

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES IN AGULERI AND UMUERI ANAMBRA-STATE

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Abstract

There are pressing needs for economic advancement, job creation, revenue generation and an enhanced standard of living at the local, state and national levels in Nigeria. Hence, these needs result in the approval and implementation of the developmental project with little or no considerations for archaeological and cultural heritages distributed within the environment. Consequently, specialities and preferences have been accorded to the environment and biophysical parameters while adverse impacts on the cultural and archaeological heritage in the local communities are neglected. Thus, this paper looks at the various impacts of developmental activities in Aguleri and Umuleri in Anambra-state on the archaeological and cultural resources in the area. This study employs an in-depth interview, reconnaissance survey, and analysis of satellite imageries collected over the past three decades, in 1988 and 2018. The practical implication of this study is the location and documentation of all the archaeological and cultural resources which are in danger of destruction, hence, making a strong case for the preservation and conservation of those resources for sustainability.

Keywords: Impact, Sustainable Development, Cultural Resources and Archaeological Impact Assessment.

Introduction

So many modifications have taken place on earth over the past centuries, all of which have significantly impacted on soil and biotic resources. With the onset of the industrial revolution, the globalisation of the world economy and expansion of population and technological capacity, land-use changes have continued unabated (Ifatimehin and Musa 2008). There is now a pressing need for economic development, jobs and revenue generation at all level (Ojiako, 2016). This has brought about “deforestation, leading to a reduction in forest quality – the density and structures of trees, the ecological services supplied, species diversity, archaeological and cultural resources that exist within the area” (Rajib Karmakar *et. al.* 2016).

Nigeria as well is not exempted as growing population densities, urbanisation, need for economic development and increase in revenue has led to a series of developmental project approvals with little attention paid to the environment, including the

unintended neglect of 'the Heritage and Cultural Resources'. The situation is so severe that the socio-economic development of many areas is being threatened, resulting in global awakening regarding environmental issues (Nelson-Jonah 2012). Although there is considerable progress in addressing the varying complexity and technical problems associated with the environment, these issues continue to be some of the most important and pressing problem facing all communities and governments today. These have led to the development of laws and policies governing the environment and economic development. The laws are designed to regulate the utilisation of natural resources and ensure the conservation of the environment to achieve sustainable development.

Cultural resources relate to the areas of ecological, scientific or geological importance; they are anything that has cultural relevance. They could be in material or nonmaterial forms, and such should be preserved for posterity. Cultural resource management is the conservation of material and non-material that are essential components of our cultural heritage, including settlement patterns, buildings, standing stone, archaeological sites, museum objects, oral traditions, folklore, myths, songs and legends (DIBR, 2013). Archaeological resources are tools and cultural evidence used, discarded and discovered by archaeologists about the extinct cultural activities. These resources which could be discovered through planned or accidental excavation are used to reconstruct the activities of the past generations' and their relationship with their environment (Gibbon, 2007). These resources can appear as metal tools, wooden tools, bones, cowries, beads, stones etc. The archaeological heritage constitutes a finite non-renewable physical and material resources, whose value lies in the information, which can be derived from them and in their importance as a social resource for the host community.

All large-scale development work, notably road schemes and other earth-moving activities, involve the inevitable destruction of at least some archaeological heritage. According to Gibbon (2007), "archaeological remains are finite resources, they decay over time as a result of natural processes and any form of excavation tends to destroy them completely". Impact Assessment has been designed as a tool for providing models, measures and planning for preventing destruction of the environment, historical and archaeological heritages on the proposed site as well as mitigating the damages in the natural, socio-cultural, health and economic well-being of the community where projects are proposed and constructed for national

development (Stakeholder's Guide, 2003). For effective use of this tool, a proper understanding of the predictions of impacts must be considered, and if not effectively implemented and used would affect the supposed benefactors of the project. Hence, sustainable development of tourist destinations, several key factors must be taken into consideration. In addition to factors like managing dynamic growth, climate change, poverty alleviation, and support for conservation, tourists' and residents' security is a crucial consideration (UNEP, 2005).

