

Governing Informal Settlements

Contentious Politics, Land Rights
and Tenure Security in Abuja, Nigeria



Nuhu Adeiza Ismail

Propositions

1. The state is powerless in multi-actor governance.
(this thesis).
2. Informal settlements are best governed informally.
(this thesis).
3. The originality of an academic article is weakened by numerous citations.
4. Academic researchers are alarmists for societal problems that are not taken seriously.
5. Truth is not relative, we only have relative perceptions of the truth.
6. You need the formal '8am to 5pm' or 'Monday to Friday' time structure to finish a PhD.

Propositions belonging to the thesis, entitled:

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Wageningen, 31 March 2023

Governing Informal Settlements

Contentious Politics, Land Rights and Tenure Security in Abuja,
Nigeria

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To Mulikat, Fareeda, and Mahdi

For the love and solace I found in them to go through this journey

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Abbreviations

AGF	Attorney-General of the Federation
AGIS	Abuja Geographical Information System
AMAC	Abuja Municipal Area Council
AMMC	Abuja Metropolitan Management Council
DCD	Development Control Department
FCC	Federal Capital City
FCDA	Federal Capital Development Authority
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FCTA	Federal Capital Territory Administration
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GIS	Geographical Information System
ISD	Informal Settlement Dwellers
IPA	International Planning Associates
NSA	Non-state Actors
p./pg.	Page
SA	State Actors
Tpl.	Town Planner
URP	Urban and Regional Planning
WUR	Wageningen University and Research

Abstract

Urban informality, particularly sprawling informal settlements, has become a defining feature of most global south cities as the rapid pace of urbanisation present challenges for city planning agencies. This thesis provides deeper insights on how and why land ownership rights and tenure security in informal settlements are so controversial and remain unresolved for over 40 years since the creation of Abuja as the new capital city of Nigeria in 1978. The central question addressed in this thesis is this: How has the historical and current interplay of governance actors produced the complex dynamics around the informal settlements of Abuja?

A qualitative research methodology in the form of critical interpretivist approach involving interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis and participant observation is utilised for this study. The concept of governance provides the umbrella framework to holistically examine the past and present governance dynamics that are (re)defining the trajectory of Abuja's informal settlements. The related concepts of critical junctures, path dependency, contentious politics, and a derived notion of an amenable state provide the conceptual framework to analyse the governance dynamics around Abuja informal settlements. An inductive thematic analysis through Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software was used for data analysis.

Historically, this study shows how the creation of Abuja in 1976 with the FCT Act initiated the informalization of the indigenous communities. This informalization process was further compounded by key critical governance antecedents such as the 1978 Land Use Act; 1979 Abuja master plan and (unsuccessful) resettlements; unharmonized customary and statutory land allocations; and the past indiscriminate demolitions/displacement threats. Findings from this study shows how the complexities around Abuja informal settlements are collectively produced by both state and non-state actors. The study identified that the collective production of the complex dynamics around the settlements is also expressed in the alliance among the political representatives of the informal settlements dwellers (ISD) and some indigenous ISD as well as alliance between some state officials and developers in confiscating lands from vulnerable ISD. The business relationship between some state officials and developers in Abuja's land businesses and the resistance practices of ISD against their displacement which often gets support from some state actors represents additional sources of the complex dynamics in governing these informal settlements. This study contributes to the understanding of governance, urban informality, and the state from a global south perspective. The study also provides insights into why the challenges and contentions around informal settlements in many African cities, particularly around land rights and tenure security, have persisted for so long without any foreseeable resolutions.



Chapter 1

Introduction



1.1. Introduction

Urban informality has become a defining feature of most global south cities. Informality is usually used to capture economic, housing, and socio-political practices that are not officially approved or recognized within the state administrative regulations. In terms of housing, many statistics have indicated that about 50 - 70% of African urban dwellers live in informal settlements (see Habitat, 2016; Okyere & Kita, 2015; Onyishi et al., 2021). The fast pace of urbanization in many African cities has created hosts of urban problems for the city planning agencies. For instance, there are no adequate housing provisions to accommodate the growing urban population. This has led to the emergence of squatters, shanties, ghettos, slums, and even modern houses on officially unapproved lands. All these forms of alternative housing provisions by many urban dwellers are usually termed *informal* by the city authorities for falling outside the officially approved building and planning regulations. Hence, despite being home to most of the city dwellers and workforce, informal settlements are spaces of contentions over land ownership rights or right to live within the city. This is in addition to the abject living conditions of most of the informal settlements dwellers (ISD): most ISD are living in deplorable communities and amid fears of displacements because of their informal label (see Banks, Lombard, & Mitlin, 2019; Chiodelli & Tzfadia, 2016; Habitat, 2010; Michelutti & Smith, 2014; Roy, 2009b; Rubin, 2018; Suhartini & Jones, 2019).

Most informal settlements have withstood development control activities of city planning agencies and displacement threats to survive within the city. They have become permanent features of many global south cities. Yet their related challenges (land rights contentions, poor infrastructure, poverty, insecurity, unhealthy environments and poor living conditions) persist. Despite the challenges, the informality status, and threats of displacements, ISD are renowned for their resistance practices and struggle for survival. Most fundamental in their struggles is the agitation for a permanent or secured land right and tenure security. In many African cities, land tenure security – understood as a form of formal protection from arbitrary displacement or forced eviction (FAO, 2002; Malik, Roosli, Tariq, & Salman, 2019) – is often under contention because of complex socio-economic and political factors, conflicting interests and institutional challenges. Some studies (see Patel, 2013b; van Gelder, 2010) have argued the need for understanding and working with the different tenure practices and land right claims as a basis for feasible interventions in the informal settlements. However, the land rights and tenure security that are central to the dynamics and contentions around the informal settlements are complicated with diverse claims and contentions from different stakeholders such as the ISD; statutory land allottees, developers, community leaders, and state officials.

The main hypothesis of this research is that the complexities in the governance of informal settlements are collectively produced by the many stakeholders around the settlements. That is, governance actors and stakeholders are engaged in diverse and sometimes conflicting practices that complicate the management of the settlements. Some of these practices that this research critically analysed include the agitations for land ownership rights and infrastructural developments from the ISD; the land ownership claim-makings and politicking of other stakeholders; the developers' scheming for lands; and the multifaced roles of the state in addressing the contentions. The amalgam of these practices and other issues of poverty, spatial injustice, and unhealthy environments around the informal settlements have made many scholars and critical observers to conclude that the dynamics of urban informality in the global south are complex, messy, and difficult to understand.

There are many ways to explore and understand the complexities around informal settlements, but the focus of this research is the contentions over land ownership rights and tenure security. This is because the issues over land ownership rights and tenure security are pivotal to addressing and understanding other issues – including the understanding of the roles and impacts of all stakeholders in the complex dynamics around the settlements. The contentions involve all the stakeholders. Exploring their claims, claim makings, and the impacts of their claim makings on the settlements can provide insights in the difficulties in the governance of the settlements, the precarious condition of the ISD, and the persistence of the challenges in the settlements. For instance, some studies (see Arnot, Luckert, & Boxall, 2011; Malik et al., 2019; van Gelder & Luciano, 2015) have explained that the lack of tenure security discourages land investments and community development efforts. Hence, the need for exploring the conditions that drive tenure insecurity in informal settlements.

The lack of basic infrastructures to support livelihoods, the deplorable living conditions of the ISD, and related sufferings are significantly worthy of exploration and call for urgent interventions. However, this research is not about how to rapidly improve living conditions of ISD nor finding quick fixes. This is basically because the challenges of informal settlements in global south cities have not decreased despite decades of local and international (governmental and nongovernmental) interventions. Rather, the underlying motive of this research is to understand how and why the challenges and contentions around these almost *indispensable* settlements have persisted so long without any foreseeable improvement, and consequently, to contribute to the understanding of their complex and messy dynamics. Hopefully, this understanding can provide a basis for more effective interventions. The contentions in the informal settlements of Abuja (Nigeria) over landownership and right to the city offer a suitable context to explore and understand the complications around the governance of informal settlements.

1.2. Abuja and informal settlements

Abuja, the new federal capital of Nigeria, is one of the fastest growing cities in Africa designed to be among the world's well planned and sustainable cities. Abuja is located relatively in the middle of Nigeria (see figure 1.1) with a land area of about 8,000 sq. km. The city centre (about 250 sq. km, also known as the Federal Capital City-FCC) being the first developmental phase according to the master plan, is relatively more developed or modernized than other regions. The highly developed neighbourhoods of Abuja with attractive modern buildings and good road networks might obfuscate the numerous informal settlements in Abuja.

However, rapid urbanization and lack of effective planning (Bloch, Monroy, Fox, & Ojo, 2015) over the past four decades have led to the growth of several and controversial (informal) settlements within and around the city (especially within the pre-existing indigenous communities). There are about 20 slummy settlements within the highly developed FCC alone to say less of the suburb and peripheries (see figure 1.2). Most of these settlements are pre-existing indigenous communities that have grown into slums because of ineffective resettlement programmes. However, they are still coexisting ironically within the highly developed neighbourhoods of Abuja (see figures 1.3 and 1.4).

Major planning and development control activities of the government, such as demolitions, forced evictions and resettlement schemes, have not shown significant effects to the growing challenges of Abuja's informal settlements. These informal settlements, most of which had existed prior to the making of Abuja a Federal Capital Territory (FCT), were due to be resettled in order to make way for a well-planned modern city. The fact that most of the indigenous settlements were considered not worthy to exist based on the modernization plans for Abuja already made them informal. Their subsequent neglect, underdevelopment, and growth into slums added another dimension to their informality.

Unlike the conventional slum upgrading or regularization programmes that are often used to mitigate the growing challenges of informal settlements in global south cities, displacements and resettlements were, and are still the main approaches of the state to get rid of informal settlements in Abuja. The displacements were in the name of executing developmental projects according to an outdated master plan. Apart from the displacement of over 800,000 residents between 2003 and 2007 through the state demolition of more than 30 informal settlements (COHRE & SERAC, 2008) that aggravated the situations, there are hundreds of land rights related court cases involving the state and several non-state actors (Otaru, 2018). Unending periodic demolitions are also part of the complex challenges of the informal settlements.



Figure 1.1: Map of Nigeria showing the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja
 Source: GIS Lab, Kogi State University, Anyigba

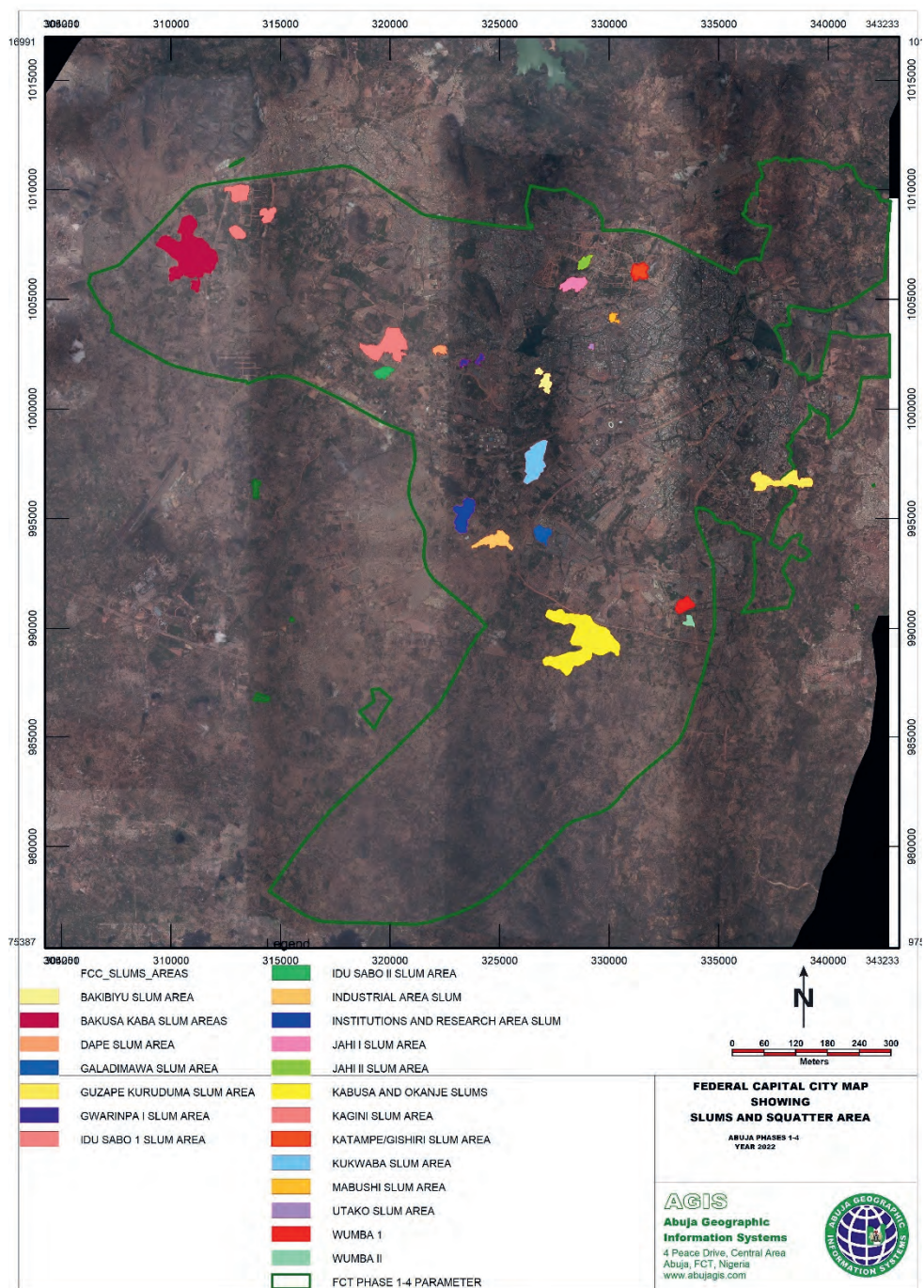


Figure 1.2: Map of Abuja FCC showing the slums within the inner city.
Source: AGIS, 2022



Figure 1.3: Mabushi slum within the developed neighbourhoods of Abuja city
Source: Author, 2022



Figure 1.4: Jabi slum within the developed neighbourhoods of Abuja city
Source: Author 2022

The 1979 master plan, designed by the International Planning Associates (IPA), is often the reference point of the state planning and development authorities in executing developmental projects and development control activities within Abuja. The resettlement of indigenous settlements (most of which have metamorphized into informal settlements) of Abuja as recommended by the master plan was to make Abuja a city for all Nigerians with equal opportunities and to avoid any primeval claims from the indigenous settlers. But this is not the situation today. The contentions from different actors and ineffective state programmes have aggravated the challenges of these settlements and the governance mechanisms around them. The master plan of Abuja made adequate provisions and proposals that could make Abuja a sustainable city devoid of informal settlements (COHRE & SERAC, 2008; Obiadi, Nzewi, & Onochie, 2018). But more than 40 years after the creation of Abuja and several development-induced displacements and resettlements (DIDR) of some indigenous communities/informal settlements by the state, informal settlements still pose a major challenge to the development of Abuja into a slum free city as being pursued by the government and elites.

Recent studies and events have also shown an increase in the size, number and problems of the informal settlements in Abuja (see Abubakar, 2014; Adepoju et al., 2013; Bloch et al., 2015; Obiadi et al., 2018; Onyekachi, 2014; Zubair, Ojigi, & Mbih, 2015). Although the settlements have been subjected to several (threats of) displacements, the way most of them have resisted or survived forceful evictions, arbitrary displacements and resettlements attempts from the government is an indication that there are still fundamental issues to explore and understand in the socio-political dynamics around the settlements. Such issues include why and how the resettlement programme is being pursued; the resistance practices of the ISD, the genesis and dynamics of the land rights and tenure security contentions; and the interrelationships between different governance actors and institutions around the settlements.

1.3. Main research focus: understanding the governance of informal settlements

Research on informal settlements has often focused on the urbanization processes and its associated housing challenges that produced the settlements, including the ever-growing complex problems of underdevelopment, ineffective urban planning, inadequate or lack of social amenities, pollution and social vices around the settlements. But, as also noted by some scholars (Lombard, 2014; Michelutti & Smith, 2014; Wacquant, 2008), much less attention is usually given to the various governance actors that are trying to influence or regulate socio-spatial processes in the informal settlements. The governance of informal settlements is not a new topic in urban informality studies. Most literatures on urban informality have shown that rapid and uncontrolled urbanization, inadequate mass housing, ineffective urban planning and development control programmes contributed significantly to the formation and growth

of informal settlements. But emerging critical studies (see Banks et al., 2019; Finn & Cobbinah, 2022; Lombard, 2019; Michelutti & Smith, 2014) on urban informality now tend to focus on the more nuanced political economy of their existence to provide more understandings about the settlements. That is, the interrelationships of individuals and the state over the public policies around the settlements.

Relatedly, the exploration of the roles and impacts of state actors and non-state actors in the dynamics of Abuja's informal settlements is the reason to simply label this research topic as *the governance of informal settlements*. However, as I will show throughout this thesis, governance (basically understood as the interplay of state and non-state actors in managing the society or a phenomenon) is an ambiguous and elusive concept of many components and usage in different contexts. What I observed in many of the studies on governance of informal settlements (see Al-Daily, 2013; Chiodelli & Tzfadia, 2016; Habitat, 2010; Michelutti & Smith, 2014; Roy, 2009a; Rubin, 2018; Suhartini & Jones, 2019) is the excessive focus on the impacts of state policies and governance styles at the expense of other significant processes and actors that are equally contributing to the problems in the governance of informal settlements.

Understandably, many studies focus on the role of the state, being the major or the most visible entity in the management of the settlements. But by doing so, important processes and practices by other actors may be overlooked. As a result, empirical studies on the mutual roles and collective impacts of governance actors on the fundamental issue of land rights and tenure security are relatively scarce. Some studies have attempted explain the collective impacts of both the state and non-state actors in the governance challenges around urban informality (Banks et al., 2019; Chiodelli et al., 2020; Finn & Cobbinah, 2022; Goodfellow, 2016; Christian Haid, 2016; Christian Haid & Hilbrandt, 2019; Lombard, 2019; Saharan, Pfeffer, Baud, & Scott, 2022). But most of these studies still portray the state as a powerful monolithic entity and/or the main culprit in the problems around urban informality, with little or no critical insights on how and why the state is so. This research contends the popular notions of the state around urban informality with an in-depth exploration of the working mechanisms of the state in the governance of Abuja's informal settlements.

Most of the accusations against the state related to the problems around urban informality are factual and this study is not to contest these facts. However, too much focus on the state alone and the attribution of most informal settlements' problems to it without adequate exploration of the state's working mechanisms vis-a-vis other actors tends to undermine other important processes and actors that are also influencing the dynamics around informal settlements. I acknowledge the significant role of the state in the dynamics of urban informality, but the claim I intend to make through this study is that the powers or processes that produce and sustain informality do not lie with the state alone. They go beyond the already complex state to a dynamic network of influential actors outside the formal jurisdiction of the state. Hence, one of the goals of this study is to show the mutual and interconnected roles of different governance actors (state and non-state) in the governance of informal settlements. Considering the statutory role of the state as the manager of the society, the presentation of the state

as a powerful actor/regulator that defines the complex dynamics around urban informality is not out of order. However, in the context of African urban governance, such perception or theorization of the state is incomplete and thus problematic.

Some of the problems with such notion of the state that this study attempts to address are: explaining the significant roles and impacts of influential non-state actors; examining the state working mechanisms vis a vis other governance actors; and most importantly, showing that the identity of the African state is constantly evolving and elusive to most nomothetic theories of the state (de Satgé & Watson, 2018; Jammulamadaka & Murphy, 2017; Routley, 2016; Watson, 2009). Three common interconnected themes in the discourse of (African) urban planning and governance guided my conceptualization of governance of informal settlements in this study. They are historical antecedents that initiated current contentions, the politicking of contending actors, and the complex role of the state. This is based on insightful readings from interrelated social science disciplines like geography, political science, sociology, anthropology, development and organizational studies. How I engaged with these extensive bodies of literature is outlined in chapter 2 of this thesis.

For the conceptual and analytical framework of this study, I drew ideas from historical institutionalism (see Capoccia, 2015; Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007; Mahoney, 2001; Peters, 2019; Sorensen, 2014; Sorensen, 2017b, 2018, 2020) on critical junctures and path-dependency to explore the past antecedents that have and/or are still influencing current contentions around Abuja's informal settlements. I used the concept of contentious politics (Tarrow, 2011, 2013; Tilly & Tarrow, 2015) to further delve into how the claim makings, contentions, and negotiations of contending actors are defining the dynamics of infrastructural development, landownership rights, and the resettlements or displacement (threats) around the settlements. Lastly, I connected many distinct theories of the state (for example see Christian Haid & Hilbrant, 2019; Jammulamadaka & Murphy, 2017; Lindell, 2008; Rhodes, 1996; Rose & Miller, 2010) to explain how the many components of the state and its dynamic actors have made it inherently complicated and amenable to contentious politicking.

A critical analysis of governance mechanisms requires the exploration of the socio-cultural and historical antecedents that have produced the power relations and networks among governance actors. It also includes a critical examination of how structural and agential forces are defining governance processes and outcomes. The interplay of structural and agential forces around socio-political phenomena cannot be separated when the collective actions of individuals in the society are influenced by their relationship with socio-political structures of governance (March & Olsen, 1984). The common understanding in many literatures is that both social actors and structures are mutually dependent on each other for their makeup and activities in the society. That is, though actors are the ones that define the rules, norms and structures (institutions) that guide interrelationships, but in making of such rules, norms and structures, they are confined to or influenced by the existing rules and structures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Hodgson, 2006; G. Jackson, 2010; North, 1991; Peters, 2019; Steinmo, 2015; Thelen, 1999). This is why I see it necessary to analyse the

interplay of all the governance actors around the informal settlements of Abuja on the background of the structural forces that defined their relationships.

The complex interplay of different actors, politicking and contentions around the informal settlements of Abuja provide a suitable setting to explore the complex governance mechanisms around informal settlements. The exercise of power among governance actors in the case of Abuja's informal settlements is not one directional. Different power relations and networks are established by the contending stakeholders to have more leverage. Different stakeholders exert pressures on the state to demand or validate claims to contested spaces. And the state always tilts (see Tilly & Tarrow, 2015) to the pressures from different stakeholders (even the marginalized ISD as I will show in this study). The resilience of most of the ISD to sustain a prolong resistance to arbitrary displacement for more than 40 years, despite the assumed authoritarian powers of the state and other powerful actors, points to the fact that power is indeed relational and not totally constellated at any side of governance. The dynamic power relations as I will explain in this thesis are manifested in the forms of the resistance practices of the ISD; the use of the state apparatus by some powerful actors to confiscate lands; and the irregular discretion of the state in deciding which and whose parts of the informal settlements to be demolished or not. This thesis explores these power relations and practices among contending actors and the state to explain how their interplay is defining the dynamics around Abuja's informal settlements.

1.4. Research aim, questions, and approach

The central aim of this thesis therefore is to provide deeper insights on how and why land ownership rights and tenure security in Abuja's informal settlements are so controversial and remain unresolved for over 40 years since the creation of Abuja as the new capital city of Nigeria in 1978. This research aims to contribute to the understanding of urban informality in the field of urban governance and planning from six different perspectives. These perspectives represent the gaps I perceived in academic debates and public discourses on urban informality, governance, institutions and planning.

The first is with the umbrella concept of governance. This study analyses governance processes and practices holistically and systematically without separating the mutual and constitutive influences of all governance actors. This is not common in informality studies where most studies either focus on the structural forces underlying urban informality, or the agency of stakeholders (especially the marginalized) in defining the dynamics around urban informality. My approach in using governance as an overall framework is to analyse how governance actors collectively coproduce(d) the dynamics and complexities around urban informality.

