **Table 1**, showing that the youngest participant was 38 years and the oldest was 51 years.

Table 1. Demography of the participant.

Participant ID	Gender	Industry experience (Years)	Age (years)
P1	Male	15	40
P2	Male	20	51
P3	Female	20	43
P4	Male	10	38
P5	Male	12	42
P6	Female	8	35
P7	Male	14	40
P8	Male	16	44

6.1. Code Generation

The result of the coding step is presented in **Table 2**, showing that a total of twenty codes were generated, and the number of participants that contributed to each of the codes was also presented. The result shows that all the participants contributed to six of the generated code, while only one code had the least number of participant contributions (four participants).

6.2. Theme Development

The developed themes are presented in **Table 3**. The result shows that five themes were developed with the corresponding themes that make up each (**Table 3**). The result also shows that three themes generated were made of three codes except theme 5, which was made of eight (**Table 3**).

7. Discussion

Lagos Island is a significant area in Nigeria's commercial and administrative

Table 2. Codes generated from the interview transcripts.

Serial number	Code generated	Number of contributing participants
1	Influence of Globalisation on traditional architecture	8
2	Shift towards modern materials (concrete, steel) from traditional materials (mud, thatch)	8
3	Incorporation of glass facades and metal roofs in new buildings	6
4	The negative impact of globalisation on cultural identity	8
5	Decline in the use of traditional materials and techniques	8
6	Loss of ornate carvings and decorations in modern structures	3
7	Preference shift towards modern architectural styles	8
8	Perception of durability and low maintenance as advantages of modern buildings	5
9	Symbolism of wealth and status associated with modern architecture	5
10	Lack of awareness and appreciation for traditional architecture	7
11	Rapid urbanization and population growth as obstacles to preservation	6
12	Shortage of skilled craftsmen and artisans with traditional building expertise	6
13	Initiatives to document and preserve traditional buildings and techniques	5
14	Architects and builders specialising in traditional architecture	6
15	Raising awareness and educating the public	8
16	Developing and enforcing heritage protection laws	7
17	Collaboration between stakeholders	7
18	Integration of traditional elements into contemporary developments	5
19	Investment in training skilled craftsmen and artisans	5
20	Balancing Globalisation and Cultural Identity	4

Table 3. Themes generated from the interview transcripts.

	Themes	Codes
Theme 1	Globalisation and Material Shift	Influence of Globalisation on traditional architecture Shift towards modern materials (concrete, steel) from traditional materials (mud, thatch) Incorporation of glass facades and metal roofs in new buildings
Theme 2	Cultural Identity Erosion	The negative impact of globalisation on cultural identity The decline in the use of traditional materials and techniques Loss of ornate carvings and decorations in modern structures
Theme 3	Preference for Modern Styles	Preference shift towards modern architectural styles Perception of durability and low maintenance as advantages of modern buildings The symbolism of wealth and status associated with modern architecture
Theme 4	Challenges in Preservation	Lack of awareness and appreciation for traditional architecture Rapid urbanisation and population growth as obstacles to the preservation Shortage of skilled craftsmen and artisans with traditional building expertise
Theme 5	Preservation and Promotion Efforts	Initiatives to document and preserve traditional buildings and techniques Architects and builders specialising in traditional architecture Raising awareness and educating the public Developing and enforcing heritage protection laws Collaboration between stakeholders Integration of traditional elements into contemporary developments Investment in training skilled craftsmen and artisans Balancing Globalisation and Cultural Identity

centre. The architecture of Lagos Island is a reflection of the city's rich cultural and historical background. According to Immerwahr's (2007) article published in the Journal of African Cultural Studies, the Portuguese constructed the earliest buildings on Lagos Island in the fifteenth century when they established a trade relationship with the Kingdom of Benin. The Portuguese Manueline style influenced these early architectural designs, characterised by intricate stonework and ornate decorations.