Uncertainty regarding security can determine significant fluctuations of touristic flows, so residents' and tourists' safety becomes a global problem for sustainable tourism. Even with the best efforts, a tourist destination cannot develop or be revived unless it offers a high level of safety and security (Hassan, 2000). Sustainable development could be used interchangeably as sustainable tourism development, where tourism "meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. Thus, it is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled which maintain cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support system" (Steck, 1999; 2).

It is observed that little or no attention is given to archaeological features and cultural heritages in the environment, which may be vulnerable and could cause a long term impact on the locals. Understanding archaeology as a course that deals with data from the past cultural activities through excavation, surface collections and ethnography (Andah and Okpoko, 1994). Hence, Andah and Okpoko, (1994) and Renfrew and Bahn, (1996), show how archaeologist guides their interest in the study of dynamism in culture, environment and human history. Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) has come to stay as the remedy or obligation to protect their National Archaeological Heritages and maximise its value to the host community as sustainable resources into the future (Gibbon, 2007). As such sustainability in archaeology and related discipline has recently focused on minimising the loss information that results by project constructions. Since, material remains has lots to tell, as expatiated by Okpoko (2007) that "physical remains left by previous human inhabitants and considered parts of a country's cultural heritage...". More so, Okpoko (2007), also pointed out vividly, the assertions from World Bank Statement (1991;120) that

“cultural resources are part of the sources base, and it is therefore important that development options... are screened for potential impact on cultural properties”. Hence, the neglect of this aspect of the National heritage (Okpoko, 2016; 3) must be corrected and reconsidered during developmental activities.

Many theories have been used by researchers to explain sustainable development, archaeological impact and tourism. For this work, Community Attachment model would be used to anchor the work. The Community Attachment model formulated by John Bowlby (1991) developmental psychology talks about a child’s tie to the mother and its disruption through separation, deprivation, and bereavement. Mary Ainsworth’s innovative technology later helps in the development of the theory, her concept of the attachment figure as a secure base from which an infant can explore the world. Other researchers like Long, Perdue, and Allen (1991) viewed the model from the perspective of community interrelationship to their environment and economic revitalisation. An important developmental policy is to sustain local values, culture, and quality of life. Developers and planners can ease the impact of the development by considering the nature of ties to the community. This could be achieved through an inventory of places and features that are of most concern to the community, and a proper impact assessment before the development of any significant project in the area.

Materials and Methods

Aguleri and Umuleri in Anambra East Local Government Area of Anambra State are chosen as the study area for this work. This is as a result of their long-standing history as the early human settlements in Igboland and the need for the preservation of archaeological and cultural resources give the increasing rate of developmental activities in the area (see Okpoko, 1988). The study area is located along the bank of river Omambala (Anambra River). This is within the Long 6° 53' 20.40" E and Lat 6° 20' 13.20" N. It also falls within the humid tropics climatic zone (Ezezim, 2010). The area has tropical rainforest vegetation, with more of lateritic reddish earth soil type, that influenced the activities of the early settlers in the area. Thus, the area has a long-standing history of the agrarian economy, especially the cultivation of yam, which is popular within the Igbo culture.

Another common agricultural practice, especially in the urban area is the cultivation of vegetables, potatoes, cassava on the swampy plains in the area. The area is believed to have hosted the descendants of Eri, the son of Gad (in the holy bible, the 7th son of Jacob), who migrated to the area and settled. The Eri lineage was believed to form the nucleus of many other clans in Igbo land, including Aguleri and Umuleri, with Aguleri being the first son that took hold of the Father’s homestead. With this, we can state tentatively that Aguleri and Umueri had an earlier civilisation and unique technologies more than we may imagine. Also, to strengthen the ancestral ties of Gad- Eri as Igbo ancestor, the discoveries and the proof range from the bronze pots, King David star, onyx stone, several beads, clay pots and many others were excavated from the area especially the supposed grave of Eri, the still-existing Agwuve (Trinity tree) with one tap root in Aguleri and many other evidences (Ikeanyibe, 2006; Eyisi, 2010).