The second perspective is on the fundamental importance of land rights and tenure security in the dynamics of informal settlements. The contribution of this study is

showing how the controversies around land rights and tenure security have been defined by the past and current antecedents from the governance actors. The focus on the past is the third perspective. An in-depth retrospective exploration of how the current dynamics around informal settlements have evolved over time is not common in informality studies. Hence the adaption of historical institutionalism in this study.

The state and its working mechanism are the fourth perspective through which this study aims to contribute to academic debates. Exploring the state and its working mechanisms provides a wide avenue to understand the complexities around urban informality (see Christian Haid & Hilbrant, 2019). The gap this study aims to bridge through this perspective is to provide empirical details on how and why the state is popularly assumed to be the culprit in the problems around urban informality. The hypothesis to explore here is that the divergent components and actors of the state, and their formal and informal relations with other actors complicate the state.

The formal-informal divide is another reoccurring topical issue in informality studies. The fifth perspective is to argue for the rethinking of what/who is formal or informal based on my case study, and the suitability of the formal-informal dichotomy in everyday governance practices around informal settlements. For the last perspective, I engaged with the proponents of southern planning theory to contextualize the insights from my study vis a vis popular assumption on the African states and their everyday governance practices in academic discourses.

Exploring the contentions over land rights and tenure security in the governance of Abuja's informal settlements in this study is meant to address these perspectives or gaps. Hence, the scope of this study revolves around *the roles and impacts of state and non-state actors on land ownership rights, tenure security and formation of Abuja's informal settlements*. Theoretically, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of land (right) contentions, the state, and the dynamics of multi-actor governance from a global south perspective.

To achieve the research aim, the central research question to be addressed in this thesis is: *How has the historical and current interplay of governance actors produced the complex dynamics around the informal settlements of Abuja?*

The following sub-questions are formulated to structure the analyses and insights that addressed the central research aim and question:

1. What are the historical antecedents that influence the dynamics around the settlements?
2. What are the roles and impacts of non-state actors in the dynamics around the settlements?
3. What are the roles and impacts of state actors in the dynamics around the settlements?

Answering these three research questions in chapters 4,5 and 6 will provide more insights on how the complexities around informal settlements are produced and

sustained, and how they are evolving and defying interventions despite decades of academic research, local and international efforts. Considering the different narratives and claims from different actors around Abuja's informal settlements, and the power relations that have been established in pursuing the claims, I adopted an interpretivist qualitative research approach to explore the dynamics of Abuja's informal settlements. Most studies that have sought to understand the complexities around urban informality are qualitative. The dominance of qualitative studies and common interpretivist approach among urban informality scholars is usually based on the ontological perspective that realities are created through the actions and narratives of social actors. That is, there are multiple realities about urban informality – realities that are constructed through the actors that produced or sustained the informality.

I position myself as a critical post-structural social constructivist for interpreting or understanding the meanings that humans attach to their actions. I took this interpretivist position because I recognize the plurality in knowledge-production among social actors, and that there are various ways of constructing social realities amid historically embedded power relations (see Boréus & Bergström, 2017; Creswell & Potho, 2018; Jennings, 2015). Chapter 3 on research methodology provides a more comprehensive explanation of the suitability of critical social construction and qualitative research methods as the best philosophical and epistemological paradigm to explore the dynamics of Abuja's informal settlements. The exploration requires extensive and intensive collection of information across the stakeholders in the contentions around the settlements. The empirical data for this study were gathered (in three phases between March 2019 and November 2020) using qualitative methods of interviews, document analysis and participant observations (see chapter 3 for more details).

1.5. Overview of the thesis structure

The thesis is comprised of 7 chapters. The introductory chapter provided the background and rationale for the research, the research aim, questions and methodological approach. The second chapter reviews and examines relevant literatures to build a theoretical and conceptual framework for the thesis. Chapter 3 explains the research methodology, the operationalization of the various concepts of this study, data collection and analysis methods, and the features of the study areas. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are the empirical chapters that address the research question, while the last chapter summarizes this thesis with answers to the research question and discussions of the research findings. More details about the chapters are briefly outlined below.

Chapter 2: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework – This chapter provides the theoretical and conceptual framework of this research. I used ideas from the concepts of path-dependency and critical junctures in historical institutionalism, contentious politics in resistance and social movement studies and distinct theories of the state in

many social science disciplines to conceptualize the governance of informal settlements as an historically embedded process through which an amenable state and influential non-state actors interrelate, using various institutions for claim making, resistance, contentious politicking, powerplay and negotiations over land rights and tenure security..

Chapter 3: Research Methodology –This methodology chapter explains the rationale, justifications, and processes that guided this research from conceiving the research ideas to interpreting the findings. The chapter also explains the philosophical background that warranted this qualitative case study research design, the details of my study areas, data collection methods, data analysis, and the axiological influences in the research.

Chapter 4: The governance of Abuja’s informal settlements: a historical overview and analyses of the critical policies and programs since 1976 – This first empirical chapter addresses the significance of historical antecedents when exploring governance processes around a phenomenon. The chapter provides answers to the question of how current dynamics and complexities around the informal settlements of Abuja have been defined by critical historical governance moments. The retrospective exploration provides insights on how the informal settlements became informalized and why there are different land ownership claims to the ISD’s lands.

Chapter 5: Contentious Politicking in the Informal Settlements of Abuja: The Roles and Impacts of Non-state Actors – This second empirical chapter provides answers to the question of the roles and impacts of non-state actors in the dynamics around informal settlements. These non-state actors include the ISDs, their community leaders and political representatives, statutory land claimers, land developers, speculators, and the rich elites/politicians of Abuja. The empirical details of their activities in the chapter shows how contending non-state actors have a boundless access to the state (institutions and actors) in search of support for their various claims and interests.

Chapter 6: Informality and the state: understanding the state in the governance of informal settlements – This last empirical chapter expatiates the hypothesis of the amenable state by showing how the dynamic state actors, components, multiple governance levels, and power hierarchies within the state have complicated the state’s mandate in managing the informal settlements, thereby making the state a tilttable entity to contending stakeholders.

Chapter 7: Discussion and conclusion – After providing answers to the research questions and readdressing the several claims of this research, in this final chapter I engage with wider literatures to discuss the six perspectives this thesis contributed to in the discourse of urban (informality) governance and planning. Based on my first-hand field experiences while conducting this research, I conclude this thesis with my opinion on one of the most contentious issues among the stakeholders around Abuja’s informal settlements – which is the question of what is best for the ISD: to resettle them or not.



Chapter 2

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework



Chapter 2

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

2.1. Introduction

This central focus of this research is to explore and understand the dynamics in the governance of informal settlements, and how such dynamics define issues of land rights, tenure security and development of informal settlements. This chapter presents the theoretical and conceptual framework used to analyse and explain the dynamics of informal settlements as observed in the case of Abuja. Given that this study is an exploration of the interplay between state and non-state actors, multi-actor *governance* is the umbrella concept that connects the various theories and concepts discussed in this chapter. This research explores the mutual and collective interplay of all governance actors to present a holistic understanding of the complexities around informal settlements.

This chapter is organized into four parts. The following section introduces the conceptual debates around urban informality and informal settlements, and the central role of land rights and tenure security in the contentions around informal settlements. After highlighting the arguments and topical debates in many of the existing studies on urban informality, I delve into the compound concept of governance in the third part. Path-dependency, contentious politics, and the state are the main themes of governance that are explained in the third part. The final part explains my conceptual framework for analysing the case of Abuja's informal settlements. This part also summarizes the arguments and my position on the roles of both the state and non-state actors in the governance of informal settlements.

2.2. Urban informality, informal settlements, and the state

Urban informality is a common term in urban studies for describing economic and spatial phenomena that are considered not conforming to urban planning laws and regulations. Duminy (2011) described informality as a category of income-generating, servicing or settlement practices that are relatively unregulated or uncontrolled by the state or formal institutions. The socio-political contexts through which informality are produced and evolving have been a topical issue among academics, policy makers and urban practitioners for many decades. Originally used to differentiate between government regulated and unregulated economic activities/sectors, the term informality can be traced back to the 1972 International Labour Organization (ILO)'s report on employment, income and inequality and the 1973 work of Keith Hart on

informal income opportunities and urban employment in Ghana (see Alfaro-d'Alençon et al., 2018; Alsayyad, 2004; Hart, 1973). The informal economic sector was largely attributed to the poor and unemployed urbanites who need to survive through 'disorganized' economic activities, not conforming to or outside the government regulations.

The linking of informality to the housing sector from earlier economic conceptions was seamless. The poor urbanites that are mostly involved in informal economic activities normally do not have the socio-economic capabilities to rent or build housing facilities in the planned and highly competitive parts of the city. They are hence subjected to vulnerable locations and lands of lesser economic value for their housing needs. The work of Hardoy and Satterthwaite (1986) on shelter, infrastructure and services is one the earliest scholarly works that explains how the socio-economic inequalities and unequal access to city lands have made a large proportion of the city population (especially the poor) to find alternative (most times illegal) solutions for their housing needs.

Over the years, this alternative mode of housing provision has been labelled as slums, shanties, favelas, squatters, ghettos and other related terms in literature and urban planning discourses with negative connotations (see Dovey, Shafique, van Oostrum, & Chatterjee, 2020; Duminy, 2011; Okyere & Kita, 2015), either to draw attention to their plight or used as a stigma by planning authorities for their eradication or displacement. According to Dovey et al. (2020) informal settlement is a term that became popular in late twentieth century as an euphemism for slum to avoid the slur associated with using other more derogatory words. They advised that the term informal settlement should not be used as the direct synonym for slum to avoid downplaying the growing importance of urban informality as the dominant mode of affordable housing production in most global south cities. However, informal settlement remains a compound name for settlements that do not meet the building, legal and planning requirements of city authorities.

Regardless of the definitional controversies around them, informal settlements are generally associated with illegality, inferiority, insecurity (especially, land tenure), irregularity, insurgency (struggle and resistance) and incremental practices of self-organization (Dovey et al., 2020). Any settlement on land that is unauthorized or not captured in the city plan is usually considered informal regardless of the socio-economic status of the dwellers or the housing quality. That is, contrary to popular notions, developed neighbourhoods with modern houses by the urban rich can also fall under the category of informal if they are built on unapproved space (see Fekade, 2000). In addition to the poor infrastructures that characterize most informal settlements, the never-ending contentions over land ownership rights and tenure security dominate the discourses around informal settlements. Informal settlements are usually deprived of essential amenities and developmental projects because of their controversial tenure or uncertain future. Socio-economic vulnerabilities, loss of community and identity, social vices, forced evictions and displacement, loss of livelihoods, inadequate housing and social amenities, and environmental degradation

are common problems associated with settlements (informal) with insecure or uncertain land tenure (Malik et al., 2019; Reale & Handmer, 2011)

2.2.1. Land rights and tenure security in informal settlements

All the controversies around informal settlements are invariably tied to land ownership rights and the tenure security of the dwellers. These land rights and tenure security also differentiate the informal settlements from their formal counterparts in the city in term of displacement threats. Land right, defined as the social and legal entitlement to acquire, use and control a piece of land (UN-Habitat, 2008, p. 5) is the main contentious issue in the discourses on informal settlements (Roy, 2005). The contention over land rights in informal settlements are often connected to disagreements over different land ownership claims and tenure arrangements. Land tenure is understood as the institutional and legal framework for regulating land use behaviour, property rights, accessibility, allocation, control, transfer, usage type and period of use (FAO, 2002; Malik et al., 2019) and is dependent on the socio-political dynamics of a country (Geoffrey Payne & Durand-Lasserve, 2012). Land tenure security is understood as a form of formal protection from arbitrary displacement or forced eviction from city authorities.

Tenure security is fundamental in the dynamics around informal settlements (Malik et al., 2019; Reale & Handmer, 2011). It is the insecurity of it that often warrants the displacements of informal settlements' dwellers (ISD). But there are several variations on what tenure security is and how to measure it because of the subjective peculiarities in different contexts (Arnot et al., 2011). The most used definition of tenure security is one by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) which emphasizes the guarantee of protection from arbitrary displacement and confidence that one's right to a land is protected by all authorities. Normally, the one with the officially recognized (statutory) right to a land should have a higher tenure security, but in cases where other unofficially recognized persons already have access to the land, tenure insecurity starts manifesting for both the official and unofficial land claimers. The contentions over land ownership rights increases tenure insecurity because of the awareness by all land right claimers that a change in rules of engagement can alter the access and utility of the land (see Arnot et al., 2011).

It is a common belief that urban land issues in most African cities are messy, complex, multi-layered and poorly understood because of the complex powerplay, lack of transparency, institutional challenges (see Hornby, Royston, Kingwill, & Cousins, 2017; Otubu 2018; Nuhu, 2018) and unending land crises and conflicting claims on land rights and tenure security (van der Haar, van Leeuwen, & de Vries, 2020). The conflicting claims and contentions often originate from different tenure arrangements: the (postcolonial) state's formalized statutory tenure arrangements and the pre-existing customary arrangements. These two are the most common normative classes of land rights and tenure security are the customary and statutory land rights or tenure practices. Customary land tenure practices are based on local, traditional, or ancestral

customs or communal land management (Hornby et al., 2017), it is the dominant or widely accepted tenure practice across sub-Saharan Africa under the authority of traditional rulers (Chimhowu, 2019). The statutory land tenure is commonly described as an adopted land management practices from the colonial masters, where the state has the overriding rights to allocate and register lands based on the state's land use plans (see Njoh, 2013).

Despite most of the postcolonial states adopting the statutory tenure system, customary land practices are still prevalent in many African societies, especially the indigenous communities whose indigeneity is a source of land security (Sjaastad & Bromley, 1997). However, in addition to the two classes of tenure practices are *de facto* tenure practices that are defining the dynamics of lands in most Africa cities. There are questions of what is legal or illegal, temporary or permanent lease, registered or unregistered, community or individual ownership, indigenous or state lands in African land dynamics (Hornby et al., 2017; Sjaastad & Bromley, 1997; UN-Habitat, 2008). Although the ISD are always subjected to displacements threats, they are considered to have the *de facto tenure security* because of their current occupation or entitlement to the land (van Gelder & Luciano, 2015). Their *de facto* tenure security does not prevent their displacement, but it gives them some audacity to make claims. For instance, using the case of low-income settlements in Durban South Africa, Patel (2013c) explained that ISD understood and realized their tenure security differently from the imposed statutory rights from the state. According to her, the differences need to be captured or operationalized in theories, policies, and state dealings with the informal settlements' dwellers.

In addition to the *de facto* tenure security, van Gelder and Luciano (2015) also explained that there is *perceived tenure security* (a subjective perception of individuals or groups confidence on security or protection from arbitrary displacement) and *legal tenure security* (the tenure security according to existing laws and legislations). These various ways of understanding tenure (in)security in informal settlements are functional explanations of how tenures are secured in different contexts. The several measures or indicators for evaluating tenure (in)security include method of acquisition, litigations, political factors, duration of access (length of occupation), legal titles, level of resistance, power of contenders, threats of eviction, level of community acceptance, governance mechanisms, and administrative recognition (see Arnot et al., 2011; Doss & Meinzen-Dick, 2020; Reerink & van Gelder, 2010; van Gelder, 2010; van Gelder & Luciano, 2015). Presumably, there is a high level of tenure insecurity in informal settlements because of the persistent threats of displacements. But the precarious vulnerabilities of the poor informal settlements' dwellers and their resistance practices sometimes ensure that they are not arbitrarily displaced (see Arnot et al., 2011; Hall et al., 2015; Michelutti & Smith, 2014; Reerink & van Gelder, 2010; Rubin, 2018; van Gelder & Luciano, 2015).

The importance of tenure security in addressing the challenges of informal settlements is widely acknowledged. For example, Malik et al. (2019) show how tenure security can enhance stability and development of informal settlements in Lahore, Pakistan. The

challenges of land rights and tenure security and related secondary challenges like infrastructural development are persistent problems for ISD who constitute up to 70% of the urban populace in Africa. Different tenure practices produced the complexities and conflicts around land issues in many African cities. They also lead to determination of formal or informal land rights, while customary practices are usually classified under the informal category (see UN-Habitat, 2008). The indicators of tenure (in)security outlined above, and van Gelder & Luciano's classes of tenure security explained, will be used in this study to evaluate how the interplay of governance actors has (re)defined land rights and tenure security in the informal settlements of Abuja.

2.2.2. The formal-informal dichotomy in urban spaces

Formal/informal is a common dichotomy when classifying the norms, practices, and actions that relate to either the state actors or the non-state actors. Formal (official, lawful, and coordinated) practices, procedures, and regulations are usually ascribed to the state while 'informalities' are usually associated with non-state practices and actors (see Hodgson, 2006; Peters, 2019). However, contemporary studies have shown that governance actors can be formal or informal at the same time regardless of their identity or affiliation (see McFarlane, 2012; Okyere & Kita, 2015; Visoka, 2017). That is, what or who is formal or informal has become blurry in governance processes and practices. The blurriness in terms of housing is manifested in the indispensability of informal settlements as the most affordable alternative mode of housing production in global south cities (see Dovey et al., 2020). Hardoy and Satterthwaite (1986) and Okyere and Kita (2015) also noted that many of the city formal workers live in informal settlements. According to Hardoy and Satterthwaite (1986), informal settlements are logical response of the city dwellers to their accommodation needs that cannot be provided by the state (see also Roy, 2005).

The *indispensability* of informal settlements as a significant mode of housing in the global south cities is widely acknowledged in both academic and public discourses. The debate lies in the suitability of the term 'informal' to describe the controversial urban spaces. Acknowledging that formality or informality is beyond normative dualistic or binary descriptions, some scholars (see Alfaro-d'Alençon et al., 2018, p. 60) considered formality/informality a continuum in spatial organization, while some argued that *the informal/formal frame is clearly not binary, neither is it a continuum* (Dovey et al., 2020, p. 8). They argued that although informality is the mode of affordable housing production for half of the Global South city population, informal settlements are still associated with insecurity, inferiority, illegality, irregularity, insurgency, and incremental practices from irregularities. These has made many informal settlements to be seen as blights in city planning and development. In a related remark on the risk of the informal label, Duminy (2011) remarked that:

the formal/informal dichotomy is arguably neither useful as a basis for policy/planning action nor research. Labelling a vast range of complex and contingent activities as simply "informal" encourages their perception as

homogeneous, essentialized and ahistorical (with negative implications for planning intervention)

Most of the scholarly arguments point to the fact that urban informality is an acceptable norm in urban governance. The interplay of formal and informal practices or the indispensability of informality in governance practices have warranted the use of terms hybridity, multiplicity, or pluralism to describe everyday governance processes and practices in contested spaces (see Goodfellow & Lindemann, 2013; Lemay-Hébert & Freedman, 2017a; van Overbeek & Tamás, 2018). These terms are widely used in multi actor governance practices; yet, the question is to what extent they are suitable in capturing complex, controversial and unconventional governance practices. To contribute to the debate on the interwoven relationship of state and non-state actors, formal and informal practices, I will revisit the formal-informal dichotomy debate after the analysis of my case study to (re)examine the traces of hybridity or multiplicity in the governance of Abuja's informal settlements.

However, most of the negative connotations around informal settlements (and their dwellers) are fizzling away partly because of the place making efforts of the ISD, and partly because of their significance in the socio-economic development of global south cities. The relevance of informal settlements in the socio-economic sectors of global south cities is widely acknowledged. The settlements house most of the city low and middle income groups, and many business enterprises that provide cheap goods and services to the city dwellers (Hardoy & Satterthwaite, 1986). Most of the informal urbanites have also been noted to contribute significantly to the political dynamics and governance of the cities (see Aceska, Heer, & Kaiser-Grolimund, 2019; Koster & Nuijten, 2016; Paller, 2017). However, there still remain one fundamental area that is hardly resolved in informal settlements – landownership rights and tenure security. While many place making efforts are consolidating the ISD in the city, the contentions over land rights and tenure security still remain a source of fear for the dwellers. These contentions offer a suitable avenue to explore and understand the dynamics of formal-informal processes and practices and the state because of the interplay of governance actors.

2.2.3. The state and informality

Managing the contentious land ownership claims of different actors is often a big challenge for state planners. The management of these settlements is often a yardstick for evaluating the efficiency of the state and its planning institutions in many global south cities. Most studies and discourses around informal settlements are hardly complete without reference to how the state manages them. More so, the socio-economic systems that produce urban inequality and marginalization of the urban poor, the urban planning and regulatory institutions that designate what space is formal or informal, and the institutions that enhance the emergence of the informal settlements are all connected to the working mechanisms of the state (Alfaro-d'Alençon et al., 2018; Roy, 2005; Wacquant, 2008, 2015). However, despite the wide recognition

of the state's significant roles in managing urban informality, very little is known about the state's complexity and working mechanisms around informal settlements. One of the main goals of this research is to understand the role of the state in the making of urban informal settlements.

The approach to studying urban informality and informal settlements has evolved from the original dualistic economic/legal models of formal-informal dichotomy to the political economies of how structural and agential forces define urban informality. However, as noted by Alfaro-d'Alençon et al. (2018), 'urban informality is a compendium of practices and set of functional urban operations that counter and transgress political boundaries and hierarchic economic models' (Alfaro-d'Alençon et al., 2018, p. 60). There is a consensus among urban scholars that urban informality is indispensable especially in global south cities. But the trending quest is to provide nuanced understanding of their growing challenges and complexities. Such understanding includes the interwoven pattern of formal and informal processes and practices (see Lombard, 2019; McFarlane, 2012; Okyere & Kita, 2015), and the complexity of the state in dealing with urban informality (see Banks et al., 2019; Christian Haid & Hilbrant, 2019).

The discourse on the relationship of the state with informality centres on two related issues: the (re)production of informality by the state and the state's complex roles in managing informality. The state as the major or the most visible entity in the management or dynamics of informal settlements is often analysed in the studies of informal settlements. Almost all the processes that have produced or sustained informal settlements have been associated with the state's ineffective socio-economic and spatial developmental policies and programmes or the state's weak institutions to ensure strict compliance to housing standards. In other words, many studies on informal settlements have directly or indirectly concluded that structural forces of state institutions, policies, and programmes determined urban inequality, marginalization of urban poor and provision of housing facilities in favour of the rich (for example, see Alsayyad, 2004; Divyani Kohli, Kerle, & Sliuzas, 2012; Fard, 2018; Fekade, 2000; Habitat, 2003; Lombard, 2019; Okyere & Kita, 2015; Roy, 2005, 2009a, 2009b; Wacquant, 2008, 2015, 2016). These inequality, marginalization and skewed housing provision necessitated the poor or less powerful urbanites to resort to self-help housing provision usually on unauthorized or contested spaces.

Some studies, such as Alsayyad (2004), Fekade (2000), Lombard (2019) and (Roy, 2005, 2009a, 2009b), have explained that the state governance structures, policies and developmental programmes enhanced the urban inequality, inadequate housing and exorbitant urban land prices, thereby forcing some urbanites to find alternative housing provision in illegal spaces. These studies ascribed the challenges, controversies, and marginalization of informal spaces to the state powerful governance structures, policies, and programmes. For example, Roy (2005) asserts that informality is a production of the state through the use of its planning and legal apparatus to determine what's formal or not. Wacquant (2008, 2015, 2016) in his studies of ghettos in some American and French cities, also explained that these contested

spaces are produced and defined through a systemic marginalization and stigmatization by the state in collaboration with powerful elites.