Five themes were developed in this study from the interview transcript to explore the topic (Table 3). The "Globalisation and Material Shift" theme describes the shift from traditional architectural practices and materials to modern ones due to globalisation. One respondent stated, "*Key features of traditional architecture include using locally sourced materials such as timber, adobe, and coral stone, intricate decorative elements, courtyard layouts, and incorporating traditional building techniques*". Traditional Lagos Island buildings are characterised by a distinct architectural style that reflects the cultural heritage of the Yoruba people.

Although, there are positive impacts of globalisation on traditional architecture in Lagos Island, such as the introduction of innovation (*“globalisation has brought new ideas, materials, and construction techniques, leading to innovation and diversity in architectural styles”*). Globalisation has significantly impacted traditional architecture, especially in developing countries where modern and contemporary designs replace traditional buildings and architecture and has brought about a shift in architectural preferences, with a growing inclination towards modern architectural styles. Urbanisation and modernisation are the primary drivers of transforming traditional architecture in developing countries.

However, globalisation has resulted in the displacement of traditional architecture and the rise of modern structures in urban areas. As stated in the interview, *“One notable change is the increased use of reinforced concrete and steel in construction, replacing traditional materials like timber and adobe”; “the introduction of glass facades, sleeker designs, and modern building technologies have become more prevalent”*, shows the adoption of modern construction designs and materials. This shift has been driven by the desire to adopt Western architectural styles, which are viewed as modern and progressive. As a result, traditional architecture has been relegated to rural areas and is no longer viewed as relevant in urban settings. Furthermore, globalisation has led to importing of building materials and technologies, further eroding traditional architecture. Modern materials and technologies have resulted in the loss of traditional building skills and techniques, which are no longer passed down from generation to generation.

The theme of cultural identity erosion emerges as a significant aspect of the research topic. Globalisation, with its rapid flow of ideas, technologies, and architectural trends, has the potential to reshape cultural identities and transform traditional architectural practices. Lagos Island has a long-standing cultural heritage embedded in its traditional architectural forms, which has evolved over generations to reflect the identity and values of the indigenous Yoruba people. However, under the influence of globalisation, particularly during the colonial era, European and Western architectural styles were introduced and gradually became dominant. The architectural style of the buildings on Lagos Island is a blend of Portuguese, Brazilian, and traditional Yoruba styles, reflecting the diverse influences that have shaped the city’s history. As noted by Bigon (2008), the architecture of Lagos Island “represents a cultural fusion of African and European styles that reflects the city’s history as a major centre of trade and commerce in West Africa” (p. 32). This shift marked a departure from the authentic expression of the local culture, potentially eroding the unique cultural identity associated with traditional architecture on Lagos Island. One of the key concerns regarding cultural identity erosion is the loss of cultural distinctiveness. One of the respondents stated the negative impact of globalisation (*“However, there is a risk of losing the distinct cultural identity that traditional architecture embodies, as it gets overshadowed by more homogenous global styles”*). As global archi-

tectural trends infiltrate Lagos Island, there is a risk of homogenising the architectural landscape and diluting the traditional design elements that reflect the local cultural identity. This shift in preference can be attributed to various factors, including the perceived association of modern architecture with progress, modernity, and global connectivity. The preference for modern styles also affects the architectural profession and local artisans. As the demand for modern designs rises, there may be a decline in the practice and knowledge of traditional building techniques. This could lead to a loss of craftsmanship and expertise associated with traditional architecture and a potential decline in employment opportunities for local artisans specialising in traditional construction methods.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study emphasises traditional architecture's cultural and social significance beyond its economic viability or aesthetic appeal. It highlights the need to balance tradition and modernity, integrating global influences while preserving the unique cultural identity of Lagos Island. This can be achieved through adaptive reuse of existing structures, incorporating traditional design elements into new developments, and involving local communities in urban planning. Policymakers, architects, and stakeholders are crucial in mitigating cultural identity erosion. They should consider the perspectives and aspirations of local communities, prioritise the preservation of cultural heritage, and collaborate with local artisans to revitalise traditional building techniques and materials. By doing so, they can ensure the continued relevance and transmission of traditional architecture to future generations.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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