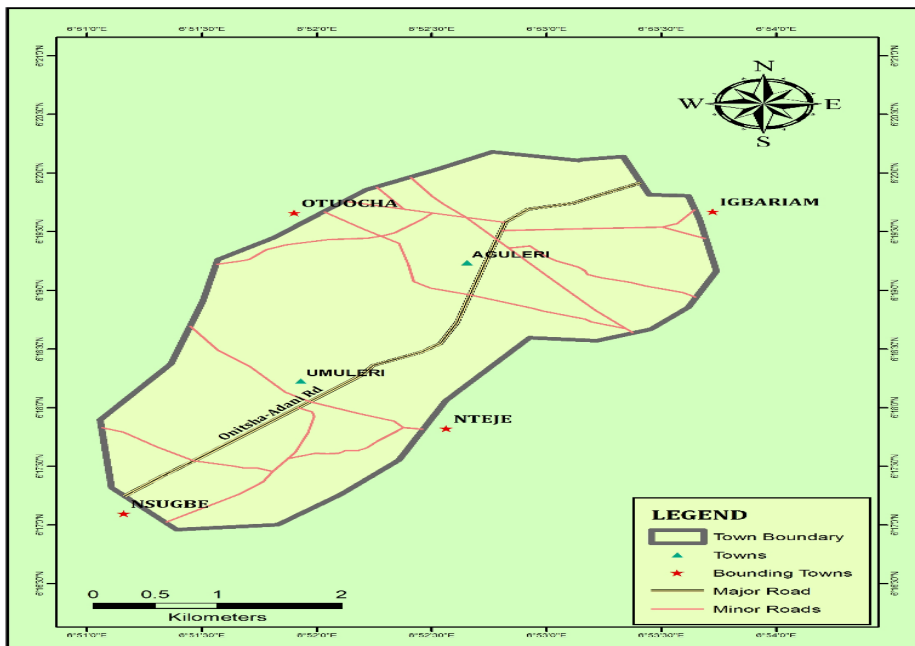


Fig I: The Study Area (Source: Ministry of Land and Survey)

In order to carry out this study effectively, information was gathered from primary and secondary sources. The former includes reconnaissance survey, through direct observation and in-depth interview. While the later comprises information from online materials, published and unpublished works. Also, GIS and GPS

equipment were employed in the course of this study. While GPS was used in data collection, GIS was used to map the features as they exist on the earth crust and also to analyse imageries captured from United States Geological Survey (USGS), to ascertain the level of development that has occurred in the area over time.

The study area, Aguleri, and Umuleri communities in Anambra State represent the site for ancient history, housing some archaeological and cultural resources of early Igbo settlement. As opined by (Oguagha, 1988), the area is known for a cultural endowment with Igbo historical background and efficient economic activities. Okpoko (2007) believes that previous human habitations are considered part of a country's cultural heritage. Being some few kilometres away from Onitsha, and with an increasing need for development, revenue generation across the globe, the area hosts developmental activities that can hamper the continuous existence of the resources and loss of history. Given the above scenario, there is a need to preserve and conserve available resources for posterity. Thus, this study examines the impact of developmental activities on archaeological and cultural resources in the study area.

Result and Discussion of Findings

Baseline Condition of the Study Area

The Umuleri axis before the project construction commenced was dense forest vegetation with wild and herbal plants such as *Iba chorop*, *Ihaba ofia*, *Okwuma*, *Agbara*, *Anuebe*, *Uma*, *Edemmuo Amuma* and animals. Stone mining is also a major handiwork there, where families mount stalls and mine stones from their land. They break and park the stones in heaps to sell to builders. The study area also houses the community's grooves and deities (*Oguadah*, *Ofia Nengo*, *Ofi Iyiokwa*, *Iyiom*, *Udo Okpo*, *Ofia ojukwuagu*, *Nwampo*) and abandoned settlements. Tributaries with cultural significance such as *Kpeke river*, *Oyi-Oji*, *Ogene-oji*, *Oguadah Pond*), were the locals visit for communal worship, rituals for most festivals and games. Habitually, the dense vegetation provides medicinal herbs used by indigenous herbalist around the area. More so, through the Aguleri area, before most of the development a lot of cultural structures exist in the area, this include; Eri settlement site, Eri gravesite, Eri tomb, Menri gravesite, dry valley, Monuments, grooves, deities, Igwes' Palace, Agwuve tree, and abandoned settlements and these features made up the community resources, which are way vulnerable for development projects approved without proper assessment.