Similarly, some studies in African context (see McMichael, 2016 in the case of Juba informal settlements in South Sudan; Barry et al, 2007 in the case of Cape Town informal settlements; and van der Haar, 2021 et al. in their summation of some sub-Saharan African cases) explained the roles of powerful actors in the land conflicts and challenges in informal settlements, but like others, the main culprit in their narratives is the state. Haid (2017) sees the state as the primary producer of informality by having a Janus-faced attitude in allowing or disallowing varieties of informal practices. Others (such as Boudreau, 2019; Christian Haid & Hilbrant, 2019; Rubin, 2018) explain the complex roles of the state in managing informality as the informalization of the state (the state engaging in informal practices or extra-legal activities besides or beyond written rules) or a clientelist relationship between state officials and informal parties.

These claims about the state are accurate in most cases and this study is not to contest them. However, too much focus on the state alone and the attribution of most informal settlements' problems to it without adequate exploration of the state's working mechanisms vis-a-vis other actors tends to undermine other important processes and actors that are also influencing the dynamics around informal settlements. I acknowledge the significant role of the state in the dynamics of urban informality, but the assertion I intend to make explicit through this study is that the powers or processes that produce and sustain informality do not lie with the state alone; rather, they go beyond the already complicated state to a dynamic network of more or less influential actors within and outside the formal jurisdiction of the state. Hence, one of the goals of this study is to show how the mutual and interconnected roles of different governance actors (state and non-state) compound the complex dynamics in the governance of informal settlements.

The governance of dynamic societal issues and resources has been described as multi-level and multidimensional – the central power or influence of the state is often complemented with self-organizing and interorganizational networks of different non-state stakeholders (Rhodes, 1996; Stoker, 1998). Governance implies the indispensability of other (non-state) actors in both the processes and outcomes of governmental activities. That is, the activities of both the state and non-state actors coevolve and coproduce the processes and outcomes of governance. Yet, the informality studies have mainly focused on distinct explanations of the roles and impacts of each governance actors without showing their interdependence in the production of the complex dynamics around urban informality. Although governance involves the interrelationships between state and non-state actors, until recently, most studies on urban informality often focus on the state and its structures in the complexities around informal settlements without explaining the significant inputs of other actors. The ones (see the next subsection) that highlights the roles of non-state actors in the production, complications, and governance of informal settlements have also done very little to show the link between their activities and the state structures.

2.2.4. The state versus other actors: the missing link

The early studies of urban informality have serially accused the state of producing and sustaining informality without showing the contributions of other actors. For example, Roy (2005) explained that the state has the power to construct and reconstruct legitimacy and illegitimacy in the discourse of informality. But the significant roles of some actors that buy lands illegally, build on unauthorized spaces or against the building standards are hardly discussed in the complexities around informal settlements. Moreover, the inefficiency or absence of the state governance structures in most informal settlements have also empowered other private and non-state actors to assume the role of regulating the affairs and provision of infrastructures to the IS dwellers in return for socio-economic benefits or territorial control (Mawani & Leaf, 2018). While the state has a major role in producing informal settlements, the significant roles of other actors in their complexity also require adequate attention. For instance, the resistance practices of ISD or marginalized urbanites are often romanticized as heroic without showing how such practices relate to the state structures.

Some studies acknowledged the mutual roles of both the state and non-state actors in the dynamics of informal settlements (see Banks et al., 2019; Chiodelli et al., 2020; Chiodelli & Tzfadia, 2016; Christian Haid, 2016; Christian Haid & Hilbrant, 2019; Lombard, 2019). These studies explained the significant roles (or rationale) of non-state actors in the complexity/challenges of informal settlements, but very little explanations were given to the state or how the activities of the non-state actors have positioned the state actors to act the way they do around informal settlements. The state was mainly pictured as a single entity that uses urban informality for any agenda that suit its functionalities. For example, Chiodelli and Tzfadia (2016) explained that the state sometimes uses the threat of evictions and displacements to keep its populace under check or subdued, but the evictions and displacements are hardly done because the state has insufficient means to provide alternative housing for the displaced. Similarly, Banks et al. (2019) highlight how the state directly or indirectly incentivize some informal practices for reducing its costs of governance through informal or non-state funded service provisions.

Unlike earlier studies on urban informality, the significant roles of other actors are now being emphasized in informality studies. For example, using insights from several regions (Saharan Africa, India, South America), Banks et al. (2019) linked the growing agency of marginalized urbanites and the criminal activities of wealthy elites to the messiness and complications in urban informality. Similarly, using the case of Morocco shanty towns, Beier (2021) explained how private developers deviate from the state resettlement plan by building controversial unaffordable houses that further complicate the state's attempt of formalizing the informalized neighbourhoods. Michelutti and Smith (2014) also explained how a network of non-state actors (slum dwellers, slumlords, NGOs, political parties, and community leaders) controlled governance

processes in Mumbai informal settlements through their grassroots politics and criminal activities but didn't explain the open or hidden collaborations of the state officials in their governance mechanisms.

Another example of how the state and non-state actors interact to produce informality is the work of Lombard (2019) on informal housing in UK. She explained how the structural forces of the state (migration and housing policies) and agency of rogue landlords and tenants produced informal housing practices in UK. But her analysis still separates the state and non-state actors' roles excluding any form of mutual collaboration in the production of the informal housing provision. Another example is Rubin (2018)'s explanation of the governance link between informal practices of the state and formal activities of some ISD in South Africa; yet her analyses were hinged upon the clientelist practices of local municipal state officials without showing the possible connections with the other levels of the state. However, what is still missing in these studies is the tendency of excluding or distinctively analysing the roles of the non-state actors from those of the state actors and vice versa. That is, despite the widely acknowledged blurriness between formal and informal governance practices, the hidden and obvious collaborations or engagements among governance actors (state and non-state) in producing urban informality are not always elaborated.

A common trend in recent informality studies (see Christian Haid & Hilbrant, 2019; Banks et al, 2019; Lombard, 2019) is the call for understanding the complexity of the state in the dynamics of urban informality. According to Christian Haid and Hilbrant (2019), the complex relationship between the state and informality globally opens up a new field of knowing, analysing and understanding the state and its governance mechanisms around informal settlements. The indispensability of informality (especially in global south) in urban centres has raised the question of the actual relationship between formality and informality in urban planning and governance. The ideas of the indispensability of non-state actors and informal practices in planning and governance (see McFarlane, 2012; Van Assche, Beunen, & Duineveld, 2012) imply that there are influential power relations and networks beside or beyond the state. Hence the need to analyse the mutual and collective practices of all actors. There is a great prospect for a more holistic understanding of urban informality when the interplay of all the governance actors is analysed collectively to illuminate complex processes and practices. A critical engagement with the basic tenets of governance offers a basis for the prospect.

2.3. The concept of governance and urban governance in African cities

Governance has become a common concept in many fields of study. Scholars in various disciplines have used the concept to explain processes or outcomes of how actors interact over societal resources, issues, and problems. Drawing from the earlier expositions on governance by (Rhodes, 1996; Stoker, 1998), the essence of governance implies analysing and understanding the organization of a society beyond the

conventional representative body of government to include all other actors, processes and structures behind the scene. The terms, concepts, theories, definitions, and approaches used in explaining this multi-actor and multi-institutional form of societal organization in literatures have become broad, multidisciplinary, and multidimensional. Common among these governance terms and concepts are: coproduction among different actors (see Ostrom, 1996); self-organizing and interorganizational networks of state and non-state actors (Rhodes, 1996; Stoker, 1998); and decentralized, multi-level and polycentric decision making (Andersson & Ostrom, 2008; McGinnis & Ostrom, 2012; Ostrom, 2010). The central idea of these and other governance slants is the explanation of the interplay between state and non-state actors and institutions.

However, the common area of debate among governance scholars is the question of what is more important to analyse: the processes of governance or the outcome of governance (Obeng-Odoom, 2017). This research is exploring the processes of governance rather than understanding the manifestations, given that the focus of this research is to untangle the dynamic roles of different governance actors in the complex dynamics around informal settlements. Relatedly, based on a review of over 100 peer-reviewed articles on urban governance in Africa and using Kisumu city in Kenya as example, Smit (2018) emphasized that understanding governance processes is key to addressing African urban challenges. Governance processes are quite similar everywhere, but governance challenges are different in various contexts involving different actors, especially in contested issues with divergent claims and claim-making practices. The contentions around informal settlements in many African cities provide a suitable context to explore the complexities and challenges in governance.

Informal settlements are a defining feature of African cities. It is usually estimated that between two thirds to three fourths of the African urban populace dwell in informal settlements (Förster & Ammann, 2018; Onyishi et al., 2021). This has made informality a persistent problem for city planners. Urban governance or planning in Africa is complicated with lots of dynamic practices that are unconventional to western notions and theories of governance. There are inconsistencies in formulation of policies and their implementation – usually because of historically embedded problems, incoherent structures, and undefined roles of political actors (see Obeng-Odoom, 2017). Besides informal settlements, land crises management is another core issues for African urban stakeholders. While ISD usually struggle to be part of the city through a secured land tenure, other actors struggle for lands to develop or invest. The institutional challenges that characterised land management in Africa have aggravated land conflicts among multiple actors with different ownership claims and politicking to access lands (Paller, 2017; van der Haar et al., 2020). In addition to these problems, Pieterse (2018) remarked that the multiple actors with vested interests in the socio-spatial development of African cities are another source of complexity in urban governance.

The state is another party in the governance of African cities. But several studies (see sections 2.2.3 and 2.3.3) have shown that the state is not fully in charge of the complex governance processes that are defining the trajectories of African cities. For example,

using the case of Kenya, Smit (2018) argued that the state – either as an actor or institution – does not occupy the dominant position in decision making in African cities. Traditional rulers, community leaders, civil societies, trade unions, associations (of youth, men, women, slum dwellers, etc), developers, politicians, NGOs etc are key players in the governance of African cities. The contentious politicking of (powerful) actors and diverse resistance practices of marginalized urbanites are significant processes that also define urban governance and planning in Africa (see Aceska et al., 2019; Asante & Helbrecht, 2019; Paller, 2017). But despite the significant roles of these actors in governance, the state is usually the culprit in the complexities around urban informality in most studies.

Governance is a broad concept with elusive analytical frameworks. However, there are governance interrelated themes that can be deployed for critical analyses. For instance, the proponents of evolutionary governance theory explained that analysis of governance processes require explanations on how actors engage with institutions (interdependency), how governance mechanisms evolved from past legacies (path dependency), and how policies and plans over outcomes of interest (goal dependency) shape governance (Beunen, Assche, & Duineveld, 2015). Similarly, the reoccurring themes in the various discussions of (informal settlements') governance discussed so far include historical antecedents, contentious politicking of multiple actors, and a complex state with undefinable and evolving identities/roles. These three interconnected themes provide a suitable framework to analyse the roles and impacts of state and non-state actors in the agelong contentions over land rights and tenure security in Abuja's informal settlements. To conceptually elaborate on these themes, I draw ideas from historical institutionalism (HI) theory, contentious politics, and dominant theories on the state.

2.3.1. Historical antecedents and Historical Institutionalism

Historically, actors and institutions are mutually dependent in defining governance processes (see DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Hodgson, 2006; G. Jackson, 2010; Mahoney, 2001; North, 1991; Peters, 2019; Steinmo, 2015; Thelen, 1999). Institutions, understood as the established and prevalent social rule-systems that structure social interactions by providing both the constraining and enabling environments for different actors' behaviour (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004; Hodgson, 2006), can be formal (established and controlled through the state governmental structures) or informal (established and control by non-state actors but recognized by the state). Being formal or informal is only a description of which side of the divide one is. The interrelationship of formal and informal institutions in organizing the society is inseparable and indispensable (Hodgson, 2006; Peters, 2019). Historical institutionalism (HI) is a theoretical approach in social sciences for guiding historical explanations on how institutions structure and shape political actors, behaviours, rules of engagement and outcomes of interests across time (Steinmo, 2008, 2015). Exploring how historical antecedents shape the current dynamics around the governance of informal

settlements can provide fundamental insights into the persistent problems and contentions around informal settlements.

HI is deeply rooted in political and comparative historical sciences but its potentials to explain socio-spatial phenomena are also being explored in other social science disciplines. The significance of HI in urban and spatial planning studies have also been highlighted in various aspects such as planning history (see Sorensen, 2014; Sorensen, 2017b); spatial and regional planning (Dąbrowski & Lingua, 2018); urban governance and infrastructural development (see Choi, Lee, Kim, & Seong, 2019; Jacobs & Manzi, 2016; Nicol, 2010; Norris, 2014; Sorensen, 2017a; Sorensen, 2018; Sorensen & Hess, 2015); urban redevelopment (Rast, 2009), and processes of urbanization (Sorensen, 2020). Sorensen (2018) explained that HI has a robust set of flexible conceptual and analytical tools such as critical junctures and path-dependency. Critical junctures are major governance decisions or policies (often as a product of the interplay of different governance actors or as a solution to existing problems) that are capable of setting path-dependent trajectories for future outcomes. Peters (2019) explained path dependency in governance means that when a government program or organization embarks upon a particular policy or a style of action, there is tendency for those initial choices to persist with a determinate influence far into the future unless their trajectories are altered by political pressure and conflicts of actors to produce another institutional change (or a new critical juncture).

The robustness of these frameworks is examined in the first empirical chapter of this thesis to provide a historical account of how governance actors have defined the challenges and contentions around the informal settlements of Abuja. The relevance of path-dependency in explaining historical causal relationships around a phenomenon is widely acknowledged. Yet, as Kay (2005) rightfully pointed, the path-dependency framework is merely descriptive to explain casual relationships through the historical interplay of governance actors rather than prescriptive to provide insights into current dynamics and future trends. To build upon the fundamental insights provided through the flexible frameworks of critical junctures and path-dependency, Tarrow (2011) and Tilly and Tarrow (2015) contentious politics' theory provided critical analytical framework for examining the current complex relationship between contending actors and the state.

2.3.2. Contentious politics

The interrelationships between and within formal and informal institutions, state and non-state actors are not always collaborative, supportive, or supplementary. There can be divergent and competing interests, goals, and actions of different actors in operating within or relating with existing institutions especially over contested issues. The various forms of contentious engagement between state and non-state actors over government policies and programmes on societal issues have been explained as contentious politics in governance (see Paller, 2017; Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). Tilly and Tarrow (2015) defined contentious politics as '*interactions in which actors make claims bearing on other*

actors' interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties' (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015, p. 7). Contentious politics as explained by Tarrow (2011; 2013) has to be a collective political struggle and interplay among claim makers with different interests. The claim making could be from any actor but the state or a body of government must be part of the claim making to make the collective political struggle a contentious politics. These tripartite roles of the state in contentious politics already connote complications.

According to its expounders, contentious politics happen when actors join forces in confrontation with elites, authorities, and opponents around their claims or the claims of those they represent. Contentious politics focus on the complex interactions among divergent actors that may have explosive effects on powerful authorities. These actors often use every resource and opportunity at their disposal to drive home their demands especially through active involvement in local politics, and engagement with socio-political networks at different levels. Contentious politics are manifested in various forms ranging from resistance practices, power networking, lobbying and negotiations to social movements and judicial or physical confrontations. While some forms (like power networking, lobbying and negotiations) of contentious politics are usually deployed by powerful actors, resistance practices are more peculiar to marginalized or disadvantaged actors.

Resistance to government policies, plans and programmes are often a result of perceived injustice, marginalization, and infringement on rights. Resistance is a common phenomenon in the governance of contested spaces, but it has no clear or generally accepted definition in literature. According to (Courpasson & Vallas, 2016), resistance is an ubiquitous term but yet an elusive social, economic and political phenomenon whose present scholarly discussions are characterized by fractured assemblage of concepts and heterodox ideas from disparate academic disciplines. This implies that the explanation of resistance in academic studies is subjected to the methodologies of different disciplines. In social sciences, resistance is commonly explained in the forms of which it is expressed in socio-political settings. For instance, J. C. Scott (1985) sees resistance as an uncoordinated, sometimes violent, prosaic but constant struggle between the oppressed and those they perceived to be exploiting them by foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, violence, slander, arson, sabotage, and so on.

Kerkvliet (2009), in his explanation of the everyday politics of the less powerful against powerful authorities and powerful actors, defined resistance as 'what people do that shows disgust, anger, indignation, or opposition to what they regard as unjust, unfair, illegal claims on them by people in higher, more powerful class and status positions or institutions' (Kerkvliet, 2009, p. 233). However, contemporary resistance practices are not all about uncoordinated physical violence or hidden atrocities. The current forms of resistance to city authorities and elites are much more coordinated and confrontational amid a generally acknowledged need for social justice and equity (Daskalaki & Kokkinidis, 2017; Vanden, 2016). These current forms of resistance

include power struggle, widespread socio-political networking and sustained communal solidarity that involve active engagement in politics and social movements to agitate for rights or resist infringement on rights (see Courpasson & Vallas, 2016; Hall et al., 2015; Oliver-Smith, 2002; Tarrow, 2011).

In this research, contentious politicking refers to the dynamic contentions and claim makings of different actors around informal settlements, including the multifaceted resistance practices of the marginalized ISD, statutory land claimers and the influential activities of powerful actors. That is, *contentious politicking* is meant to initially focus more on the activities of non-state actors and their connections with the state before unpacking the state and its actors. This is not to underplay the impact of the state, but rather to bring out the nuanced details of the often-underreported complexities from non-state actors. Similarly, van der Haar et al. (2020) used ideas of contentious politics to explain the contentions, crises and claim makings on lands in Africa as social practice whose analysis should be embedded within a broader understanding of the politics of claim-making. According to them, the concept of contentious politics helps in avoiding the a priori segregation of social actions into distinct categories such as 'resistance', 'mobilization', 'conflict' or 'violence' (van der Haar et al. (2020). The framework of contentious politics will help to unravel how different land right claim makers go about validating their claims by forming coalitions, negotiations, using force or pressure, etc. and most importantly using the opportunities provided by the modern state with multiple access points for competing actors to pursue their claims.

In contentious politics, the state is normally presented as a powerful actor or a unified entity with the singular autonomy to regulate, facilitate or suppress the claims of different actors in the society. Yet, as I will explain in the next section, this is not always the case. If the state had the sole autonomy to regulate, facilitate and suppress different claims, the lingering contentions in informal settlements across the global south would not persist; neither would the problems within and around the informal settlements persist despite numerous state interventions. In other words, I posit that there are other influential powerful actors that can suppress the state's regulatory powers in the dynamics of contentious politics around informal settlements.

2.3.3. Understanding the state

In the most general sense (especially in informality and political studies), the state refers to the statutory representatives of a country and all their associated governance structures (ministries, agencies, parastatals, department, offices, and institutions) and policies for organizing the society. Flint (2011) defined the state as 'a centralized set of institutions facilitating coercive power and governing capability over a defined territory' (Flint, 2011, p. 722). Her definition portrays the state as a centralized entity through which its statutory representatives (state actors) regulate the activities of another set of actors within a defined territory. The designation of places as informal is significantly influenced by the state since it is the official body that designates which urban space is formal or informal, planned or unplanned. Governance processes,

political interests, power relations, and state regulatory forces within an urban system play a major role in the classification of settlements as informal (see Alfaro-d'Alençon et al. (2018).

Although governance involves the interrelationships between state and non-state actors, until recently, most studies (see subsections 2.2.3 and 2.2.4) on urban informality often focus on the state and its structures in the complexities around informal settlements. Recent studies have started shedding light on the complex roles of non-state actors in the production, complications, and governance of informal settlements. While we now know the various ways or rationales of the non-state actors in the dynamics around informality, very little is known about the state and its actors, composition, rationale, and working mechanisms around informality. That is, most of the studies that consider the state as the major culprit in the complications around urban informality have limited explanatory details on the complexity of the state. The paradox in seeing the state as the major producer and *sustainer* of informality is that most of the studies devoted to both the global south and the global north have also adequately explained how informal production and practices transcend into and beyond the state regulatory powers {(for the global south see Deuskar, 2019; Goodfellow, 2019; Hardoy & Satterthwaite, 1986; Michelutti & Smith, 2014; Rubin, 2018; Saharan et al., 2022) and (for the global north see Boudreau, 2019; Chiodeli et al., 2020; Jaffe & Koster, 2019; Lombard, 2019; Picker, 2019)}. These studies have pointed at weaknesses of the state – how different political actors can influence or manipulate the state in the production and governance of informalities.

I see three main weak points in the different discussions on the state's relationship with informality and principles of governance discussed so far – first, the portrayal of the state as the most powerful actor that is defining the processes that produce and sustain informalities, including those processes that have been portrayed as 'beyond the state's control'; second, the disproportionate lack of emphasis on the significant roles of other influential actors and their impacts on the state's working mechanisms; and third, the lack of discussions on the harmonious relationships or alliance between the state and marginalized urbanites. The conflicts between the state and the marginalized urbanites dominate academic and public discourses on the state's relationship with informality and principles of governance. What I see in some of the existing studies on urban informality (and other related studies) that could balance the narratives are the subtle or implicit assertions that the state is liable to be manipulated by different political actors (including the marginalized) towards their dynamic interests. What is more, the state can tilt to the pressures and demands of various actors according to its discretion, as Tilly and Tarrow (2015) have explained. I posit that the discretion to tilt is not a prerogative of the state. Rather, governance actors (within and outside the state) have the powers in deciding where, when, how, and to whom the state tilts. The curious question that has been asked in this regard is: who is the state? And where and how is the state (see Bawa, 2011; Truelove, 2020)? Elaborating on my earlier hypothesis that the state is an amenable entity can provide insightful answers to these questions.

2.4. The amenable state

'The state is no longer the "superstructure" of capitalist society, serving the interests of the dominant groups and suppressing those of the proletariat and its allies. The standardizing and unifying ambitions of expanding states created opportunities for less well-endowed people to mimic and adapt the stratagems of elites'

(Tarrow, 2011, p. 72-90; see also Tilly & Tarrow, 2015).

The involvement of multiple non-state actors in governance already implies that the state is no longer the only influential actor in governance processes. The dictionary meanings of amenable include liable to be brought to account; capable of submission; easily influenced or controlled; and readily brought to yield, submit, or cooperate. The amenability of the state or the degree at which the state controls governance processes (either as a welfare-nation state, developmental state, neoliberal state, weak or fragile state) varies across regions and contexts. Hence the need for an emic understanding of the state to describe its peculiar identity in various political, social, cultural, and economic contexts. For instance, in their description of postcolonial states, Jammulamadaka and Murphy (2017) explained that the state is constantly being built by various actors (state and non-state), and that the essence of the state lies in its inherent ability to change and adapt to pressure from multiple actors. The amenability of the state in this study is to provide a framework that will unpack the complexities in the governance of Abuja's informal settlements.

The idea that the state's power in governance is relative, diluted, weak, or eroded has been explained differently in governance literatures (both in the global north and south). For example, the idea of political powers beyond the state has been explained by Rose and Miller (2010) in the context of global north welfare-nation states. According to them, the state represents a complex amalgam of institutionalized forces that is constantly being defined by the technologies of government or techniques of rule. Hence, examining the problematics of government through the power (or weakness) of the state can help in the understanding of how and to what extent the state is articulated into the activities of government, including heterogenous political relationships, authorities, forces, actors, sources of knowledge and practices (Rose & Miller, 2010, p. 275). Rhodes (1996) also explained how the central control power of the state is reduced or *hollowing out* in multi-actor governance.

To understand the state in the governance of informal settlements, and to expand the discussions on the weakness of the state, I will elaborate on the hypothesis of amenability of the state with various theoretical discussions. There are numerous reasons that can be deduced from interdisciplinary literatures on governance or societal organization to explain the amenability of the state, especially in postcolonial African states. The major ones that are relevant to this study are summarized under

the categories of: i, Multiple sites, actors, and components of the state ii, Power relations and networks iii, Traditional institutions and customary practices iv, Informal practices of the state and v, Limited state resources and neoliberal forces.

Multiple sites, actors, and components of the state

Apart from the multiple sources of power outside the state's official jurisdiction, there are multiple sites (local, regional, and national), dynamic actors, and several organs (including departments, ministries, parastatals, commissions, etc) of the state that could be coherent or incoherent in governance processes. Most of the African states are comprised of many administrative units from the local to the federal levels with conflicting mandates and little synergy. The multiple governance sites are controlled by different actors enjoying various degrees of influence depending on their structural position in the society (Lindell, 2008). The multiple governance sites of the state, institutional rivalry, fragmentations, and conflicts provide the channels for contending actors to manipulate the state towards their dynamic interests or claims or resistance (see Rhodes 1996; Stoker, 1998). The studies that have attempted to dissect the state have shown that the state is a fragmented body comprising of different departments, agencies, ministries and parastatals that are subjected to the influences of powerful actors with different hierarchies of power and multiple sites of influence (Christian Haid, 2016; Christian Haid & Hilbrant, 2019; Lindell, 2008). For example, Haid and Hilbrant summarized that:

the state comprises different bodies, departments and governmental units of different scales, with conflicting political interests, as well as actors in various positions and levels of influence, from high-ranking politicians to department chiefs, public officials, planners and street-level bureaucrats. Through this heterogeneity that constitutes the state, the state is prone to contradictions, conflicts, irrationalities and inconsistencies—opening up spaces for manoeuvre and negotiation (Christian Haid & Hilbrant, 2019, p. 555).

This shows that the inherent composition of the state has created the opportunities for powerful actors to manipulate. Hence, the multiple actors in the different governance sites of the state are the fundamental basis of an amenable state.

Power relations and networks

Lukes (2005) explained that power can be exercised in three dimensions – the force to make others do otherwise of their intended or anticipated action; the process of authorities making decisions or taking actions without consensus or negotiations with others; and when people are manipulated by external forces to want what is not really in their interest (Lukes, 2005, p. 477). The different actors in governance express their power to influence processes in different forms and degrees. According to Rose and Miller (2010) in their explanation of power beyond the state, contemporary political powers are exercised through a profusion of shifting alliances among diverse authorities, and free interaction of plurality of groups, organizations, and individuals in governance. The diverse sources of influences and power that political actors exert on

the state to demand or validate claims to contested spaces, and the resulting dynamics are quite enough to tilt state towards *unintended* directions. As also explained by Rhodes (1996), the power of dynamics of multiple actors in governance often lead to reduced central control power of the state or hollowing out of the state.

The growing agency of non-state actors in planning in the spirit of *adequate* representation in democratic governance also influence the state. Various forms of representations in planning (participatory planning, communicative planning, iterative planning, etc) involving non-state actors and informal institutions are planners' pragmatic innovations to previously unproductive top-down planning approaches (Van Assche et al., 2012). Although the intention is good, the involvement of multiple actors is another opportunity for some actors to provide their *selfish* or conflicting inputs that further complicate planning processes. The growing agency of the marginalized urbanites and dwellers of informal settlements has been explained to be a major force in the socio-political dynamics of global south cities (see Aceska et al., 2019; Banks et al., 2019; Paller, 2017). However, their activities cannot be separated from the state since the state is the one to validate their claims or grant their rights/agitations – so they need some connections with the state to make things happen in their favour. Just like the other stakeholders, the marginalized urbanites have found ways to form alliance with some state officials or a state organ towards validating their claims or supporting their struggles. These opportunities for non-state actors to engage or collaborate with state officials provide avenues for the manipulation of the state against its stated mandates.

Traditional institutions and customary practices

Traditional rulers are key players in the governance of African cities yet many studies on African urbanization hardly pay attention to their powerful roles (Marrengane, 2021). Traditional institutions and their customary governance practices in the society existed before colonization and are still part of governance in most postcolonial states (see Jammulamadaka & Murphy, 2017). The traditional institutions are still able to influence modern governance processes even when some regimes try to suppress their influences (Onyishi et al., 2021; Smit, 2018). In most cases, the traditional rulers and their customary structures are usually more accessible to the marginalized populace than modern state structures. For example, explaining the formal-informal divide in the governance of Nigerian communities, Olowu and Erero (1995) explained that traditional institutions are resilient and more effectively institutionalized to gain the confidence of the African people in providing goods and services where postcolonial governmental structures have failed. The faith of the people in the pre-existing traditional institutions has enhanced the relevance and influence of the institutions and other customary practices in the modern-day governance processes in Africa.

What is more, many of the nongovernmental indigenous institutions have acquired formal recognition and structures from the state and can therefore be regarded as *indigenous formal institutions* (Olowu & Erero, 1995). Their structures are not different from the colonial modern state formal institutions as they are also evolving along

modern governance practices (Chimhowu, 2019). Most modern state officials recognized the influences of the traditional structures, especially their political influence on the electorates. So, they usually succumb to the pressures from the traditional institutions. In many cases where the modern state refuse to work with traditional customary structures, tension arises with tendencies of failure in state's developmental projects or interventions. On this, J. C. Scott (1998) explained that the modern states are driven by a high modernist ideology (usually by the elites and capitalists) to justify their existence, and authoritarian tendencies. And that many state projects fail because formal rules and plans usually do not make provisions for unavoidable informal practices – thereby making formal state plans parasitic to informal practices of its intended beneficiaries (J. C. Scott (1998).

The success or failure of state projects depends on how adequate the provisions for informal practices, local knowledge and knowhow are in the state developmental projects (Scott, 1998). This could be the reason why some states still allow customary practices in governance even when there are no statutory provisions for such practices. For example, in her exploration of the influence of formal and informal institutions in quality housing delivery in Benin city of Nigeria, Ezeanah (2018) explained that even with state building approvals, land developers still need to pay multiple (unofficial) levies to traditional bodies before they are allowed to start and finish a building. Relating this to the contentions over customary and statutory land rights in informal settlements, the authority and powers of the traditional rulers, in the prevalent customary tenure practices across sub-Saharan Africa, have extended statutory governance structures to include traditional institutions in many cases (Chimhowu, 2019). In other words, traditional rulers can influence the state's governance processes and outcomes through the dominant customary practices across Africa.

Informal practices of the state actors

The informal practices that characterized the state in many studies include clientelism, street level bureaucracy, nepotism, and corruption. These informal practices of the state might be popular in the discourses around global south governance, but they happen in the global north too (Jaffe & Koster, 2019; McFarlane, 2012). They represent the various ways that state actors can manipulate the state from within to support their non-state allies. State officials (or actors) within the various government sites have different hierarchical powers, socio-political interests, and societal affiliations that drive or determine how statutory responsibilities are run. Their informal practices often aggravate or jeopardize due processes in state administration. Based on clientelist relations, most politicians who occupy state offices tend to support their political bases or voting population with state resources legally or illegally in return for more votes during elections (see Michelutti & Smith, 2014; Rubin, 2018).

Street level bureaucracy – the use of discretion by the field or street level state workers in project/policy implementation (see Forkuor, Agyemang, & Odongo, 2020) – is another liability feature of the state that reinforces the influences of non-state actors. The state government workers who oversee the implementation of state programmes

and policies usually do not implement the programmes and policies in full accordance with the formal laws, rules, or procedures. In most cases, due to their high affinity to the masses and low connection to the state top power hierarchies, the street level workers use their discretions in assessing the fairness, nature and feasibilities of state programmes and policies before enforcing implementation or not (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2000). Interested state officials sometimes connive with other actors to frustrate (or sabotage) state interventions that are against their interests. The incoherent nature of the state and its actors (Christian Haid, 2016; Christian Haid & Hilbrant, 2019; Hall et al., 2015), together with their conflicting socio-political interests, provide the opportunities for non-state actors to engage any state administrative unit that is likely to support or validate their claims/agitations. Such collaborations could be official (*legal*) or unofficial (*illegal*).

Globally, corruption, understood as the misuse of public office for private gains (Svensson, 2005, p. 20) is manifested in different forms and degrees. Critically, Routley (2016) explained that corruptions are usually misunderstood in many African societies. According to her, what is usually termed corruption is a clash of tensions between postcolonial state '*official*' norms and the '*practical*' norms or ways of doing things that are deeply rooted in the tradition and culture of most African societies. She went further to explain that such perceived corrupt practices are usually negotiation skills or strategies among political actors. However, clientelism, street level bureaucracy, nepotism, and corruption are still informal practices for manipulating the state. These informal practices within state also affirm that the state can no longer be considered as the entirely formal side in governance. Relating this to the earlier discussion on the formal-informal divide and the explanation on customary practices in African governance, it can be concluded that there is a porous boundary in the dichotomies of state/non-state actors and formal/informal practices in the governance of African cities.

Limited state resources and neoliberal forces

Lack of modern technology, inadequate funds, and borrowing from local and international financial institutions are common to the African states. The state is normally aware of its failure or limited resources to provide adequate housing (and associated amenities) for its populace. This has made the state to be rational in managing or dealing with the other stakeholders that are able to provide such facilities with or without its approval. Since informally produced amenities (housing, water, business centres, etc) are essential for the populace that the state could not cater for (see Banks et al., 2019; Hardoy & Satterthwaite, 1986), it is quite difficult for the incapacitated state to stop or fully regulate the essential service provision by other stakeholders. Hence, these stakeholders can leverage on their important contribution to the society to make demands from the state, or at least make the state overlook their excesses. Slum(land) lords, land developers, powerful elites, business men, land speculators, organized criminal groups etc who are active gainers in the dynamics (or existence) of informal settlements (see Agbibo, 2018; Banks et al., 2019; Michelutti

& Smith, 2014)) can be part of the complex network of actors that can use their powerful connections to evade or circumvent genuine state regulations or interventions.

In addition, there are local and global neoliberal socio-economic forces that might (re)define the state (Beier, 2021; Jammulamadaka & Murphy, 2017; Rose & Miller, 2010). From the discussions so far, the state is an active governance actor and site whose character, substance, and form are influenced by forces within and outside it. Subjected to local and global liberal and neoliberal forces, the postcolonial state is constantly struggling to maintain its relevance, legitimacy, and identity in nation building processes (Jammulamadaka & Murphy, 2017). Local and international investors are needed to contribute to the economic development of the state with neoliberal incentives. These forces define the political economy of the state. And the political economy of a state is also important in understanding the dynamics of informality in the global south (Banks et al., 2019). Social movements and civil societies across local and international boundaries are also part of the forces that put pressure on the state to act in certain ways different from original plans or norms (Sarmiento & Tilly, 2018; Tarrow, 2011). All these forces combined to make the state an amenable entity to influential actors.

The outlined factors above highlight the main reasons why a polarized and incoherent entity like the state seems to be complicated or ineffective in managing informal settlements. Combined, these factors make the state liable to manipulations and complications in managing informal settlements. Considering the central functions of the state as an entity for organizing the society, it is not out of place to see the state as a united and coherent system working with the same purpose for common goals. But this is not often the case when the state – a *body* with multiple parts performing different functions by multiple actors with divergent interests – unavoidably had to relate with another set of divergent non-state stakeholders over common object of interest. The state roles in the dynamics of informal settlements are interconnected with (and most times influenced by) the roles and activities of other actors, networks, and structures that are interested in the informal settlements. Hence, the state is unavoidably amenable to the different forces, powers, and manipulations of the non-state stakeholders.

2.5. Governance of informal settlements: A way forward

To understand the complex dynamics around informal settlements in the case of Abuja, I conceptualize the governance of informal settlements as a historically embedded process through which an amenable state and influential non-state actors interrelate, using various institutions (formal and informal) for claim making, resistance, contentious politicking, powerplay and negotiations over land rights and tenure security. As lens for exploring and understanding the complexities and dynamics of Abuja's informal settlements, I posit that governance is a borderless contentious politicking between state and non-state actors involving indistinct complex practices

over historically embedded issues of land rights and tenure security. Some recent studies on urban informality have acknowledged that there are hosts of divergent actors and intricate politicking influencing the dynamics around informal settlements beyond the usual assumptions of the state's incapacities. This research takes the discussions further to show how and why the state is amenable to the contentious politicking of different actors over historically embedded issues of land rights and tenure security.

To really understand the complexity of the informality phenomenon, this research argues that the roles and impacts of all governance actors should be examined mutually and collectively based on the basic tenet of the concept of governance. That is, a collective analysis of the roles and impacts of both the state and non-state actors can offer a holistic understanding of urban informality. The argument so far is that the interdependent analysis of the mutual roles and impacts of state and non-state actors in the complex dynamics of informal settlements are rare in informality studies – especially on the fundamental issue of how land rights and tenure security are produced and contested. Most of the studies that consider the state as the major culprit in the complications around urban informality offer limited explanatory details on the complexity of the state. Hence, this research contributes to the understanding of (informal settlement) governance through a critical exploration of the roles and impacts of all governance actors (from both sides of and beyond the formal/informal and state/non-state dichotomies) and processes in the dynamics of informal settlements.

My conceptualization of governance (of informal settlement) as a borderless interplay between contending actors and an amenable state will contribute to the versatile studies of informality in urban planning and governance, especially in the current quest to understand the state's complexity in urban informality. There is a growing consensus in the field of political sciences and interdisciplinary governance literatures on the weakness of the state in dealing with multiple actors and forces. But the view of the state as an entity that is liable to be influenced or manipulated by different actors has not been dealt with in the studies on urban informality. The present research on the borderless interplay of both state and non-state actors and the amenability of the state will also offer another perspective on the common debates on the formal-informal divide in urban planning and governance.

Historical Institutionalism (HI) offers a useful analytical framework for explaining how the historical interplay of actors can shape institutions and rules of engagement on object of interest (see Sorensen, 2014; Sorensen, 2018; Sorensen & Hess, 2015; Steinmo, 2008; Thelen, 1999). Building upon the foundation from HI, Tilly and Tarrow's (2015) theory of contentious politics provides the basis for examining the complex relationship between contending actors and the state. Contentious politics explains how contending non-state actors use the state to their advantage. The contentious politics theory did not offer much insight into the working mechanisms of the state that make it tiltable. Inspired by Tilly and Tarrow's (2005) explanations on how the decentralization of the modern state has made it a body that can tilt to various actors' demand, I drew evidence from multidisciplinary studies to explain how, why, and when the state tilts. I deduced that the state is an amenable system. The amenability of the

state explains how the state's complex roles in governance are influenced by the inputs from non-state actors. This is in addition to the incoherent composition of the state and its diverse actors. All these provided the insights to conceptualize the complex governance mechanisms around informal settlements especially for the case of Abuja. The three main themes in my conceptualization of governance provide the analytical frameworks to explore and understand the dynamics of Abuja's informal settlements.

Exploring the path-dependencies of how some historical antecedents have defined or are defining the current dynamics is not common in informality studies. Hence, I begin my analysis in the empirical chapters with a historical overview of how the contentions over land rights and tenure security in Abuja's informal settlements have evolved since the creation of Abuja as the new capital city of Nigeria. I use ideas from critical junctures and path-dependency of historical institutionalism to explore the past antecedents that have influenced or are still influencing current contentions around Abuja's informal settlements. I explore the path-dependencies of the past antecedents to provide a fundamental understanding of how significant historical governance processes (critical junctures) have defined the current dynamics around the settlements, especially the contentions over land ownership rights and tenure security (see chapter 4).

In the second empirical chapter (chapter 5), I draw from the concept of contentious politics to further delve into how the claim makings, contentions, and negotiations of contending actors is defining the dynamics of infrastructural development, contentions over lands, and the resettlements or displacement (threats) around the settlements. The third part of the conceptual framework on amenable state is to unpack the state and its complex relationships with contending actors towards understanding the usually assumed complexity of the state in urban informality. In this final part, as will be shown in chapter 6, I present the state as a stage for contending actors, which is a unique diversion from seeing the often-romanticized resistance practices of the informal settlement dwellers as direct conflicts with the state. That is, the marginalized ISD could also use the state to their advantage in many cases. Considering the different narratives and claims from different actors around Abuja's informal settlements, and the power relations that have been established in pursuing those claims, the next chapter on research methodology explains the suitability of critical social constructivism and qualitative research methods as the best paradigm to explore the dynamics of Abuja's informal settlements.



Chapter 3

Research Methodology



Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

In reference to the central aim of this research to explore and understand the interplay of state and non-state actors in the dynamics around informal settlements in Abuja, a situated or contextual understanding of the structural and agential forces that have defined and/or defining the contested spaces in Abuja is necessary to understand the complexities that characterized the informal settlements. This means culturally and historically situated explorations and interpretations that are typical of qualitative research (see Creswell & Potho, 2018; Jennings, 2015; Raddon, 2010). The various data [interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), documents, reports, and direct field observations] produced for this study and their analyses are also based on qualitative research paradigm. This methodology chapter is therefore necessary to explain the rationale, justifications, and processes that guided this research from conceiving the research ideas to interpreting the findings. The chapter contains the ontological and epistemological background that warranted this qualitative case study research design, the details of my study areas, data collection methods, data analysis, and the axiological influences in the research.

3.2. Ontological and epistemological background

To enhance validity, reliability, and transparency, the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin qualitative research needs clarification in contemporary research paradigms (Boréus & Bergström, 2017; Creswell & Potho, 2018). Ontology deals with the question of what constitutes reality and how existence can be understood, while epistemology deals with what constitutes valid knowledge and how we can obtain it (Raddon, 2010; Jennings, 2015). Designating a place as informal already connotes power hierarchy and marginalization of the less powerful. However, the discourses, contestations, struggles and politicking that characterized these contested spaces also indicate power struggle among various actors. These actors through their divergent claims and contentions produce multiple realities around the informal settlements. Hence, understanding or interpreting the realities of urban informality is unavoidably dependent on what the actors have produced – that is their narratives and actions. The ontological stance that acknowledges the existence of multiple realities that are produced through different power relations in various historical and social contexts is often described as critical theory (Creswell & Potho, 2018; Jennings, 2015; Raddon, 2010). Very similar to the issues discussed in this study, Creswell and Potho (2018) opined that the central themes that are explorable by critical researchers include scientific study of social institutions, historical problems

of domination, alienation, social struggle, state regulations, and resistance among others.

My conceptualization of informal settlement governance as the contentious politicking of different actors over historically embedded issues using an amenable state resonate well with the ontology of critical theory. The scientific knowledge that this study has attempted to produce is based on the realities that have been produced by social actors through their everyday practices, politics and lived experiences. Relating to this critical ontological perspective is the epistemological approach of social constructivism for understanding and interpreting realities through the subjective experiences of social actors. The deconstruction or reconstruction of the lived experiences and perceptions of societal actors has been the main rationale behind the popular social constructivism approach in social sciences. Social constructivism encourages researchers to be fully aware that human experiences and perceptions are mediated historically, culturally and linguistically (Willig, 2008). The elements of social constructivism that recognize that there are various ways of constructing realities also align with the plurality in knowledge-production ideas of post-structuralism. The central tenet of post-structuralism is the emphasis on the crucial role of language (which is historically and culturally embedded in different contexts) in social discourses for interpreting realities (Boréus & Bergström, 2017).

Interpretivism is a central tenet of social constructivism used to analyse and explain the multiple realities around a phenomenon. Interpretivism refers to epistemologies, or theories about how we can gain knowledge of the world, which loosely rely on interpreting or understanding the meanings that humans attach to their actions (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 119). Based on the interrelated philosophical assumptions (critical theory and post-structural social constructivist perspectives) that aptly capture the realities and dynamics of my research, I position myself as a critical social constructivist. The critical aspect of my position is to understand the subjective positions of different stakeholders in order to deconstruct common assumptions of state/non-state power relations around the governance of informal settlements. As part of a subjective and value-laden epistemology, social constructivism studies primarily use qualitative methodology to engage in an intrinsic, instrumental, and transactional axiology with research participants (Jennings, 2015, p. p).

The phenomenon of urban informality is prone to interpretivist qualitative research approach. Most studies, (including the earlier ones like Alsayyad, 2004; Hardoy & Satterthwaite, 1986; Hart, 1973; Roy, 2005; Wacquant, 2008; Yiftachel, 2009) (and more recent ones like Agbiboa, 2018; Beier, 2021; de Satgé & Watson, 2018; Deuskar, 2019; Dovey et al., 2020; Lombard, 2014, 2019; Michelutti & Smith, 2014; Rubin, 2018; Saharan et al., 2022) among several others) that have sought to understand the complexities around informality are qualitative studies. The dominance of qualitative studies and common interpretivist approach among informality scholars is usually based on the ontological perspective that realities are created through the actions/narratives of social actors. That is, there are multiple realities about urban

informality – realities that are constructed through the actors that produced or sustained the informality. Similarly, Kovacic and Giampietro (2017) also argued that quantitative description of informal settlements in terms of their spatial and physical features are not enough to address the complex social inequality, informality, power struggles and political interests that play pivotal roles in the establishment and development of informal systems.

The complex dynamics and complications around informality cannot be effectively explained in quantitative terms because of the intricate activities of different stakeholders. It is also difficult to explain the peculiarities within informal settlements and the divergent activities of ISD through generalizing statistical frameworks without missing out on the nuanced details that could be better understood through critical analysis of the different narratives from different stakeholders. Moreover, data on the various dynamics around informal settlements (such as multiple land right claims, tenure security practices, planning processes, rationales behind displacements and forced evictions, politics of land grabbing and access, lobbying, resistance, power networking, clientelism, etc.) cannot be quantitatively generated in their entirety if holistic understanding of the issues is the goal. Hence, this study uses qualitative approach and qualitative methods, such as reconnaissance surveys, interviews, FGDs, participatory observations/direct field observations and analysis of relevant documents, to explore both the explicit and implicit dynamics around Abuja's informal settlements.

3.3. Case study qualitative research

Informality is a global phenomenon with different dynamics in different contexts. The social, spatial, and political dynamics around informal settlements vary at local, regional and national levels. The need for more specific case study research on informal settlements to counter the trending over-generalizations of their dynamics have been advocated in many studies (for example see Lombard, 2014; Wacquant, 2008). For instance, unlike the conventional slum upgrading or regularization programmes that are often used to mitigate the growing challenges of informal settlements in many cities of the global south, displacements and resettlements programmes are the main approaches of the Nigerian government in managing informal settlements in Abuja. The informal settlements within Abuja also have their peculiar differences. For example, Mpape (often referred to as Abuja biggest slum) is comprised of a heterogeneous population from different parts of Nigeria, and residents/migrants in this slum have ethnic/tribal affiliations through which they sometimes network power relations. Mabushi slum on the other hand is typical of Abuja's indigenous communities turned slums, where the residents are resisting arbitrary displacements and resettlements. However, most of the informal settlements in Abuja are agitating for regularization, tenure security, and infrastructural development of their communities.

Qualitative case studies of this kind is capable of producing content-dependent knowledge that will aid the proper understanding of realities and help the researcher's learning process of developing professional research skills (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Case studies can be designed to test existing theories or for generating new theories for explaining the how and why of complex phenomena by taking a closer look at the internal dynamics of individual cases (Willig, 2008). In the case of this research, the choice of choosing a case study (Abuja) is both to evaluate how existing theories can explain the phenomenon of informality in different contexts, and to show how specific empirical cases can contribute to the theories of understanding urban informality.

3.3.1. Study areas

The significant peculiarity of Abuja for this study is that, as the federal capital territory of Nigeria serving as the centre of unity for the diverse ethnic groups in the country, most processes within the city have wider socio-political implications across the country. Unlike other states in Nigeria, most of the settlements or neighbourhoods in Abuja have heterogeneous population where no tribe or ethnic group dominates (except in some indigenous villages). Informal settlements are scattered all over Abuja (both in the core areas and peripheries). Some of the major areas marked by the Abuja Metropolitan Management Council (AMMC) as domains for informal settlements include Gudu, Katampe, Kaura, Mpape, Idu, Karmo, Dape, Tasha, Gwagwa, Saburi, Zauda, Jahi, Gishiri, Mabushi, Kuchigoro, Chika, Aleita, Piwoyi, Lugbe, Pyakassa, Kpadna, Jabi, Utako village, Kabusa, Tudun-wada, Dei-dei and Guzape (see Adepoju et al., 2013; Zubair et al., 2015).