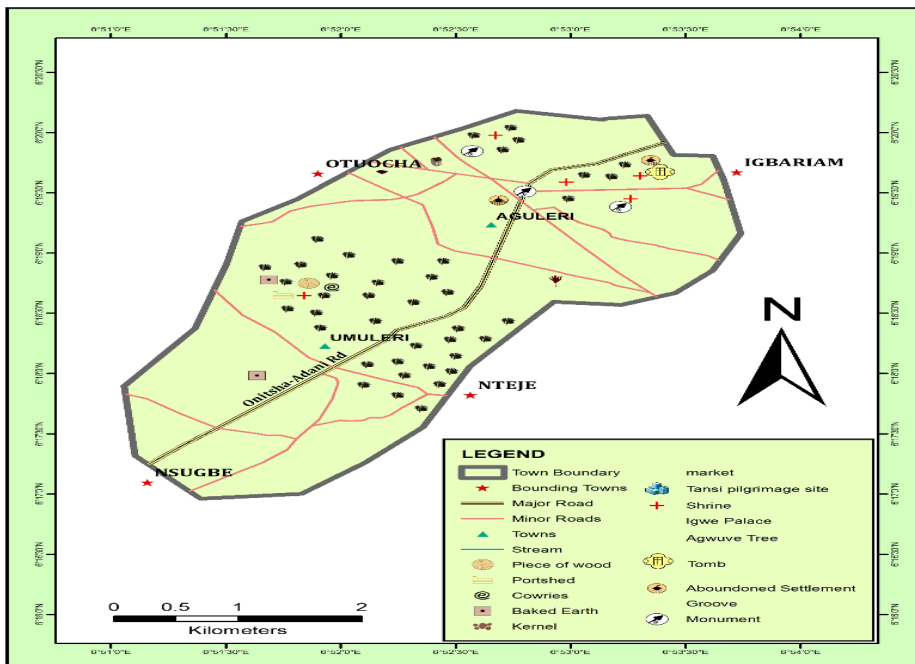


Fig II. Map Showing the Location of the Resources
(Source: Ministry of Land and Survey)

Impact on Archaeological and Cultural Resources

It is evident from the preceding that archaeological materials with excellent tourism potential exist within the study area. The figure below shows the archaeological and cultural resources found in the study area.

Table I: Distribution of Archaeological Materials in the Study Area

Archaeological/Cultural Materials	Location Found
Eri Settlement Site, Eri Grave Site, Eri Tomb, Menri Grave Site, Dry Valley, Monument, Grooves, Igwes Palace, Agwuve Tree, Abandoned Settlement	AGULERI
Kernel, Baked Earth, Cowries, Potsherds, Grooves, Deities, Stream, Pieces of craft (wood), Ancient trees	UMULERI

Source: Fieldwork, 2016

Through observations, pieces of potsherds were found scattered all over the site, around Oguadah (abandoned settlement) and pieces of woodcraft at Odini. Groove and tributaries were hauled from their deities on the verge of constructing bridges and underground tunnel for erosion track. Hospitals, fuel stations and

business places were established and affected the original dense vegetation. Interview information from Maazi John Egwuonwu, explains that most of the places previously occupied by their ancestors have been developed without proper Impact Assessment, and thus, information about their cultures are lost with such development. The possibility of their remains either cultural, industrial or bones being preserved in the grooves and abandoned settlement are high; hence, no consideration was given to these aspects of the local before the approval of the most developmental project. More so, Oriaku Akudo mentioned that most of the affected area are homes of their god and goddesses and therefore, not expected to be disturbed to avoid their wrath.