Findings from initial reconnaissance survey of the study areas revealed that these impoverished and underdeveloped settlements are numerous in Abuja, coexisting ironically within the highly developed and well planned neighbourhoods of Abuja in areas like Mabushi, Utako, Kado, Jabi, Kabusa, Lugbe, etc. Most of Abuja's informal settlements in areas such as Mpape, Jabi, Kpadna, Kabusa, Kado, Dutse and Utako have similar characteristics (slummy) and contentions (especially the threats of displacements and evictions). They also have similar challenges and interconnected resistance practices; hence the reason for this study to focus mainly on Mabushi and Mpape communities after the reconnaissance surveys in Mpape, Mabushi, Jabi, Kpadna, Kabusa, Utako and Dutse Alhaji.

The choices of Mpape and Mabushi are not random. Mpape and Mabushi are in the periphery and core of Abuja respectively. Their different origin, size, location, socio-economic and demographic status provide basis for exploring and comparing the main issues of this research. Mpape is Abuja's biggest slum and its uniqueness – its location, heterogeneity, size, national representativeness, and internal politics makes it unavoidable in this study. Mabushi and Mpape have some basic differences and similarities that are of significance for this study. Apart from the difference in sizes, processes of formation, locations, socio-economic and demographic statuses of the two

settlements, state planning and development control approaches towards the two settlements are also different. There are resettlement plans for Mabushi, while demolitions, displacements and forced evictions dominate the discourses around Mpape. Another criterion for selection is the amiable disposition of the residents and the availability of insiders to help in going around during fieldworks. Mabushi and Mpape were chosen because of the availability of amiable insiders and the willingness (as perceived from the reconnaissance surveys) of ISD to discuss their issues without referring me to their (political) leaders. I was informed by some dwellers in some communities that their leaders instructed them to not discuss resettlement/land issues with anyone. This is probably because the resettlement issues have lingered for so long without an end in sight or their leaders simply want to be the ones to dictate the terms and conditions for their resettlements.

In scholarly literature, urban informality is a phenomenon that is often associated with urban peripheries because of the assumed availability of lands for urban expansion. The dynamics of informality within the city centres are often given less attention. Although the direct comparison of the two selected settlements is not the primary aim of this study, I selected the two communities to holistically understand the multi-actor governance mechanisms around Abuja's informal settlements and to explore the assertions that differences exist across various informal settlements even within one city. This purposeful sampling approach of selecting case studies based on their anticipated information content is described as information-oriented selection and this approach helps in maximizing the significant variation information within case studies (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

3.4. Data collection methods

Informal settlements, like other places, are historical and temporal-spatially constructed (Massey, 1991). They are urban landscapes characterized by historically embedded discourses and politics of identity and ownership (see Wylie, 2007). These contested spaces in Africa are spheres of claim making over land ownership (see van der Haar et al., 2020). The claim making over land ownership is manifested in the form of contentious politics where various actors usually engage with the state to contest their claims (see Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). But as observed in the introductory part of this thesis, the bias focus on the structural forces that produced the informal settlements have dominated their discourses, thereby beclouding other important agential forces of the contesting actors. This is the rationale behind the central aim of this research – to explore and understand the roles and impacts of all actors in the governance of informal settlements collectively. This exploration required extensive and intensive collection of data across the stakeholders in the contentions around the settlements. The empirical data for this study were gathered using qualitative methods from reconnaissance surveys, interviews, FGDs, participatory observations/direct field observations and analysis of relevant documents.

The data for this research was gathered in three phases between March 2019 and November 2020. The first phase was a pilot study (March to April 2019) to map out the stakeholders, informants, and institutions around the dynamics of Abuja's informal settlements. It also involved some visits to the settlements to observe their geography and network with some insiders to inform them of my research and future visits. The second round of fieldwork was between October 2019 to January 2020. The last round of fieldwork was between October and November 2020. This was carried out to generate supplementary data and more clarifications/validations on some of the previous data. The last phase extended into the analysis and writing stages of this thesis when I occasionally contacted some of my key informants to discuss the issues and to ask questions whenever necessary. The respondents and the various data that were generated from the field and other sources are discussed in the following subsections.

3.4.1. Stakeholders and Interview respondents

The stakeholders and respondents for this study were identified during the preliminary stages of the research and the pilot survey. During the pilot survey, I consulted some researchers working on similar topics in Abuja for some tips on practical issues regarding the fieldwork and suggestions in recruiting field assistants. After some careful considerations, I ended up with four field assistants. Two were graduate students at the University of Abuja and Kogi State University working and living in Abuja and, the other two are my friends living and working in Abuja. Several factors (as recommended by Stevano & Deane, 2017) such as the degree of knowledge, *insiderness*, working/social relations, familiarity with the study areas, affiliations and prejudices were carefully considered before choosing the field assistants.

The dynamic backgrounds of my field assistants proved to be helpful during the fieldworks: one is working with FCDA (the parent agency for most of the state planning departments and units) for more than 11 years; one is working with AGIS for about 4 years, a Gbagi (the dominant tribe and language of Abuja ISD) who once lived in an informal settlement (Kabusa); and one is an Uber driver that knows the terrains of Abuja very well. The contribution of my field assistants was crucial to the fieldwork research: it ranged from breaking the ice and setting convivial atmospheres in tense situations to practical and logistic problems of mobility and finding locations and key informants. Other inputs of the field assistants in this study are highlighted in the positionality and ethics section. Based on the stakeholder mapping in the preliminary phase, the stakeholders/actors in the dynamics around Abuja's informal settlements are outlined in the following table.

Table 3.1: Stakeholders around the dynamics of Abuja’s informal settlements

State actors		Non-state actors	
I.	The presidency- the highest authority and executives including the president, vice president, the FCT minster, and other officials that are directly working for or under the president.	i.	The traditional rulers and community chiefs who are usually indigenous elders or long-time residents (migrants) in the informal settlements.
II.	The chief executives (appointed by and answerable to the president/FCT minister) and staff of the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA), Abuja Geographic Information System (AGIS), Land department and Department of Development Control (also known as Abuja Metropolitan Management Council-AMMC).	ii.	The informal settlements’ dwellers comprising of both the indigenous settlers and migrants.
III.	The chief executive (Chairman); Council members; District head; and staff of municipal area councils- statutory local government arms that make rules to govern local affairs in the municipal areas hosting the informal communities.	iii.	The wealthy elites, self-proclaimed politicians (without portfolio), land developers, investors, and individuals that have been allocated the lands of yet-to-be resettled indigenous communities.
IV.	The military (only answerable to the president) who are also claiming some lands being farmed by the ISD.	iv.	Land agents and speculators who are mainly active in the buying and selling of lands, and the negotiation of compensations for economic trees on contested lands.

All these actors are directly involved in the dynamics around the informal settlements of Abuja. The classification above is to show the relative positions of the stakeholders. Basically, state actors in this study refer to the state officials that are affiliated to state agencies and institutions and are having statutory roles of executing state’s policies and plan. Non-state actors refer to the other stakeholders without official affiliation, and who are either contending or reacting to state’s policies and plans. The non-state actors include out of office politicians or politicians without portfolio. But as I will show in the empirical chapters, the interplay of the stakeholders does not imply this simple binary divisions. For example, the statutory state actors in the municipal area councils

also pose as the political leaders/representatives of the ISD to provide (through the statutory allocations from the national budget and/or internal revenues generated from the settlements) some services and basic infrastructure in the informal settlements regardless of the federal government's plans over the settlements. Another problem in the classification is the active involvement (see subsection 3.4.4) of some staff of the state planning agencies in the buying and selling of lands in the informal settlements. They are state actors that are also participating in the (informal) activities of non-state actors. Also, some military officers claiming some lands in the informal communities are now retired and can no longer be considered state actors, yet they are still in the picture. For practical challenges, I could not interview any official among the presidency and the military officials. The absence or presence of their narratives or their side of the story has no significant influence in this research – especially for the fact that they operate behind the scenes and through the other accessible state officials. For those that were interviewed, the details of the interviewing processes are explained in the next subsection.

3.4.2. The interview processes

Interviews provided the major bulk of the empirical data for this study. Interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) do not only expose the researcher to lots of information, but they also make the researcher co-creator of new ideas around phenomena with the participants. They also enhance interaction between the researcher and participants; diffusion of ideas, claims and arguments; and revealing the socio-cultural and traditional ways of talking about phenomena (Belzile & Öberg, 2012). The multiple divergent perspectives and sometimes contradictory narratives from my interviewees further reinforced my philosophical belief that social actors construct multiple realities around a phenomenon. However, the multiple realities from the lived experiences of my interviewees provided in-depth insights and holistic overviews of the dynamics around my case studies.

Most of the interviews were carried out in the second and third phases of the fieldwork. Interviews and FGDs were used to gather opinions and data from the staff of relevant government agencies, departments and units such as the resettlement and compensation department, urban and regional planning (URP) departments of FCDA; GIS and Map production unit, Information unit, and Land administration department of AGIS; the sector planning and monitoring units of AMMC; and AMAC Municipal Area Councils (local representatives of the people in the federal government structure of Nigeria). The non-state participants include community leaders, representatives, landlords and residents in Mpape, Mabushi, Jabi, Kpadna, Kabusa and Utako communities of Abuja, estate developers and land agents. Some of these participants were initially contacted during the pilot survey without any formality. But in the second and third rounds, official introduction letter and printed interview questions (see appendix I) were given to the respondents to formally engage them for interviews. The interview questions have a covering note explaining the aim of the interview, the rights of the participants, the need to record the interviews and the anonymity of the

respondents. For those that cannot read, I explained the same content to them in pidgin English or some local dialects (such as Gwari, Hausa, Yoruba, Ebira, Nupe). Interpretations were done by my research assistants where necessary.

The interviews proceeded after the respondents acknowledged that they understood my mission and are willing to answer my questions. There were cases of decline especially by the ISD mostly due to their frustration that they have conducted similar interviews without any significant change to their challenges. Others declined because of their suspicions that I am a government agent trying to gather information against them. I had to explain to those that are tired of granting interviews that the more they talk to researchers like me, the more the awareness of their plights get known. I explained that an increase in their awareness can also lead to pressure on the state to seek for feasible solutions to their problems. I noticed that the framing of the interview questions to centre on the contentions over land rights and tenure security (away from the usual studies on infrastructure and poverty) also motivated many of my respondents to keenly participate in the interviews.

The interviews usually started with the gatekeepers (directors, heads of departments, community leaders or chiefs), first to get their perspectives and secondly to get their approval to interview others within their jurisdictions. Most of the other participants were snowballed for the interviews. The snowballing of participants was usually initiated by the gatekeepers and then the subsequent participants. They usually direct me to more specialized persons (e.g., senior town planners and site workers) or experienced long-time residents. But to ensure that I was not subjected to one-sided narratives of the chosen participants, I randomly interviewed other stakeholders on my own especially in the last fieldwork when I had become more familiar with the communities and stakeholders. The interviews were designed to be semi-structured in order to give room for more detailed or unanticipated information from the respondents (see Belzile & Öberg, 2012), but as anticipated, many of the interviews ended up as unstructured during execution.

The unstructured interviews involved cases when the respondents informed me that there are more important issues for me to know first before answering my questions. In most cases, I listened to their stories and allowed the narratives to continue as long as they fall under the broad theme of this research. However, the unstructured interviews were well moderated, and questions were asked where necessary for clarification or more details. Some of the interviews also turned into unplanned FGDs when additional participants joined the discussion - some joined because they were present and interested in the discussion, and others joined because the original interviewees asked them to share their experiences or expertise. The unplanned FGDs involved 3 to 7 persons, with the initially contacted interviewee leading the discussion in most cases. The other participants collaborated the narratives of my original interviewees with site stories, experiences, more details, and personal opinions.

I acknowledge that interviews and FGDs are good research methods for acquiring shared knowledge, elaboration of ideas, co-construction of narratives and recognition of non-verbal responses, reactions, and consensuses. They can also be biased, or they can also silence salient hidden opinions (of timid individuals). I tried as much as possible to be very alert to all these shortcomings during the interviews. I conducted follow up interviews for individuals that I needed more clarifications or information from. In total, 48 interviews and 10 FGDs were conducted among over 100 participants. They include ISD, their community leaders and political representatives (including their statutory representatives in municipal area councils); heads of departments, planners, site workers and staff of state planning institutions; land developers, surveyor, and land agents (see appendix II for more details). The duration of the interviews and FGDs ranged from 12 to 89 minutes.

3.4.3. Review of Development Plans, Policy Documents and Reports

An extensive review of relevant documents, such as Abuja development plans, land use acts and various reports on government policy documents for the planning and development of Abuja, was used to supplement the interview data. These secondary data, surveys, stories, reports, news, etc. were also important sources of data for qualitative research (see Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun, Clarke, Hayfield, & Terry, 2019). Policy documents, master plan, regional development plans, reviews, research papers, maps, court cases and media reports were sourced from government institutions such as FCDA, AMMC, AMAC, and AGIS and news reports. In addition to other related research on Abuja spatial development and land issues that have been cited in this research, other documents that provided some data for this research include:

- The Abuja's Master Plan by International Planning Associates (IPA), 1979
- The Socio-economic review of Abuja's Master plan by Benna and Associates, 2009
- The Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) 2004 report: Housing Rights in West Africa Report of Four Fact-Finding Missions
- The Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) and Social and Economic Rights Action Center (SERAC) 2008 report: The Myth of the Abuja Master's Plan: Forced evictions as urban planning in Abuja, Nigeria.
- Abuja 1976 FCT Act
- Abuja Geographic Information System (AGIS) handbook
- Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) 2015 report: Summary of the Report of the Systems Study and Review of Land Administration in The Federal Capital Territory. Abuja, Nigeria
- The Mpape court case Judgement report, 2017
- The resettlement list and household figures from resettlement department, FCDA, 2019
- The Department of Development Control Manual, 2007 edition
- Some news reports.

3.4.4. Participant/Direct field observations

I actively participated in the fieldworks with direct field observations to experience the informal communities and their living conditions; the relevant government institutions and their working patterns; and some visits to contested (farm)lands. According to Jorgensen (2015), participant observation in research can enhance creative decision making about problems and questions to be studied, create better avenues for gathering information, and establishing sustaining trusting relationships with ethics, values, and politics. This can make record making, data analysis, interpretation, and reporting of fundings more fruitful and genuine. My active participation and observations in the field enhanced my contextual understanding of the various discourses on Abuja's informal settlements, including the narratives from the interviews. One of the highlights of my direct field observation was the attempted land buying in one of the informal settlements Kabusa (one of the pilot-surveyed settlements). The lands are statutory owned by an AGIS staff. My field assistant and insider in FCDA linked me with the AGIS staff, and we confirmed the genuineness of the statutory ownership from another staff in the GIS department of AGIS before proceeding to see the lands.

At the field, I experienced one of the resistance practices (physical confrontation) of some Gbagyi farmers when we were assessing the farmland. They were shouting and walking towards us with the cutlasses they were working with until the man that took us there informed them (in Gbagyi language) of our mission (research and not land buying), and that we were there with the permission of their traditional ruler. They calmed down afterwards with one of them willing to help us with our enquiries. One of the lands has a building on it by a Fulani original inhabitant (willing to leave the land and the house if we can pay him 12 million naira- about €24,000), the other land contains cashew trees (we can clear the cashew trees and develop the land if we can pay the customary landowner 2.5million naira- about €5000), the cost of each plot of land as offered by the AGIS staff was 3.5 million naira (about €6000). This is one of the common cases in the informal settlements of Abuja where the lands being occupied by indigenous settlers or other ISD are being owned by other persons with statutory rights from the state. Any investor or developer or statutory landowner must settle with the customary landowners (who are already occupying the lands) before accessing the land. Contentions usually arise when customary land claimers are not willing to let go of the lands to statutory land claimers.

Having a landed property in Abuja is a dream of many Nigerians. I had wanted to buy the land especially for the fact that I was dealing with statutory owner from AGIS, which gives some level of genuineness in the complex Abuja land market – where a piece of land can be sold to multiple persons. Anyone with original papers from AGIS usually have the upper hand. But I changed my mind because of the challenges of settling the customary land claimers. These challenges are usually negotiated by experienced land agents but there are chances of coming across the dubious ones. Apart from

experiencing the resistance strategies of the ISD, another interesting insight from the land buying attempt is the direct involvement of a state worker (a worker at AGIS where land conflicts are to be addressed) in the land issues of Abuja. I learnt that such cases are common among several state workers who usually use their privileged positions and state structures to gain the upper hand in the contentions over land ownership and land businesses. For instance, one of my respondents (Interview #9) informed me that some staff of his agency (AGIS) usually give the allocation details of those to be resettled to their cronies to go and negotiate buying the allocated lands/houses from them. And like the owner of the land I attempted to buy, some senior officials of the planning agencies have lands in the informal settlements with the official allocation papers. The direct involvement of many state officials in the land contentions, the pressure from land investors/developers, the resistance of the ISD and other interconnected parties highlights the complex dynamics around the informal settlements of Abuja. These complexities are explained extensively in the empirical chapters.

3.5. Data analysis

The data from both the semi-structured and unstructured interviews/FGDs necessitated an inductive thematic analysis/coding of the data as recommended by proponents of bottom-up data analysis and theorizing (for example, see Clarke, 2005; de Satgé & Watson, 2018). The interviews and FGDs were transcribed, coded and analysed thematically to reflect the research questions and interests. The interviews and FGDs were transcribed verbatim with my field assistants helping with translation where necessary. Since the FGDs were unplanned and not structured, I transcribed them like the interviews to represent the position of the original interviewees. But wherever necessary, strong opinions and relevant comments of individuals in the FGDs were emphasized and ascribed to the individuals in the analysis and discussions of the data. The Atlas.ti (qualitative data management and analysis software) was used to organize and code the research data, and to run cross-coding and queries of the data to enhance a thematic content-based analyses.

Field observations and other casual discussions were used to support analyses and discussions where necessary. The coding of the data was mainly inductive from the data and summarily grouped into themes that answer the research questions. The inductive coding (especially the first and second level coding) was to initiate a bottom-up analysis by identifying the themes, patterns and concepts that emerged from the data. The inductive analysis of the data was also inspired by the suggestions of southern planning theorists who advocate for more emphasis on a ground up explanation of global south urban issues to reflect their peculiar features (see De Satgé & Watson 2018). The third level coding involves the creation of linkages and networks among the first and second level codes – this formed the basis for my arguments and narratives that were subsequently validated or compared with existing theories. The first level coding was mainly to open up and break my data into meaning parts, and to discover the implicit and explicit themes/patterns that are observable from the data. Fifty-seven

codes were generated in this first stage based on various themes that characterized the data.

The fifty-seven first level codes provided the basis for the second level coding: the axial coding for drawing connections and linkages from the codes developed in the first level open coding (see Braun & Clarke, 2013; 2019). Ten codes were generated inductively and axially from the first level open coding to link and group the discrete textual data together. The third level coding (using Atlas.ti smart grouping function) was done for a clearer and robust analysis (and interpretations in the empirical chapters) that align with the aims and research questions of the thesis. It involved an iterative process of making sense of the codes and code groups that were generated in the first and second level coding in order to discover core themes/concepts/ideas that can guide the writing and structure of this thesis. The five core themes identified at the third level categorization are: historical antecedents; the roles and impacts of non-state actors; the roles and impacts of state actors; land rights and tenure security; and arguments on the way forward. These five themes are used to structure my empirical chapters that explain the finding of my case studies with and/or in relation to existing theories, concepts and arguments.

Examples of the coding processes as generated from the Atlas.Ti software are shown in the screen shots and tables in appendix III. The code-document tables in appendix III show the number of quotations according to state and non-state actors on thematic issues. Based on the statistics and as expected, narratives on the challenges and future of the informal settlements were discussed more by the state actors. The non-state actors talked more on the activities of the ISD, their resistance practices, land right claims, tenure security and historical issues. This is an indication that the ISD are more interested in securing their rights to the city while the state actors are thinking about how to get rid of them or manage their presence in the city. Groundedness of codes (Gr) is number of quotations coded by a code or documents (the transcribed interviews). GS represents the number of documents in a document group (the transcriptions are primarily grouped into state and non-state actors) or number of codes in a code group.

3.6. Positionality, Limitations, and ethical issues

Reflecting on how the values, beliefs, status and biases of a researcher influence the research processes is a major quality control strategy in qualitative research (Berger, 2013). For credibility and transparency, I have so far explained my choices and rationale throughout the research processes. This section is to summarize the decisions or positions that could have influenced the findings of this study in one way or the other. This self-reflection in the research process is necessary for the readers to understand my specific experiences that have shaped this research (see Adu-Ampong & Adams, 2019; Berger, 2013). It is worthy to note here that I am a Nigerian studying in the Netherlands and using a city in my home country as case study. I see myself as both an insider (a Nigerian who once lived in Abuja) and an outsider (a foreign researcher without the lived experience of living in informal settlement). This means that to some extent I have the contextual understanding of the phenomena that I am studying but I still need to know the content and dynamics from the stakeholders around the phenomenon.

The fluid position of a researcher being an insider and outsider can enhance or constrain access to research participants and information, hence the need for reflexive practices to negotiate through hurdles (Adu-Ampong & Adams, 2020). My positionality directly or indirectly influenced some of the data collection procedures in this research. Based on my understanding of the working mechanisms of most of the state institutions and clues from some insiders, I was able to *informally* negotiate most bureaucratic bottlenecks that would have limited my access to relevant informants or subjected me to only officially chosen respondents. For instance, after being initially informed about their unavailability, I was able to get an official copies of Abuja's master plan, reviews, resettlement data, and development control manual after doing the *needful* (greasing the palms).

On the downside, I noticed that being Nigerian made many of my respondents to provide concise responses to my questions. The short responses were usually from the state officials. Understandably, the short responses from the state officials are probably because of fear of revealing too much information that might indict them. But there are cases of when some told me that I should know (better) with phrases like '*you know our people nah*' or '*we all know that...*' All insinuating that as a Nigerian, I should understand the situation and the governance processes of the country, based on my lived experience. However, this *shortcoming* was compensated for with interviews with more respondents within the same department or unit; this was to verify and/or supplement the responses of their colleagues. I also provided more details and clarifications on ambiguous quotes in my analysis to explain the contextual meaning of the quotes where necessary.

3.6.1. Using field assistants/Insiders

In some cases, especially when there was need to use local dialects, I asked some of my field assistants to conduct interviews while I observed the process to ensure that all the necessary questions were asked. Before the interviews, especially in the second phase of the fieldwork, I spent about two days to orient my field assistants with my research topics, interests, interview questions, the quality of data I needed from the fieldwork and some professional ethics/skills I had learnt before the fieldwork. The idea of using students and friends who are based in Abuja as field assistants was mainly to help in reaching out to more respondents and in some cases, to compare their findings with mine – in order to be sure that the stories being told me as a researcher abroad is not different from the ones being told to the local students. At the end, the stories were not different but very diverse and complementary – so diverse that we (with my assistants) sometimes had to connect the dots together to understand the whole picture. And in some cases, we planned supplement interviews for participants from whom we needed more information or clarifications.

My field assistants were also involved in the initial stage of the data analysis – translating, transcribing and harmonizing our fieldnotes. The field experiences of field assistants and their lived experiences in study areas were very useful in generating factual details around a phenomenon. According to Holmberg (2014), field assistants (depending on their levels of involvement) can be regarded as research associates and co-producers of knowledge for their significant contributions to the research. As observed in my case, they are very useful in spotting spurious claims and identifying key informants. For instance, one of my field assistants (also an insider at FCDA) was quick to advise me to stop wasting time with the *ogas* (directors and head of department) as they do not have the proper understanding of the problems being political appointees. He suggested to talk with the junior officers who are directly engaged with the ISD and other stakeholders. His assertion was correct because most executive heads usually directed me to their subordinates whenever they could not answer my questions. One of them remarked that there are things he cannot say because of his office. In an instance, one of the chosen representatives in FCDA remarked that: *'...I don't know why oga (the boss) directed you to me, if you want plenty information for your project, I will advise you to go and see Tpl Adexxx (pseudonym)...'*. On a general note, I observed that the other officers without headship positions were very open, and they discussed the issues as objective as possible – sometimes criticizing some state officials of many anomalies like hoarding project moneys.

I acknowledge that recruiting and assessing the suitability of field assistants is difficult especially because the triangular power dynamics between research participants, research assistants, and researchers have influences on the research process and outcomes (Stevano & Deane, 2017). But using amiable, experienced and dedicated friends and graduate students who are based in Abuja with adequate understanding of local practices and slangs proved to be very fruitful in all ramifications of the fieldwork. Apart from their contributions to my contextual understanding of complex issues in the

interviews, their presence during interviews enhanced a convivial atmosphere and an aura of openness in my discussions with respondents. Taking note of the power dynamics between the researchers and the researched, we usually presented ourselves as students (without specifying my international affiliation) willing to learn from the participants. But in some case, I needed to identify myself as a foreign scholar in order to access some VIPs or key informants like top state officials and traditional heads.

3.6.2. Ethical issues

Nigeria, like many countries in the world, is facing many social, political, and economic challenges. Most Nigerians are generally known to be outspoken when discussing societal problems, social injustice, inequality and marginalization in the country. They are quick to criticize or highlight the rot in the Nigerian system or among their leaders without holding back. Even state workers openly discussed the anomalies or rot in the system during my interviews with them in their offices. However, I understand that doing research on contentious issues in this context requires professionalism and awareness of the possible sensitivity of the questions I posed on contentions/sensitive issues to avoid any risk, and to make sure my respondents' (state officials, ISD and others) and my personal safety are not endangered. Although most of my respondents didn't categorically demand for anonymity, I promised them their anonymity wherever necessary during my analysis and reporting – especially the identity of those that provided some sensitive information that could lead to their confrontation or queries from their bosses or other persons. Most of the traditional rulers/chiefs and heads of major state departments were unavoidably cited in relation to the office they occupy, but wherever I sensed some potential tension or risk, I tried as much as possible to cite them indirectly.

(Explaining) my introduction letter and interview guidelines were the only channel used to get oral consents of my research participants. As noted during the pilot surveys, requesting a formal/written informed consent from the state officials/planners could make many of them to hold back vital information that might be considered anti-government or for fear of losing their jobs. Such request also made the ISD uncomfortable in discussing many vital issues. There were many cases when participants (especially the ISD) refused to even hold and read my introduction letter/interview questions for fear that I was serving them some indicting documents like quit notice or relocation papers. However, I informed the respondents that the confidentiality of their names and information provided are guaranteed and will be used strictly for research and academic purposes. The recorded interviews were strictly meant for my personal use – to transcribe and support my fieldnotes, and not for distribution to a third party. The data collected were treated ethically as they reflect sensitive issues, and they are stored according to the data management policy of the Cultural Geography group of Wageningen University and Research (WUR) which is also based on the WUR data management policy and regulations.

Another ethical concern is reporting the intricate politicking and/or resistance strategies of the ISD. In order not to weaken or jeopardize their resistance, conscious efforts have been made in reporting sensitive resistance strategies and their political issues. Although, this research can serve as another medium for the ISD voices to be heard, the main aim is to explore the impacts of the mutual or conflicting (inter)relationships among different governance actors related to the contested land rights and tenure security around the informal settlements. All sides are accorded the necessary attention and considerations in the research with all sense of objectivity.

The limitations and challenges encountered during the fieldworks do not have any significant influence in the findings and conclusions of the research. Moreover, my inductive based thematic analysis signifies that my findings are based on the limits and scope of what was produced empirically. My reflexivity and improvisations in this research are hinged upon the post-structural assumptions of adaptive research methodology – just as research paradigms or boundaries are constructed, they can also be altered or crossed within the practical and theoretical limits of a discipline, the research project/case, and the research organizations (van Assche, Beunen, Duineveld, & Gruezmacher, 2021). As much as possible and as far as I know in social science research ethics, I have tried not to commit any unforgivable abomination in this study.

To avoid any form of bias or prejudiced interpretation of responses and other textual data, I employed both (text/data) producer-oriented and discourse-oriented strategies in the analysis, summation, and interpretation of my findings. The producer-oriented strategy entails the interpretation of the data according to what the producers meant without my prejudiced meanings; while the discourse-oriented strategy entails making meaning of the data in relation to other related texts (including quotes from other respondents) and discourses (Boréus & Bergström, 2017). The producer-oriented strategy is reflected in the way I used the direct quotations of my respondents to thematically present my findings in the empirical chapters. The discourse-oriented strategy is used when I compare narratives of my respondents on an issue, and in the discussion and conclusion sections where I need to relate my findings to other studies and wider literatures. My findings and discussions are presented in the subsequent chapters.



Chapter 4

The governance of Abuja's informal settlements: a historical overview and analyses of the critical policies and programs since 1976



Chapter 4

The governance of Abuja's informal settlements: a historical overview and analyses of the critical policies and programs since 1976

4.1. Introduction

History matters when seeking to understand the dynamics around informal settlements. Contentions over land rights, tenure security and infrastructural development in informal settlements are often embedded in past antecedents that are created through government policies and programmes. In this first empirical chapter, I therefore chart a historical overview of key significant moments, policies, and programmes that over the years have shaped the evolution of the present dynamics around informal settlements in Abuja. Inspired by Sorensen's plea to take history and path dependence serious in planning research (see Sorensen, 2014; Sorensen, 2020), I adapt the analytical framework of historical institutionalism (HI) to explain the key historical moments in the governance of Abuja's informal settlements. Drawing ideas from HI's interrelated analytical concepts of critical junctures and path-dependency, the next section of this chapter outlines the critical historical moments in the governance of Abuja's informal settlements before explaining their path-dependencies in subsequent sections.

4.2. The critical historical moments in the governance of informal settlements in Abuja

The reoccurring historical issues in the discourses of Abuja's informal settlements indicate that there were significant governance moments that created the paths that defined the current dynamics around the settlements. In the exploration of my study areas, most of the stakeholders indicate that the present dynamics around the settlements have deep roots in past antecedents such as the creation of Abuja with the FCT Act in 1976, the 1978 Land Use Act, Abuja's master plan of 1979, resettlement programmes, customary and statutory land rights, past land allocations, and demolitions of illegal structures. To fully understand why and how these historical issues are significant, the analytical concepts of critical junctures and path-dependency provide a flexible framework to extensively explain them. Critical Junctures refer to those major governance decisions or policies (often as a product of the interplay of different governance actors or as a solution to resolve existing conflicts) that are capable of setting path-dependent processes that are contingent or influential on future outcomes.

Decisions made at these critical junctures foreclose other alternative choices to produce a long-term path-dependent processes that shape outcomes of interest

(Capoccia, 2015; Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007; see Mahoney, 2001; Thelen, 1999). Peters (2019) explained path dependency in governance to mean that when a government programme or organization embarks upon a particular policy or a style of action, there is a tendency for those initial choices to persist with a determinate influence far into the future. But the paths created can be altered by political pressure, conflicts, and actions of different actors to produce an institutional change. Major institutional changes, key governance decisions or critical historical moments with determinate significant influence on future outcomes of object of interests have been described as critical junctures (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007; Mahoney, 2001; Sorensen, 2018; Sorensen & Hess, 2015; Thelen, 1999). The *determinate significant influence on future outcomes* refers to the path dependency of a critical juncture.

Defining which historical moment counts as critical junctures is subjective and context specific. There are no standard criteria to determine what is critical or not. However, the general consensus is that during institutional crises or conflicts, critical junctures represent the momentary choice or decision made from a range of feasible alternatives by powerful socio-political actors which triggers a longer path-dependent processes that influence or constraint actors and future choices (Capoccia, 2015; Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007; Choi et al., 2019; Mahoney, 2001; Peters, 2019; Sorensen, 2017b, 2018). Mahoney (2001, p. 113) emphasized that only those choice points that close off important future outcomes should be treated as critical junctures. In a similar vein, Capoccia and Kelemen (2007) and Capoccia (2015) suggested that since there are several interconnected socio-political events and processes that can influence outcomes of interest, critical junctures should be the ones with substantially heightened probability to significantly impact or have direct causal effects on outcomes and actors of interests.

Another important aspect of understanding critical junctures are antecedent conditions. Mahoney (2001) explained antecedent conditions as the historical factors that define the available options for institutional actors thereby shaping the activities of actors and the processes that trigger critical junctures. Similarly, Capoccia (2015) described antecedent conditions as moments in which institutional status quo was challenged and demands for radical institutional change emerged. He described antecedent conditions as candidate critical junctures because they comprise of interconnected socio-political processes or decisions that have lesser or indirect causal relationships with object of interest.

In summary, critical junctures have three defining features. First, there are contingent antecedent conditions out of which critical junctures emerge and become defined. Secondly, during the antecedent conditions, there are feasible alternative options for governance actors to choose from. And lastly, the chosen option that becomes the critical juncture has path-dependent tendencies capable of shaping future outcomes. I use these defining features of critical junctures to examine the key historical moments that became critical junctures in the governance of Abuja's informal settlements. Prior to a detailed explanation of these process, table 4.1 offers an overview.

Table 4.1: An overview of the critical junctures in the governance of Abuja's informal settlements

Contingent antecedents	Available options/ forgone alternatives	The chosen option (critical juncture)	When and why it became path-dependent
The need for a new and centralized FCT to foster national unity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Redesigning and expansion of the previous capital (Lagos) towards its neighbouring states with more land mass -Using uninhabited locations -Choosing Abuja as the suitable site for the FCT 	The creation of Abuja as the new FCT with the FCT Act	Gazetted in 1976 empowering the president/FCT minister to determine the development of Abuja and how the lands are used/managed. Abolition of primordial land rights claims to Abuja lands
The need to harmonize/regularize various land tenure practices across the country in order to effectively manage reoccurring land conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Enhancement or empowerment of traditional institutions in land governance -A bottom-up land use policy involving a hybrid of customary and statutory tenure practices - A top-down land use policy excluding customary tenure practices 	A top-down Land Use Act	Enacted in 1978 empowering the state as the sole authority in land administration. Top-down land administration that also abolishes customary land right claims to Abuja lands. It empowers the state to confiscate lands, resettle and compensate informal settlements' dwellers (ISD), and demolish illegal structures.
The need to allocate lands to individuals and developers to develop Abuja lands according to the master plan; and the housing needs of the uncontrolled migrants into Abuja	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The state working with the traditional rulers to allocate lands -The state taking care of the housing needs of both the invited and uninvited migrants into Abuja -Complete resettlement of the informal settlements before the statutory allocation of their lands 	Conflicting land allocations (through both tenure practices)	Production of multiple land right claims and building of houses on contested lands

	-Allowing traditional rulers to continue allocating land based customary tenure practices		
The need to develop Abuja as a modern city with international standards through a master plan; and the need to resettle the pre-existing indigenous communities to give way for modernizing Abuja	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Designing the master plan to accommodate all the existing indigenous communities or their integration into the development plans of Abuja -Prompt resettlement of some of indigenous communities and in-situ development of others -Developing a feasible master plan based on local realities 	Abuja's master plan and resettlement of indigenous communities	Institutionalized in 1979 for development control exercises (resettlements, demolitions, and displacements) by the state planning agencies. Necessitated the resettlement or forced evictions of the ISD
The need to curb the growth and expansion of informal settlements that are disfiguring the modernity image of Abuja; Unresolved land ownership contentions and the need to confiscate lands for the statutory allottees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -State recognition of customary land rights -Proper resettlements -Systematic gentrification or slum upgrading -Provision of alternative locations (eg the uncompleted resettlement sites) to statutory land allottees -Demolition and forced evictions 	Demolition of illegal structures	Demolition is usually the peak of the contentions over land ownership. Planning and executing demolitions make them path-dependent because of the resulting resistance, reactions or counterreactions

4.3. The critical junctures and their path-dependencies

4.3.1. The creation of Abuja with the FCT Act in 1976

Abuja as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) was created on the 4th of February 1976 through a promulgated decree (decree no. 6, FCT Act 1976), by the then head of state Gen. Murtala Muhammed, when Lagos was considered no longer suitable to serve as a federal capital. The main reasons for the unsuitability of Lagos were its peripheral location, dual and conflicting role as both federal and state capital, acute shortage of land space for expansion, and infrastructural development due to being a coastal region. The FCT Act made explicit clarifications on the governance of Abuja and land ownership within Abuja. While it was carved out from the current states of Kogi, Niger, Kaduna and Nassarawa states, the coming of the FCT Act, meant that Abuja ceased to be a part of any of its parent state and instead...

“Shall henceforth be governed and administered by or under the control of the Government of the Federation to the exclusion of any other person or authority whatsoever and the ownership of the lands comprised in the Federal Capital Territory shall likewise vest absolutely in the Government of the Federation” (FCT Act 1976, p. 2).

Another important point to note from the FCT Act is the creation of the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) with statutory mandate to coordinate the development of Abuja. Other developmental planning agencies like the Development Control Department, Lands, and Abuja Geographic Information System (AGIS) subsequently all emerged as independent offshoots of the FCDA. The FCDA is the state's topmost planning agency responsible for overall spatial planning in Abuja. Consequently, the designation of indigenous communities as informal settlements, the allocation of their lands, their displacement and resettlements process, and the contentions in these issues emanate from the policies and programmes of the FCDA.

4.3.1.1. Main Effects of the FCT Acts on the dynamics of Abuja's informal settlements

Almost all the issues (such as land ownership rights, displacements, and resettlements) around Abuja's informal settlements can be traced to the FCT Act. The FCT Act empowers the federal government through the president to be the sole owner and administrator of Abuja lands. The Act also empowers the President of Nigeria to delegate their administrative powers over the FCT to the FCT minister and other executives through direct appointment for the governance of Abuja. Unlike other States in Nigeria that are administered by elected governors and their cabinets, the administration of Abuja is run by an FCT minister that is appointed by and answerable to the President. The FCT Act also empowers the state planning authorities (specifically the FCDA) to coordinate planning and development activities in Abuja including

demolitions of informal settlements, compensations, and resettlements of the indigenous communities.

The most significant effect of the FCT Act on urban (in)formality is that overnight the traditional rulers and the original inhabitants of Abuja lost any right over their ancestral lands. Their customary land rights and systems of land administration are not recognized by the state, and they are only entitled to their present settlements (amid threats of displacements) pending when the contentious issues (e.g., adequate compensations, preferred housing types, etc.) over their resettlement are resolved. Thus, the fundamental challenge for the informal settlements' dwellers (ISD), especially the original inhabitants, is that their primordial right to their lands and settlements has been usurped by the state for the overriding national interest of making Abuja a modern capital city of Nigeria. According to a deputy director at FCDA, it is only the federal government of Nigeria that can decide the fate of the indigenous (now informal) settlements. He said:

'...when Abuja was declared a federal capital in 1976, all primordial rights seized to exist...the entire 8,000 sq. km. (the land mass of Abuja) belongs to the government, so those rights are not feasible in Abuja. More so, there are no rights because the creation of Abuja was already in the constitution and the government can only decide to accommodate any informal settlement within the region...' (FGD #6).

The structural effects of the FCT Act also include the FCT minister's sole power and discretion in the developmental planning of Abuja and the administration of Abuja lands. The validity of any land allocation in Abuja is dependent upon the certification by the FCT minister. According to a director in the AGIS/Lands department, *'all the plots of land that's in Abuja is for the federal government and it [is] only the minister that has the power to give it out...'* (Interview #45). The developmental planning and land administration of Abuja is dictated by who is in power and who is the FCT minister (Interview #35). This discretionary powers of the FCT minister have also been considered a major challenge for the state planning institutions that have to rely on the whims of the minister in their developmental planning activities. A former executive director of Development Control department remarked that:

'...the main challenge that is slowing down the development of Abuja is that every new minister will come and concentrate a new layout, forgetting the old and existing layouts that needs continued development, just because they can't get lands for their cronies in those old layouts, so they create new layouts where they can share the lands for themselves and their political associates...they will then start providing infrastructures in these new areas at the expense of the old ones...' (Interview #34).

Based on the powers of the FCT Act, the FCT minister can arbitrarily initiate any developmental project in Abuja without recourse to the master plan or the advice of

state planners. However, the arbitrary discretion of the FCT minister in allocating lands and determining the choices/locations of spatial developments in Abuja cannot subsist without the direct or indirect approval of the President. This is because the FCT minister is only coordinating the FCT ministerial office on behalf of the President. Generally, the FCT Act 1976 can be seen as the first critical juncture which has initiated some path-dependent processes that are still manifesting in the current dynamics of Abuja's informal settlements. The Act initiated the informalization process of the original indigenous Abuja settlements by abolishing all their primordial customary land rights and institutionalizing a top-down land administration excluding traditional institutions and customary tenure practices. The Act also empowers the President through the FCT minister to determine what settlement can exist or not within the city and hence what is considered formal or informal in the development of Abuja. The effects of the FCT Act transcend into other critical issues that are discussed in subsequent subsections.

4.3.2. The Land Use Act of 1978

In 1976, the FCT Act was used by the government to abolish all primordial claims and customary rights to Abuja lands. This was followed by the 1978 Land Use Act with a national coverage that further reaffirmed the nonrecognition of customary land rights and tenure practices in all areas across the country designated as 'urban' by the state. This was especially applicable to the state capitals and the Federal Capital City (FCC). In other words, the state can use the constitutional powers of the FCT Act and Land Use Act to dispossess anyone of their lands or displace communities and structures that the state deems as obstacle in the development plans of Abuja. The 1978 Land Use Act was aimed at unifying various land tenure systems across Nigeria. Prior to the act, there were different tenure practices across Nigeria before, during and after the colonial era (Atilola, 2010; Otubu, 2018). According to Atilola (2010), traditional leaders and warlords oversaw land administration for communal living, farming and grazing purposes before the colonial era. Individual rights to lands were determined by their community, village, or family affiliation. The practice of freehold or absolute land ownership were initiated by the colonial masters especially in the southern parts of Nigeria. To harmonize the various tenure systems and to address the several conflicts of ownership, the federal government of Nigeria promulgated the 1978 Land Use Act (Otubu, 2018).

The Land Use Act officially governs the use and administration of lands in every part of the country. The Act, without any consideration for customary tenure practices of which traditional leaders (kings and royal chiefs) were the major land administrators, vested the proprietary land rights solely in the government - as the owner and sole administrator of lands, holding the lands in trust for the public. The government administrators include the President (for FCT lands), state governors (for any state land they designate as urban) and local government chairmen (for other non-urban lands within a state). According to the Land Use Act, the government's sole proprietary and administrative right over all the lands is to ensure equal access to land by both the

poor and the rich, and to regulate market forces that might deprive the poor access to land (especially urban lands). But all these government land management roles and other planning efforts have not been effective to curb exorbitant land prices in Abuja, high cost of housing, numerous land conflicts and court cases, and the rampant dispossession of lands within the space of the poor urbanites (see Mohammed, 2017; Zakaree, 2012).

Several land conflicts, lack of tenure security for the poor, and complex land governance mechanism have warranted many agitations and recommendations to review the 1978 Land Use Act to accommodate current housing and development challenges (see Atilola, 2010; Ojigi, 2012; Otubu, 2018), but the institutional rigidity of the Act's constitutional power and a lack of political will to enforce a constitutional amendment have made initiating the review process impossible. Also, interventions such as the 2003 establishment of Abuja Geographical Information System (AGIS) for digital land management, the 2009 presidential land reform committee, the establishment of the Land Use and Allocation Committees in Abuja in 2015, and the 2014 national reform confab (without constitutional backing) have not significantly addressed the contentions on land ownership and governance in Nigeria/Abuja. The 1978 Land Use Act remain the legal reference point in land administration issues in Nigeria. However, the level of adherence or its rigidity varies across the different states in Nigeria.

4.3.2.1. Effects of the Land Use Act in the dynamics of Abuja's informal settlements

The FCT and Land Use Acts that give the federal government the power to control and allocate the FCT lands are the established laws for land administration in Abuja. But in practice, the sales and allocation of lands in Abuja in the early years of its creation were totally a free market affair between the indigenous community leaders and new migrants into the new city. The federal government made limited attempts to provide lands and housing facilities for the federal civil servants that had to migrate to the new capital from Lagos. Moreover, the private sector workers, construction workers, and the population that continuously trooped into Abuja in search of employment opportunities were not catered for (see COHRE & SERAC, 2008; Jibril, 2006, 2009). These set of non-governmental workers coupled with some governmental workers that could not get accommodation in the government housing schemes had to find alternative housing in the indigenous communities with affordable rents or even lands to buy. This initial process account for the now heterogenous population and the difficulties in identifying indigenous from non-indigenous settlers in most of the settlements that are currently considered informal (Interview #36).

The Land Use Act reinforced the FCT Act to reemphasize the nonrecognition of customary tenure practices in Abuja and the rest of Nigeria at large. Together, they provide the legal basis for the top-down land administration in Abuja. The statutory allocations of the ISD's lands to other persons by the FCT minister are based on the constitutional powers of the Acts. Moreover, the farmlands of the ISD are no longer in their control. Thus, apart from the threats of demolishing their buildings, the farmlands

of the ISD have also been allocated statutorily to other Nigerians through the FCT minister (FGD #3; FGD #9). This has been a major contentious issue around the informal settlements in terms of differing land right claims.

The contention over different land right claims emerges mainly from land allocations through two different institutions: the traditional customary institutions and the state statutory planning institutions. The ISD have over the years used their primordial (customary) rights to sell lands (mostly parts of their extensive surrounding farmlands) to migrants into Abuja with or without the approval of the state. Some long-time residents of the informal settlements claim that some of the lands have been allocated freely without financial exchange (not sold) to migrants to enhance the socio-economic growth of their communities (FGD #9). However, the state laws and Acts that created Abuja do not recognize these customary rights or the power of the traditional rulers to allocate any Abuja land after its creation in 1976. The effect of this is that lands that were being appropriated customarily by traditional rulers have also been allocated statutorily by the state to other people (see also Yahaya, 2019).

4.3.3. Conflicting past land allocations

Upon the creation of Abuja and the investiture of all lands into the executive power of the federal Presidents, the state began to allocate lands in accordance with its development plan. The lands that were allocated by the state also included those being occupied by the original inhabitants under the assumption that they would be resettled sooner or later. However, most of these indigenous communities have not been resettled since the creation of Abuja. In the meantime, those individuals that have been allocated such lands are still waiting for a resettlement that is not forthcoming in order to claim their statutory lands. Those that cannot wait for their resettlement are either reselling their statutory allocation to others or putting pressure on the state planning authorities to evict the current occupants for them (FGD #3; Interviews #31 and #35). Consequently, most of the land contentions around the informal settlements are between the original inhabitants and those that acquired lands customarily from traditional rulers and those that have statutory allocations from the state on the same piece of land. The double allocations based on different tenure practices remains the fundamental root of the contentions over land ownership rights in the informal settlements.

The creation of Abuja in 1976 with the constitutional powers of the FCT ACT and the 1978 Land Use Act has usurped the customary land rights of Abuja's original inhabitants and the rights of the migrants that bought lands from the original inhabitants. This made both the original inhabitants and the migrants *illegal* dwellers that have to struggle to belong to the city by any means they can. The different land allocations made by the state and traditional rulers/original inhabitants of Abuja produced the persisting different land ownership claims in the informal settlements of Abuja. This makes the different land allocation practices another critical historical moment in the governance of Abuja's informal settlements. The federal government's

refusal to acknowledge the rights of individuals that have been previously allocated lands based on customary tenure practices is another basis for delineating some areas as informal by the state planning authorities.