In line with the interview conducted and the analysis of the satellite imageries, some essential facts emerged regarding the developmental activities and their impact on cultural and archaeological resources. It is seen that cultural heritage is one of the most critical issues for the reconstruction of history and maintaining peoples' identity. The level of developmental activities in the study area is on the increase, and with the continued extension of Onitsha metropolis, many parts of the study areas have been ear-marked and sold for development, while other parts, especially in Umuleri, fall within the area earmarked for airport construction. Figure III and IV below show the image analysis of the area year 1988 and 2018.

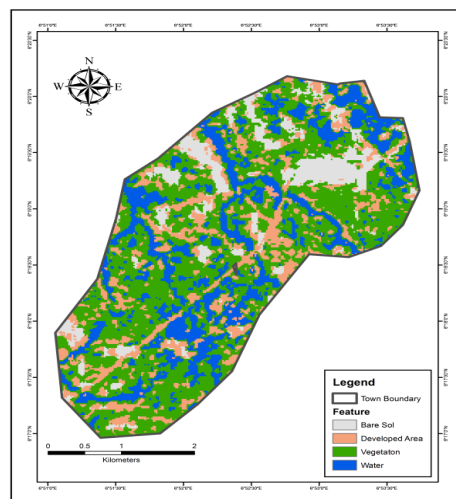


Fig III: Image Analysis of the Study Area in 1988

(Source: Google Earth Imagery)

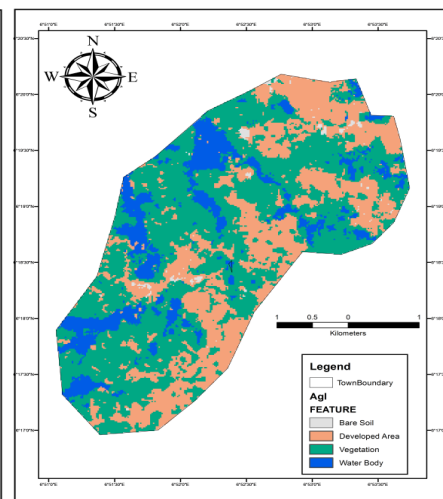


Fig IV: Image Analysis of the Study Area in 2018

Table II: Rate of Changes in the Land-use of the Study Area

Features	1988	2018
Water	21.93	13.80 ↓
Vegetation	48.41	53.40 ↑
Bare soil	10.66	0.80 ↑
Developed Area	18.99	32.00 ↓
Total	100	100

The result from the image analysis of 1988 and 2018- shows the later to have increased vegetation and developmental activities in the area with a corresponding decrease in the water body and bare soil. The increase in vegetation could be attributed to the increased need of lands for agricultural purposes to satisfy the need of the increasing population while some other lands have been used for developmental activities. Rajib Karmakar *et al* (2016) noted that the “possible impact of land-use change includes an increase in afforestation, and also noted that socio-economic trends may have a dominant role in determining land-use patterns”.

Reduction in water body could be attributed to developmental activities in the area and the reduction in the value placed on the heritage resources as waterbody and its environs acts as a home for some archaeological and heritage resources. Jing Chen *et al* (2014) also opined that the “ecosystem services value is given less priority and should be considered by the policymakers of land use and development”.

Also, reduction in bare soil could be attributed to an increase in the developmental activities in the area and increased need for agricultural lands. The argument here is that, with the continuous and uncontrolled development, the archaeological and cultural materials that have high potentials suffer the threat of loss shortly. As Scholarly observations revealed that “developmental projects have a potential impact on archaeological sites, monumental sculpture, painting, inscription and other physical remains left by previous human inhabitants” (Okpoko, 2007). In Umuleri, Part of the community land has been earmarked for the construction of the airport, resulting in preliminary construction works like roads, land excavation etc. Buried archaeological materials, original soil components, and parental materials were destroyed beyond measure while excavating the borrow-pit to fill the lakes, streams and the grading of the link roads (see the plate below).