It is worth mentioning that the official nonrecognition of the customary land allocations by traditional rulers is peculiar to Abuja. Based on the principles of the Land Use Act, there is no official role for traditional rulers in Abuja land governance and allocations. But in practice, the traditional/community leaders in other states of Nigeria still allocate free lands within their domains to individuals/developers before such individuals/developers present their allocation papers to the government for statutory validation. This is however not the case in Abuja where the federal government has emphatically denounced the customary land rights and allocation power of the traditional/community leaders (Interview #9). But despite the nonrecognition of their customary tenure practices, many traditional rulers/ISD are still not backing out of Abuja land business. They still sell lands to people based on their ancestral claims to the lands. On this, a director at Land's Department (AGIS) remarked that:

'...no more customary land rights for the royal chiefs, the government has warned them to stop selling lands, the former (FCT) Minister, Bala, even published the order in many national dailies...the government owns all the lands in Abuja, buying lands from the traditional chiefs is at your own risk...' (Interview #9).

People that bought lands based on customary arrangements are always subjected to displacement threats from the state planning agencies. Many of the land transactions between the new migrants and indigenous communities (under the supervision of community leaders) were acknowledged by the state (especially at the municipal level) with official land certification or building approvals. But they were all considered illegal when the government started its demolition exercises in the name of controlling slum and haphazard developments (COHRE, 2004; COHRE & SERAC, 2008; FGD #3). The current contention is that most of the statutory allottees have the backing of the federal government but have no access to the land because the lands are already occupied by the original inhabitants and customary allottees. The customary allottees claim to have their land allocation papers from community leaders and officially approved at municipal council levels. But unlike the municipal local governments in other states that can approve customary allocations, the municipal councils in Abuja do not have the authority to approve customary allocations based on the FCT and Land Use Acts. So, the approval or allocation papers from the municipal councils are not valid before the federal land and planning agencies. Those with official land allocation papers from AGIS/Land department are the statutory/legal landowners.

As the national capital, there are non-urban lands in Abuja for the municipal councils to allocate according to the Land Use Act. The involvement of the Abuja municipal councils in land allocation is illegal based on the Land Use Act. Despite the resistance from the federal level, there are still lands' departments in the municipal area councils

still trying to be part of Abuja land administration. Like the traditional/community leaders, many stakeholders at the municipal government level do not want to be excluded from the lucrative Abuja land business. The lack of synergy between the municipal councils and federal government agencies in land administration or allocation is discussed in chapter 6. However, based on the provisions of the FCT and Land Use Acts, the state does not recognize Abuja customary land right claimers, and do not see the need to officially recognize their rights because the lands they are occupying are meant to be developed according to an outdated Abuja's master plan. Hence, the ISD have no official tenure security over the lands they are presently occupying. But for the fact that the ISD have not been resettled or displaced, the land ownership contention still rages on.

4.3.3.1. *Manifestations of the conflicting land allocations*

As mentioned earlier, the production of different land claimers from the statutory and customary allocations is one of the fundamental problems around Abuja's informal settlements. The statutory land allottees are constantly confronting the customary land claimers who are currently occupying the lands to access their statutorily allocated lands. Narratives from some of the ISD show that the land ownership contentions are still common in the informal settlements. The statutory land claimers usually end up aggravating the threats around the ISD by putting pressure on the state to displace the ISD for them to access their statutory lands. A community leader in Mabushi explained their situation as follow:

'...some of them (statutory land claimers) are coming here, when they come and see that the lands are not vacant, whenever they come and see that there are houses on the land the government gave them, they go back to FCDA to complain or ask them to come and chase us out... how is that possible? this is our lands, the land of our forefathers, you can't chase us out without alternatives... they use to take us to court, but they are now tired, because we use to tell the Judge that we are ready to leave the lands for them if they can provide us with another alternative including building a new house for us...' (Interview #31).

In many cases, the statutory land claimers can have the options of waiting for the government to resettle the ISD, or even in some case through eviction before they can claim their lands. Negotiating with the ISD to pay for their landed assets to leave the lands is another option. Those that cannot do either sometimes sell their statutory land papers to other persons that are willing to take up the challenge and then the cycle of contention and pressure continues with the new buyers (Interview #31). Another major effect of the statutory allocations is that the ISD are losing their main socio-economic activity (farming) for survival through the dispossession of their farmlands. According to some Mubushi elders (FGD #3), statutory allottees are still disturbing them (ISD) over their farmlands including the ones outside the city (FGD #9). This is a threat to the major livelihood (farming) of the ISD. Unlike their houses that cannot be easily

appropriated or demolished without resistance, the farmlands of the ISD can easily be taken over and developed by rich statutory allottees with state backings. The traditional ruler of Mabushi explained that despite the loss of their farmlands, they are still being threatened to be evicted from their houses without suitable alternatives, hence the need for them to fight back. According to him:

'...our farm lands have been forcefully taken away; even our houses, we are being threatened that we are occupying peoples' plots; but that is the last thing we are saying now, that you can't take away our farm lands and take away our homes again without any alternative...and that's why up till today we are still where we are...we have been pushed to the walls and we are pushing back now, the farm lands have already been taken away and we don't have anything to do about that now; it is only our homes that serves as evidence that we are the bona fide and rightful owners of this place, our houses are the only things we are holding claim to...' (FGD #3).

Realizing that it is becoming too difficult to displace the ISD without better alternatives, some state officials explained that they usually advise statutory allottees to negotiate with the customary landowners to pay them off. This then becomes a sort of private or individual resettlement package which should have been done by the state. A planner in the development control department explained this informal arrangement as follow:

'...what we usually ask the developers to do is, if they can on their own negotiate (with the ISD) pay them off, then they go, otherwise we ask them to wait until the government resettles them, and many of them because they are capable (rich), they enter into negotiation, they pay for whatever economic development they have on that land...the Gbagi people are friendly people most instances they leave and then developers take over and develop their plots...' (Interview #35).

A developer confirmed the informal arrangement but that the customary landowners must be willing to leave the land, if not, the developers must wait for the government to displace them (Interview #30). This arrangement of negotiating with the ISD to pay them off shows that with or without the state's resettlements or displacement programmes, the rich and powerful can still displace willing ISD with their affluence. The powerful statutory land claimers also include some military personnel, especially those that were allocated the lands in the past during the military regimes in 1980s and 1990s using military powers/decrees (see Elleh, 2016). Most of such lands that were not developed by the statutory allottees are also being contested since they were originally the farmlands of the original inhabitants. The military powers are still claiming such lands and sometimes using force to collect the lands or displace those considered as *trespassers* (based on stories from FGD#3 and #9). There are many open lands (being farmed by the ISD) around Abuja with signposts erected by the military with warnings to trespassers to keep off (see figures 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 below).



Figure 4.1: Nigerian navy signpost warning trespassers to keep off Source: Author, 2021



Figure 4.2: Nigerian army signpost warning trespassers to keep off Source: Author, 2021



Figure 4.3: Nigerian army signpost on a controversial farmland with cashew tress in Galuwyi, Mpape, Abuja

Source: Author, 2021

The contentions between the different land claimers have been aggravated by the failure of the state to effectively resettle the ISD as recommended by the FCT Act, the Land Use Act, and the Abuja's master plan. Considering the repercussions of the unsuccessful resettlements in the current land disputes, allocating the lands of the ISD when they have not been resettled is really a critical moment in the governance of the informal settlements. The controversies and contentions between statutory and customary landowners will continue as long as the government remains determined to resettle the ISD but yet to do so. A town planner at the resettlement department explained that the rationale of the government to allocate their lands when they have not been resettled was because the communities were already considered not part of the Abuja's master plan, hence the reason for allocating their lands to those that can build or develop it according to the master plan (Interview #39). He added that the communities where the land ownership rights are seriously being contested are those that have been compensated or offered compensation but refused to vacate the lands. This is why the execution of the resettlement programme as recommended by Abuja's master plan is considered another critical juncture in this study.

4.3.4. Abuja's Master plan and resettlements

The FCT Act empowers FCDA to produce a master plan to guide the planning and development of Abuja. The city planning and development control agencies responsible for the developmental planning of Abuja city are the FCDA and Development Control Department (DCD) respectively. The agencies rely on the master plan of Abuja and other auxiliary development plans (e.g., the 2007 Abuja development Control Manual by DCD for standardizing developments in Abuja) to plan, execute, and coordinate developments and developmental projects including resettlement projects in Abuja. The Abuja's master plan was developed in 1979 with a lifespan of 20 years by an international firm - International Planning Associates (IPA, 1979). Despite its expiration in 1999, it is still a reference point by the state planners in Abuja's development discourses, managing informal settlements and development control activities such as resettlements, demolitions, forced evictions and persecutions. Based on the master plan, most of the ISD are meant to be displaced for the development of Abuja. But they are also entitled to proper resettlement according to extant laws (FCT Act, land Use Act, and the Nigeria's constitution) and international conventions.

The failure or incapability of the state to resettle the indigenous settlements before the spatial development of Abuja is the main reason why most of the settlements are still existing within the city. Abuja wasn't created on virgin land devoid of human settlements. There were about 500 to 600 pre-existing indigenous settlements with a total population of 300,000 when Abuja was created as the federal capital of Nigeria in 1976 (IPA, 1979). The master plan proposed the accommodation, merging, integration and upgrading of about 300 of the indigenous settlements into districts and local government areas. Such settlements had a strong sense of local residential community in terms of kinship ties, locational identity, administrative organization, and social network. They were to be consolidated and upgraded through the provision of health, security, welfare, education, and social infrastructures (IPA, 1979). The other settlements that didn't meet the criteria for upgrading and integration were to be relocated or resettled were about 264 settlements. These included about 125 settlements within 5 km radius of the inner city to protect the city periphery from development encroachment and unplanned expansion; about 40 settlements along the major roads to avoid unplanned and spontaneous development and about 80 settlements in the proposed corridors of major development such dam, game reserve, airport and major access routes (IPA, 1979).

The resettlement of most indigenous communities to make way for the modernization of Abuja as recommended by the master plan was never done successfully considering the present realities whereby most of the settlements have grown or expanded into slums. According to Jibril (2006), the inconsistent changes in resettlement policies since 1979 and uncompleted resettlement projects are the root cause of the squatters and informal settlement problems. The four resettlement sites meant for the relocation of Abuja's original inhabitants are Apo (460 hectares in Abuja Municipal Area Council); Galuwyi/Shere (900 hectares in Bwari Area Council); Wasa (700 hectares in Abuja

Municipal Area Council) and Anagada (2,519 hectares in Gwagwalada Area Council). But more than forty (40) years after the creation of Abuja and several infrastructural/physical developments across the city, the resettlement projects are far from being completed. A senior town planner in the resettlement department summarized and outlined the challenges around the resettlement projects to include:

'...inconsistent resettlement policies of 1976 (complete resettlement), 1978 (partial or selective resettlement), 1992 (complete resettlement), 2005 (integration instead of resettlement) and now the policy of the present administration to resettle all the ISD (both the original inhabitants and migrants); paucity of fund and lack of political will; upsurge of squatter settlements due to late implementation of resettlement programmes; agitations for integration by original inhabitants; encroachments on resettlement sites by land grabbers; lack of synergy among stakeholder departments; complaints and delays in compensation payment; speculative economic tree planting by the original inhabitants; multiple litigations from the original inhabitants; delay in the regularization of resettlement and land allocation documents; inadequate budgetary provision and delay in release of fund meant for the execution of resettlement project; mismanagement of resettlement funds; outright rejection of compensation payments/claims by original inhabitants – they dictate/fix values acceptable to them...' (Interview #39).

Similarly, another senior town planner (Interview #26) accused the government of insincerity, corruption, and lack of political will to resettle the ISD. While there are several issues around the resettlements of Abuja's informal settlements such as the never-ending and changing resettlement plans, unclarity about when and whom to resettle, the compensation packages and the unwillingness of ISD to resettle, the main issue is that the resettlement programmes have not addressed the controversies and challenges of the informal settlements. Resettlement being the only planning programme for managing Abuja's informal settlements is central and fundamental to the contentions around the settlements. The detailed evaluation of Abuja resettlement programmes is discussed in subsequent chapters. Nonetheless, the point to be made here is that the insistence of the state on resettling the informal settlements despite several challenges makes the programme another critical juncture in the governance of Abuja's informal settlements. The ineffectiveness of the resettlement programmes is a major catalyst in the dynamic challenges around Abuja's informal settlements. This is because the master plan of Abuja made adequate provisions and proposals that could have enhanced the making of Abuja into an enviable sustainable smart city but its improper implementation and lack of timely reviews to accommodate the current socio-economic processes and events has aggravated the numerous planning and development challenges being faced in Abuja today.

4.3.4.1. Effects of the unsuccessful resettlement programmes

As explained earlier, the resettlement programmes for the ISD dwellers have achieved little to no success in addressing the challenges of Abuja's informal settlements for over 40 years since the creation of Abuja. Apart from the inefficiencies of the government in executing the programmes, the ISD are not willing to relocate from their ancestral homes. However, the insistence of the government on resettlement as the only means to address the challenges of the informal settlements have several implications on the contentions around the informal settlements. Based on the current circumstances around the resettlements, there is no certainty of when or if the ISD will be resettled. Several narratives from the ISD indicate that they will do everything within their power to prevent their resettlement. According to Mabushi ISD, all they want from the government is the integration of their community into the development plans of Abuja and the upgrading of their slummy community (FGD #3).

The ISD want to be integrated into the developmental plans of Abuja, but the government is not considering such option. One implication of this is that the underdevelopments in the informal settlements will remain as the impasse over the resettlement programmes lingers. Government infrastructural development projects are not being extended to the informal settlements because of the proposed yet not forthcoming resettlements. The ISD cannot also initiate developments because of threats of possible displacement or demolitions. For instance, the ISD of Kpadna community attributed their slummy houses to the uncertain resettlements because they have the resources to modernize their houses, but they cannot because of the potential resettlement (FGD #9). Relatedly, a tribal leader in Mpape said:

'...we cannot even repair or upgrade our houses because we are afraid, imagine using big money to renovate your house, and the next day the government brings a tractor to pull it down...' (Interview #21).

Failing to have resettled the indigenous communities has resulted in the emergence of squatters and illegal structures around the indigenous communities. The illegal or unapproved structures in and around the communities are the major problem for the state planning authorities as they are not part of the original resettlement plans. Resettling them is another big challenge because of limited resources and resistance from the ISD, hence their constant subjection to forced eviction and displacement for (powerful) statutory landowners. Both the state officials (Interviews #26; #36; #39) and many ISD see the expansion of the informal settlements as a threat. According to a planner in AMAC planning office, the '*upsurge of squatter settlements due to late implementation of resettlement programmes*' (Interview #36) has made the work of the planners difficult. According to her, it is now difficult to differentiate illegal structures from those of the indigenous settlers.

According to another senior planner (Interview #26), the difficulty in differentiating the original inhabitants from the migrants is aggravated by migrants from other states belonging to the same ethnic groups (especially Gbagis) of Abuja's original inhabitants.

According to him, this group of migrants are now claiming to be among the original inhabitants that should be resettled and not evicted. The community leaders of Mpape explained that the increasing population in Mpape is alarming because of the affordable rents (FGD #8). But they are also worried because the government can use the excuse of the increasing population and underdevelopments of the community to forcefully displace them. A tribal head remarked that:

'...increasing population into Mpape is not helping matters, and that's why we are afraid, because we are becoming too big, and no development, things (amenities) are getting worse, the government can because of this (slummy conditions), demolish the whole community...' (Interview #21).

The increasing costs of resettling the ISD is not only compounded by just the addition of migrants but also the natural population increase of the original inhabitants over the years. The delay in resettling the original inhabitants now implies that a new enumeration is needed to capture the grown-up children that deserve to be compensated if the resettlement will continue (Interview #27). This has made the resettlement of the ISD more difficult according to the state official in the resettlement department.

Another significant effect of the unsuccessful resettlement programmes is the increasing resistance of the ISD to displacement and constant rejection of resettlement packages from the government. The ISD feel the conditions of those that were resettled are not better-off especially for the fact that many of them are now regretting and returning to the city. The traditional ruler of Mabushi explained that:

'...those that agreed to be resettled are regretting it now, many of them are coming back to the town...there is no water, no light, no school for our children, how do you expect us to survive there without water and schools for their children? Apart from that, people are still disturbing them, claiming the lands they are farming on is theirs...' (FGD #3).

In addition to the lack of amenities in the resettlement sites, a district head working with AMAC explained that the resettlement houses are substandard and dilapidating with no farmlands to sustain their socio-economic activity (Interview #41). Thus, ironically, the ISD once resettled elsewhere are also being deprived of access to basic amenities and their farmlands which are within the city. However, they could in relative terms enjoy some of the amenities of the formal and developed neighbourhoods around them compared to being at the outskirts. However, despite all the challenges that are constraining the feasibility of the resettlement programmes, the government is not backing down or thinking of other alternatives to address the challenges around the informal settlements. As discussed previously, one of the main reasons the government is adamant on the resettlement programmes is because the lands of the ISD have been allocated to other Nigerians, hence they original inhabitants *must* be resettled for the statutory landowners to develop Abuja according to the master plan. Additionally, reflecting on the government's refusal to consider other alternatives, a director at the resettlement department remarked that:

'...we can't waste all the resettlement sites and the money that have gone into them...look at Apo, Shere, Wassa, Apajanya...they will be completed, and they (ISD) will move, it is the government that is delaying the programme...no fund to complete them, whenever they are completed, they will move... (Interview #32).

From all indications, there are significant effects of the unsuccessful resettlement programmes of the government which for instance has prevented personal and community development efforts within the informal settlements due to fears of the unknown (the insistence of the government on a not forthcoming resettlement plan). On a positive side, the failure of the programme has also provided enough time for the ISD to enhance their resistance practices over the years. In addition, they now agitate for the development of their communities and integration into the developmental plans of Abuja. The increasing population (from natural births and migrants) of the ISD is also increasing the costs of resettling them and making the governance of the settlements very difficult for the state's development and planning agencies.

These effects have made the resettlement programme a major critical juncture in the governance of the informal settlements. The failure of the state to have resettled the original inhabitants of Abuja as at when due or upgrading some of them according to the master plan of Abuja have greatly contributed to their expansion into slums. The emergence of slums (considered as a blight in the modernization visions for Abuja by the state planning agencies) from the indigenous communities fuels the displacement pressures from the state planning agencies amid contentions over land ownership rights. Thus, despite their failures in addressing the contentions around the informal settlements, the government is still adamant in pursuing the resettlements amid the increasing resistances of the ISD. Some officials attributed the insistence of the federal government to the need to collect the ISD's lands for statutory allottees to develop the lands according to the master plan of Abuja. The unresolved contentions between those that were allocated lands by the state's land department (statutory land rights) and those that bought the lands from the traditional rulers with or without their knowledge of the validity of such transaction by the state. These contentions which include strong resistance from the ISD are usually the basis for the demolitions of some structures or forceful eviction of ISD by the state to collect their lands for the statutory land allottees.

4.3.5. Demolitions of illegal buildings

Demolitions of informal settlements or illegal buildings is a common phenomenon in Abuja. The dynamic effects of demolitions such as loss of property and livelihoods, expansion of the suburbs, multiple contentions and litigations, on the current dynamics around Abuja's informal settlements make demolitions another significant critical juncture. However, the audacity of the FCT ministers and state planning agencies to carry out demolitions is empowered by the FCT Act, Land Use Act, and the master plan. The powers of the state to confiscate any land, displace any persons (but with adequate

compensations), or demolish 'illegal' houses are enshrined in the FCT and Land Use Acts. The master plan recommended the resettlements of ISD, and the contentions from the land allocations based on different tenure practices prompted the displacement of the 'illegal' (customary landowners) for the statutory owners.

The creation of Abuja as the new FCT is considered the largest and most prominent development project in Nigeria that requires massive population displacement (see Iorliam, 2014) based on the resettlement programmes. But most of the displacements, through demolitions, in Abuja are now based on the need to curb the growth of informal settlements or to displace illegal landowners for statutory landowners. The buildings (especially those of the migrants) that have expanded the indigenous settlements into slums are usually the targets of demolitions. Demolition exercises in Abuja started in early 2000 within the city centre in areas like Wuse, Jabi, Utako, Mabushi, Gwagwa, Idu, Karmo, Mabushi, Durumi, Kado, etc where the government used military men and sporadic shooting to chase out residents before bringing down their *illegal* structures (Interviews with FCDA officials; COHRE; 2004). Demolitions were prominent and rampant during the El-Rufai era as the FCT minister from 2003 to 2007. There were reports and victims' accounts (see COHRE, 2004; COHRE & SERAC, 2008) of the experience that the demolitions were arbitrary, inhumane, haphazard, uncoordinated, and selective especially as houses of prominent indigenes and highly connected individuals were reportedly not touched. Also, alternative housing was not provided for the displaced persons according to the national and international regulations. El-Rufai is renowned for his radical planning approach during his tenure as the FCT minister. Some FCDA planners remarked that the present challenges around the informal settlements would have been mitigated (at the expense of displacing the ISD) if he had stayed longer.

COHRE & SERAC (2008)'s report explained that El-Rufai and FCDA officials wrongly created a powerful myth about Abuja's master plan to justify the arbitrary demolitions (COHRE & SERAC, 2008, p. 9). The report also shows how authorities abused the Master Plan to achieve ends that are directly contrary to the stated aims and objectives of that plan and in the process causing great suffering and hardship to the affected individuals, communities and institutions (COHRE & SERAC, 2008). Sixty-five settlements were targeted by the El-Rufai administration, but thirty-one settlements were eventually demolished with about 800,000 persons displaced (COHRE & SERAC, 2008). The demolitions abated after El-Rufai's administration in 2007, but recent news reports (see Adenekan, 2022; ChannelsTelevision, 2020; Otaru, 2019) indicate that rampant demolitions have returned in Abuja. News reports of demolitions in Abuja usually capture the anguish, reactions, emotions, and horrific nature of the demolitions, but they lack the underlying details and contentions that led to the demolitions. While the discussions so far have provided some insights on the build-ups to the demolitions, the focus in this section is to explain the overall effects of the demolitions (past and present) on the contentions around Abuja's informal settlements.

4.3.5.1. Effects of (attempted) demolitions

Demolitions usually mark the ultimate physical confrontation between the state and ISD and always result in loss of livelihoods, properties, family, and community ties. Regarding the arbitrary and inhumane displacements during the El-Rufai era, COHRE and SERAC (2008; page 10) reported that:

“...the Minister and the FCDA have done little to address the positive recommendations of the master plan towards delivering and facilitating the development of adequate housing that is affordable for the majority of the residents of Abuja. Instead, they have destroyed existing housing and forced residents into homelessness and overcrowded living conditions. Through forced evictions, the FCT Minister and the FCDA have further obstructed residents’ existing access to water, sanitation, health care, and education facilities. Furthermore, the FCDA failed to adequately consult with residents prior to evictions, failed to provide adequate notice, and failed to obtain court orders for all evictions. The FCDA also carried out some evictions in defiance of court injunctions to stop them. FCT Chief Justice Lawal Hassan Gumi reported that as of August 2007, at least 80 percent of cases pending against the FCT Administration in the FCT courts are regarding demolitions and evictions...”

In addition, the selective and haphazard demolitions have left several resistant indigenous communities within the city centre (for example, Mabushi, Kpadna, and Jabi), who have been neglected with no development leading to their degeneration into slums. Most times, most of the displaced people find their ways into the already expanding suburbs (areas like Lugbe, Mpape, Nyanya, Dutse and Kubwa) of the city. For example, on the expansion of the informal settlements in the suburb, a tribal head in Mpape remarked that:

‘...we have up to 141,000 houses in Mpape, we are more than 800, 000 people, and the population keeps increasing since the demolition of other places in the city, (for instance) when they demolished Karimo, a lot of people came down here, so the population has increased...’ (Interview #44).