Plate 1-2: Link Road and The Borrow Pit at Ifite-Umuleri Axis

Apart from the destruction done through the borrow pit, the road construction processes exposed many archaeological materials and cultural resources to destructions. Pieces of stone tools, cowries, potsherds and woodcraft were scattered around the study area, especially, on the road and abandoned settlement sites; Oguadah, Mbede, Odah and Odini abandoned settlement site. The potsherds include the body, pedestals, rim sherds with beautiful decorative techniques and motifs. Pieces of a wooden craft were discovered, although the makeup was not known. These discoveries are repositories of valuable information about the past and present descendants of the study area.

More so, In Umuleri, sacred grooves and deity houses are at risk of destruction or defacement, since, the link roads for an airport cut across the grooves. Also, streams and other water bodies which serve as an area of worship, ritual activities, and festivity for the communities are at risk of destruction. At the course of clearing for taxiway construction, an ancient Iroko tree which purportedly was over than 200 years was extirpate. Finally, the land that is supposedly meant for communal farming, hunting, lumbering and community developmental purposes were all lost to the on-going project.

Hence, it is essential to note that these outlined above are basic environmental as well as cultural attachments of the communities and their locals. The perceived impact may create a medium or long term impacts which may be unfavourable to the entire community in the long run. Owing to Nigeria's laid down policy of Decree No. 86 of 1992, which provides the legal backing for public participation in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Section 7 and 22 (3) of the Decree stipulate that "Government agencies, members of the public, experts in any relevant discipline and interested groups should be given opportunity to examine and comment on the EIA of an activity

before Federal Ministry of Environment (FMEnv) decides on the activity” (Federal Environmental Protection Agency, 1992).

For the interest of these areas under study, most importantly, the Umuleri axis earmarked for a cargo airport construction should be delayed to ensure that proper and recommendable Social Impact Assessment (SIA), Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) and Cultural Impact Assessment (CIA) are vehemently carried out on the grooves, hills and abandoned settlement. This salvage mission would help to document the environmental features as well as prove most controversial argument on Gad- Eri as Igbo ancestor, and his adventure on the area (Ikeanyibe, 2006; Eyisi, 2010). And the supposed archaeological evidence of the past civilisation in the area (Oguagha, 1988) may be unravelling in the process and would much be appreciated for archaeological study.

Finally, archaeologist and anthropologist been the expert in this aspect of EIA, should be allowed to handle this. To generate accurate and sustainable results, decisions, implementation or decommissioning could then take place if necessary to remedial the situation depending on the discovery made. Most importantly, a continuation of the project should mean that immediate and appropriate mitigating measures must be put in place, before stakeholder’s interest and expectations.

Conclusion

Observation shows that there are lots of cultural and archaeological remains in Umuleri and Aguleri communities and around the airport project site, which may give more insight to human origin, civilisation, migration and settlement pattern of the settlers as earlier stipulated by scholars (Oguagha, 1988) and (Ikeanyibe, 2006). However, as rightly observed by scholars that “developmental activities have become the primary destroyer of these vulnerable resources in the study area”, in confirmation with Nelson-Jonah, (2012) “Construction activities and other heavy developmental works in the area have destroyed most of these heritages”.

Consequently, the community resources affected by the developmental activities in the study areas are cultural practices, indigenous physical products in the form of artifact and environmental products which had undergone human retouch and exploitation. Hence, finds depict they are historical, anthropological and archaeological significance to man’s survival, put by Onyima

(2016) "there are a host of cultural heritages among communities in Nigeria that are under threat of extinction" hence, one of such is caused by developmental activities. Aside the above, communal cohesion and man-ecological relationship were not left unaffected.

Finally, to ensure a sustainable development that is in line with the World Bank report, this paper canvasses for Archaeological Impact Assessment and Cultural Impact Assessment to augment the said Environmental Impact Assessment undertaken in the areas. This would help to salvage the cultural and archaeological resources in the study area vulnerable to destruction. Lastly, it is essential to note that these cultural heritages when uncovered could be harnessed, revitalised and developed for tourism to enhance the economic base of the area.

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