Apart from the expansion of other informal settlements, another major fallout of the several demolitions in Abuja is the numerous court cases over land ownership and compensation for arbitrary displacement. The ISD (both the displaced and the ones being threatened to be displaced) have also mastered the use of the judiciary to obtain injunctions to prevent the state planning authorities from displacing them without suitable alternatives. The ISD have been aided in this approach through the support of human right activists and organisations. Another main reason for going to court is the realization by the ISD that the lands that were been confiscated from them were not

used for the purported infrastructural development of their communities. According to the traditional head of Mpape, the people started fighting back when their lands were appropriated and re-allocated to other persons instead of the promised development of their communities (Interview #6). This shows that most of the successful demolitions were probably because the ISD were made to believe that the demolitions were for the infrastructural development of their communities.

The use of the legal court system in the fight against demolitions have proven to be most effective for the ISD. Some of the political representatives (Interviews #26; #47) of the ISD are therefore very confident that they can no longer be displaced arbitrarily. A senior town planner in FCDA also confirmed the active use of the judiciary by the ISD to their advantage, and how such litigations are making planning and development control exercises difficult for the state planners (Interview #26). The ISD have found solace in courts where they can use one organ of the state (the judiciary) against another (the state planning agencies). However, as mentioned at the beginning of this section, there are still spontaneous demolitions of illegal buildings across Abuja. But on a positive side for the ISD, the rampant demolitions, public outcry, court cases and other resistance practices of the ISD have created more awareness of their plights-attracting NGOs and human right activists who are willing to support them. Despite the several demolitions both in the past and now, informal settlements are still scattered all over Abuja. Adepoju et al. (2013) noted that there is a decline in the number of slums in Abuja especially in the city centre (phases 1 & 2) because of demolition and planned redevelopment of some settlements but it is practically impossible to eradicate most of the informal settlements as they have become integral part of the city.

4.3.5.2. Attempted demolition of Mpape and the historic court case

In this subsection, I use the case of the attempted demolition of Mpape settlement in 2012 and resulting court case to illustrate how critical moments evolve and shape the contentions around the governance of informal settlements in Abuja. Over the years, Mpape, a settlement in the peripheries of Abjua, has rapidly become a highly undeveloped/unplanned settlement and can be described as a slum in all aspects. Haphazard developments, illegal structures, unapproved land uses, and the uncontrolled expansion of the settlement necessitated the government through its planning institutions to initiate the demolitions and other drastic development control measures in Mpape in 2012 (as gathered from the interviews with many FCDA and DCD officials). This attempted demolition of Mpape was met with strong resistance of the ISD through a famous court case. This made it another turning point in the governance of Abuja's informal settlements where the interplay of different stakeholders over one critical moment can produce another critical moment.

Earlier demolitions in the city centre that displaced a lot of residents to the suburb areas like Mpape have also aggravated the challenges of the informal settlements in the peripheries. There were some demolitions attempts of illegal structures in Mpape

before the 2012 event, but from the stories gathered from the field, most of such demolitions were countered with active resistance from the residents. The residents' resistance has been enforced and consolidated from their previous displacement experiences (especially the previous demolitions in the city centre) and the massive awareness of their rights. Many NGOs and human right activists have also contributed to enlightening the ISD on their rights. These resistances to state development control exercises could have warranted the government's 2012 move to demolish the whole settlement by force with the help of the military. The decision by the federal government marked another major turning point in the socio-spatial and political dynamics of Mpape and other similar settlements because of the series of events and reactions that followed.

In July 2012 the FCDA through the DCD served Mpape residents with notices to quit and immediately mobilized demolition equipment to the area without having first conducted adequate consultation or offering any alternative options, accommodation, or compensation. Contrary to the requirements of local and international laws, this planned demolition would have displaced hundreds of thousands of Mpape residents (AmnestyInternational, 2017). Knowing that physical protests/resistance will not stop the state's renewed vigour of displacing them, most of the ISD of Mpape mobilized themselves to take the FCT minister and the state planning agencies to court in order to stop the proposed demolition. The court granted an interim injunction for the government to suspend the proposed demolition till the final judgement. The ISD won the court case on the 2nd of February, 2017 after about 5 years of legal battle and living in fear of forced eviction (AmnestyInternational, 2017; Interview with Mpape community head). The victory came at a huge financial cost to the ISD. According to a tribal head in Mpape, Mpape residents spent '*nothing less than 35 million naira (about 160,000 euros in 2015) over the four years that the case lasted*' (Interview #12). On how the community mobilized to raise the money for the court case, a youth leader explained that every house in Mpape was obligated to contribute at least 4000 naira (about 20 euros then). According to him:

'...we contributed almost 40 million naira for the case, each house (paid) 4000 naira, including shops, and some rich people contributed more...the case lasted for more than 3 years, and we have to pay Falana and his lawyers more than 1 million (about 4600 euros) at every sitting...he didn't represent us for free, he said we have to pay for the expenses of his lawyers coming to Abuja (from Lagos) ...' (Interview #20).

Mpape residents were represented in court by the chambers of Mr. Femi Falana, a prominent human right activist, and a senior advocate in Nigeria's judicial system. He is popular for representing and winning court cases for many marginalized groups in Nigeria. There were also reports of local and international supports from NGOs and human right activists. But most of the financial implications of the legal battle were borne by the ISD. Mpape residents being the plaintiffs were represented by 14 prominent residents of Mpape, comprising of tribal heads, military personnel, retired

and active state workers in different critical state institutions (Interviews #43; #44; see also Abuja High Court judgement report of the case). The defendants were the FCDA; Minister of the FCT; DCD; and the Bwari municipal area council under whose jurisdiction lies Mpape.

Based on the court case report of the judgement obtained from one of the plaintiffs (Mr. John Eneje, a tribal head in Mpape), the main reliefs sought by the plaintiffs on behalf of the whole Mpape ISD include:

- i. The declaration of the attempted demolition as null and void
- ii. An order compelling the defendants to put in place a resettlement and compensation programme before activating any demolition process
- iii. And an order of perpetual injunction restraining the defendants from demolishing any building structures and facilities attached to land in Mpape.

The main arguments of Mpape ISD are:

- i. Their customary land rights
- ii. The non-compliance of the defendants in following due processes in giving notifications and providing alternatives
- iii. The fact that they (ISD) had continuously and consistently paid tenement rates, levies and other allied bills to the relevant government agencies, and therefore were entitled to their residency in Mpape
- iv. The discriminatory demolitions of migrants' buildings as against the provisions of extant human right laws and the constitution of Nigeria; etc.

The defendants' main counter arguments were because the plaintiffs had no statutory land rights and approval from the relevant government agencies to build their structures. And that the plaintiffs' buildings were on or preventing the construction of necessary infrastructures (like sewages and roads).

After the prolonged legal tussle (laced with several intrigues that are beyond the scope of this study), the judge (Justice A.I. Kutugi) granted some of the reliefs of the plaintiffs namely: a declaration that the actions of the defendants aimed at demolishing the properties of the plaintiffs is illegal and wrongful for not following the provisions of the applicable laws and due processes especially for failing to issue statutory notices to the plaintiffs; and a declaration that the defendants cannot demolish the building structures and facilities attached to land in Mpape without strict compliance with the requirements of the applicable laws – the provision of suitable alternatives (Abuja High Court Case Report 2017 pg. 69-70). However, despite the resistance practices of the ISD, the Mpape landmark court judgement and other similar court injunctions, demolition exercises are still being carried out by the federal government in the name of development control of emerging illegal structures/houses- shanties and structures without official land documents or building approval (Interviews with Department of Development Control/FCDA officials). The fear of demolition and forced eviction still hangs around the ISD as expressed by a tribal head (Sarkin Hausawa – the tribal head of the Hausas) in Mpape:

'...the government officials are still coming to threaten us with demolitions despite winning the court case against the government. The court even refused to review the case until after 20 years...but they (government) are not happy with that, they are still finding ways to collect lands and demolish people's houses...if you look around, you will still see demolition notices placed on some of houses, but they cannot do anything because the court gave us the power...that before they demolish any house, they must compensate the owner, but it always difficult for them to do that (compensate land occupants) and they want to use force...' (Interview #15).

Another tribal head (of Nupe migrants) added that: *'...we are still leaving in fear...many of us have started buying lands in neighbouring states just in case we are finally forced out of this place...' (Interview #21).* The continued demolitions or threats of demolitions by the state planning authorities in the name of development control implies that victories at courts are not enough to guarantee a secured tenure that will permanently prevent the forced evictions of the ISD. Most of them are aware of their precarious conditions and their temporal or volatile tenure security. On the volatile tenure security of the ISD granted by the court, some state officials confirmed that sooner or later, Mpape will be demolished. One remarked that *'...they (Mpape ISD) will go (be demolished) when the government is ready...' (Interview #39).* Another planner added that *'...they are so massive to be displaced, but at the end they will still go, but it needs to be backed up with force and alternatives...' (Interview #26).* But for now, the several resistance strategies of the ISD are still helping them to consolidate their existence in the city. Although most of their victories in courts are not enough to completely stop the takeover of their lands by powerful forces, such court victories have shown the ISD of Abuja the possibility of using the state against the state through litigations to prevent arbitrary displacement. Another instance of using the state against the state is the reported case of when (based on the petition by the legal representatives of Mpape residents) the Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF)/Nigeria Minister of Justice cautioned another federal minister (of the FCT) against the demolitions in Mpape community (see appendix IV).

4.4. Conclusion and discussion: four main insights

Using ideas from path dependency and critical juncture concepts of HI, this chapter explained the historical antecedents and critical governance decisions that initiated the persistent contentions around Abuja's informal settlements. I showed how past state policies and programmes, and reactions of the different actors have defined the present dynamics around Abuja's informal settlements. They are considered critical junctures because of their dynamic effects that are still manifesting in the present. Table 4.2 below summarizes the effects of the critical junctures and the structural factors that are enhancing their persistence.

Table 4.2: Path-dependencies and effects of the critical junctures

Critical junctures	Structural paths/persistence	Impacts on land rights, tenure security, and development of the settlements
The creation of Abuja with the FCT Act in 1976	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Building a capital from the scratch with limited resources -Uncontrolled migration and urbanization of Abuja leading to housing problems -Top-down Abuja land administration -Empowers the state to confiscate lands, resettle and compensate ISD, and demolish illegal structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Expansion of the indigenous communities and suburbs of Abuja -Nonrecognition of primordial land rights - All lands belong to and are vested in the state to decide relocations or resettlements -Basis for demolitions and displacements at the discretion of the president/minister
The 1978 Land Use Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Top-down land administration -Free/unregulated land market -High cost of lands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Created the statutory and customary land rights contentions -Nonrecognition of customary land rights- most of the ISD obtained their lands through customary arrangements -Complicated land governance -Difficult for the poor to access and/or buy lands
The 1979 Master plan of Abuja and Resettlement programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Outdated masterplan still being used for development control exercises (resettlements, demolitions and displacements) -Failed, unsuccessful and pending resettlement programmes with no alternative plans -Some settlements not being considered for resettlement programmes -Insistence of the government on resettlement despite the challenges and its infeasibilities -Undeveloped informal settlements -Difficulty in managing the informal settlements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Basis for delineating the settlements as informal; and some (e.g., Mpape) marked for demolition and some (e.g., Mabushi) planned for resettlement -Expansion of the informal settlements - Emergence of squatters and illegal structures prompting forced evictions or demolitions -Increased resistance and contentious politicking for the recognition of land rights or proper resettlement. -Contentions- -Preventing individual and community development because of uncertain resettlement
Customarily vs. Statutory land allocation and tenure systems (Conflicting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The origin of customary and statutory land contentions -Necessitated the resettlement or forced evictions of the ISD to free their lands for statutory allottees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Multiple land right claimers -Unending land conflicts and court cases between statutory and customary landowners -Unofficial negotiations between statutory and customary landowners; and complex land market politics

past land allocation)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Stalling developments because of unresolved land right claims -Pressure on the state to displace the ISD
Demolitions of illegal structures and the attempted demolition of Mpape/court case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Persistent, occasional, and selective demolition of structures leading to haphazard developments within the informal settlements -Movement of displaced persons to the suburb areas like Mpape thereby increasing their population and challenges -Growing resistance to 'development-induced' resettlements and displacements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Numerous court cases against the state and its planning agencies -Increased demands for lands in the informal settlements of the suburbs -Increase in the land area and population of the suburbs -Loss of (farm)lands by the ISD -Preventing individual and community development due to fear of possible demolition leading to deteriorating living condition -Residents living in fear of displacements -Enhanced tenure insecurity; Increased contentious politicking for the recognition of land rights or proper resettlement -Temporal and volatile tenure security from the courts -Relegation of infrastructural development to the background -Never ending demolitions despite court injunctions

The four main insights

There are four main insights that can be deduced from my analysis. The first relates to the use of the critical juncture framework while the other three insights derived from my case study are: i) the origins of the informalization processes of the informal settlements, ii) the origin of the different land ownership claims; and iii) the way reactions and counterreactions of contending actors can reproduce dynamics paths that further complicate contested issues.

The first insight from my analysis has shown how a critical juncture can morph into another critical juncture or lead to its (re)production. That is, critical junctures as observed from my case are interconnected. Most of the earlier discussed historical antecedents and critical moments have interconnected influences on the present dynamics around Mpape and other informal settlements in Abuja. The creation of Abuja was constitutionalized with the FCT Act which empowers FCDA to produce the master plan. The master plan recommends the resettlements of the indigenous communities and the creation of Abuja as the new FCT resulted in the unchecked influx of migrants into Abuja. This led to the expansion of the indigenous communities into slums that have become too big and too costly to resettle. The migrants or ISD found

an easy alternative to their housing needs by accessing lands through customary tenure practices. Their customary land rights are null and void based on the Land Use Act. This brings in pressure from the statutory allottees who want to take possession of such lands. All these accumulated into the demolitions and forceful evictions that dominate the discourses of Abuja's informal settlements.

Given the above, I considered all major governance decisions and policies as critical as much as there is empirical evidence to support their significance and path-dependent trajectories. That is, I did not evaluate the criticalness of one over the other as suggested by some scholars (see Capoccia, 2015; Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007). This is because they all have a long-time structural effect or path dependent influences on the current contentions around Abuja's informal settlements. The usual references of stakeholders to the various historical antecedents and critical moments discussed in this study are good indicators of how critical they are to the present dynamics. Hence, I suggest that in using the framework of critical junctures in the study of informal settlements, all critical governance moments and decisions should be considered and analysed chronologically and relational without unnecessary assessment of their individual level of criticalness. The caveat here is that the analysed critical governance moments should have significant effects on issues of interest, especially if they keep occurring in the discussions and contentions of stakeholders. This is to avoid discarding important nuanced details that allows for a holistic understanding of the dynamics around the issues through the mosaic of the interconnected critical junctures.

The second insight to draw from the analysis in this chapter relates to the informalization of the informal settlements. Apart from the underdevelopments, poverty, very poor infrastructures, and marginalization from city affluence that are peculiar to most informal settlements like those in Abuja, there is need to also understand why some actors deemed them unfit to exist in the city. The informal status of the settlements is not just about their slummy features but also their ineligibility to exist in the city based on the 1978 master plan of Abuja. The informalization of the informal settlements started with the FCT Act abolishing all primordial claims to Abuja lands and reinforced by the master plan that recommended the resettlement of the indigenous communities. The top-down nature of the Land Use Act further empowers the president/FCT minister to determine what is formal or informal or which settlement can exist within the FCT. Most of the informal settlements of Abuja are made up of the indigenous communities that have expanded into bigger settlements by migrants from other parts of Nigeria thereby turning into slums. This why most of the informal settlements of Abuja are characterized by two identities: indigeneity and informality. Their indigeneity is because they were already existing before the creation of Abuja as the FCT in 1976. While their informality is mainly because their settlements are not included in the developmental plans of Abuja.

The third insight comes from the different land ownership claims. Unresolved frictions between the statutory land administration through the Land Use Act and traditional customary practices lead to the multiple allocations that produced the statutory and

customary land claimers. The Land Use Act as a top-down state approach to land administration is not fully acceptable to local traditional institutions. Otubu (2018) noted that whilst trying to remedy the inadequacies in the existing laws, the Land Use Act created its own genre of problems in land administration in Nigeria. In practice, especially in other states of Nigeria, traditional institutions are still very active in land administration. The fundamental problem relating to the informal settlements is the disagreement over tenure practices (see also Patel, 2013 & Van Gelder 2010) where the statutory tenure criteria used by the state to determine land rights and tenure security are practically different from the customary arrangements that were used to allocate lands to the informal settlement dwellers. This has generated a lot of controversies, conflicts and legal tussles that have overwhelmed the judicial institutions. The interinstitutional Abuja land use and allocation committee (LUAC) empowered to fairly and transparently address the land disputes through out-of-court settlements has not significantly solved the challenges and the land disputes in the informal settlements which are still under the threat of forced eviction and displacements (Aytogo, 2018; Oturu, 2018; Times, 2012).

Lastly, the fallouts from the interplay of actors represent the fourth insight. Just like what has been described as the branching patterns of critical junctures and their path-dependencies (see Sorensen 2015; 2018; Thelen, 1999), the reactions and counterreactions of contending actors can produce dynamic paths that further complicate contested issues. The informal (without the state official procedure) compensation arrangement between customary landowners and statutory land allottees is an illustration of how the paths of critical junctures can be recreated into various paths. Another instance is the (counter)reactions of ISD over the never-ending demolitions or threats of displacements that resulted in the 2012 attempted demolition of Mpape. The resulting court case ended with the 2017 landmark judgement to halt the attempted demolition. This is another critical moment that could have more significant effects in the future dynamics of the informal settlements. The complication in this case is the production of a complex tenure (in)security for the ISD. In addition to the judicial temporal immunity from displacement, the autochthonous affiliation to Gbagyi tribe, old mud houses, firewood, and the planting of economic (cashew) trees for deterring land grabbers are symbolic artefacts that also guarantee some levels of security from arbitrary displacement. This form of tenure security can be described *artefactual*.

This chapter has provided a fundamental historical insight into the complex dynamics around Abuja's informal settlements, but there is need to further examine the current politicking around the settlements to provide more insights on the contentious issues. The subsequent empirical chapters examine the contentious politicking of different actors (including the ISD) over land rights and tenure security; the state's roles/reactions in the contentious politics; and the arguments for or against the integration of the settlements in the developmental planning of Abuja. This is to shed light on the influence of (powerful) governance actors in (re)defining present and future contentions around the informal settlements.



Chapter 5

Contentious Politicking in the
Informal Settlements of Abuja:
The Roles and Impacts of Non-state
Actors



Chapter 5

Contentious Politicking in the Informal Settlements of Abuja: The Roles and Impacts of Non-state Actors

5.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter (chapter 4), I discussed the historical antecedents, state planning policies and programmes, and other governance processes that have defined the current dynamics around the informal settlements of Abuja. The chapter provided a fundamental understanding of the genesis and evolution of the claims and contentions over land rights and tenure security in the informal settlements. Since the overall aim of this research is to explore and understand the collective roles and impacts of state and non-state actors in the governance of the informal settlements, this chapter focuses on the activities of the non-state actors and how they relate with the state actors.

I identified two set of non-state actors. The first set of actors are the informal settlements dwellers (ISD) comprised of the community/tribal leaders, the indigenous and nonindigenous settlers. The second set of actors include the political representatives of the ISD, the land developers, statutory land claimers and NGOs. The second set of actors do not live in the informal settlements, but they have interest or stake in the settlements. However, within each set of actors, there are those that are supporting the ISD and those working against them. The divergent and conflicting interests and activities of the various non-state actors are significantly contributing to the complications around the informal settlements. The first part of this chapter explains the claims and agitations of the ISD. The second part deals with their resistance practices while the third part explains the solidarity and differences among the ISD, and the conflicting interests within the informal settlements. The fourth part focuses on the interests and activities of the other non-state actors. The last section concludes and summarize this chapter before discussing the findings of the study in relation to other literature.

5.2. Agitations of the informal settlements' dwellers

In addition to the contention for landownership rights and tenure security discussed in chapter 4, the other agitations of the ISD include infrastructural development or provision of basic amenities, and a better resettlement package if they must be displaced from *their* lands. Other secondary agitations include demand for a share of their internally generated revenues for their community development and more indigenous representation in the administration of Abuja.

Lack of basic amenities and poor infrastructure is a common feature of informal settlements, especially the slummy ones. The informal settlements of Abuja are under threats of eviction or displacement. Like most informal settlements, they are also deprived of many basic amenities that could enhance their living standards. Notably among the several needs of Abuja ISD are access roads, schools, and healthcare centres. A long-time resident at Mpape remarked that:

'...our major problem now is road and hospital, see our hospital, every day, children are born there morning and night, no space for other sick people, we have been calling on the government for expansion but up till now (nothing: with his hands' gesture), the hospital (built by the community) is very, very small, they keep promising us... many of our children are going to schools in Bwari, Dutse (neighbouring communities) ...' (FGD #4).

Another dweller added that there is only one access road in Mpape despite being home to a significant portion of the city workers. A member of Mpape traditional ruling council asserted that the government must develop their community because of the strategic location of Mpape and the high revenue Mpape community is generating for the government. He said:

'...we have tourist centres here in Mpape, people are coming from everywhere to see the crushed rock and (quarry) lake, we also have a waterfall...there are about 8 companies in this Mpape so they can't say they don't know the importance of Mpape...people are still coming here for sands, if we block Mpape, they won't see sands to build all the houses they are building...' (FGD #8).

However, as explained in chapter 4, the ISD are frustrated that they cannot develop their communities because of the uncertainties around their future (Interview #25). But since it is obvious to the ISD that the government is not capable of funding their resettlement and their displacement seems uncertain for now, the infrastructural development of their communities is now one of their major agitations. Most of the ISD that have been designated for resettlement are asking for quality houses, adequate amenities, tangible financial compensations, and other packages that will mitigate the adverse effects of their socio-economic losses in the new resettlement sites. But the state appears incapable to meet their demands. Hence, their resistance to the several displacements attempts from the state. One of my interviewees explained that:

'...the government asked us to move there first (the new resettlement sites) before those things (social amenities) will come, but we refused because we are already living in the town, we are used to good roads here, we are used to electricity, we have a school, and now they want to take us to one village where there is no light, school, hospital, and road. We refused to move on that condition, that is the reason why we are here waiting for them...' (FGD #9).

Another resettlement demand is of houses or lands for those that were not captured in previous enumeration because they were not up to 18 years then (FGD #9). The ISD

are also resisting the resettlement programme as their socio-cultural lifestyle is not considered in the resettlement sites. According to an FCDA town planner, the ISD *want their kings' houses to be built traditionally, and they don't want several communities to be merged in one estate because of family and kinship ties* (Interview #26). When asked why the king's house or position should be a reason for resisting resettlement, the traditional council at Kpadna explained that:

'...if they gather 3 villages like Jabi, Utako and Mabushi together in one place, they will be fighting on who will be the head, how will they resolve that, this is natural everywhere, there is competition for power in the whole world, there is no way you put all of us in same place and that won't come up... each community has its chief, they should build the resettlement sites community by community and let the head that's the head in each community continue being the head to avoid problems (FGD #9).

Although there are several controversies around the resettlement programme of Abuja, the ones outlined above are the major demands from the ISD before they can agree to resettlement.

The economic development of the ISD is another concern for agitation. The ISD cannot freely access *their* farmlands for the sustenance of their major socio-economic activity (farming). The ISD in Mabushi and Kpadna within the city explained that farmlands within and outside the city have been confiscated and developed by *big men* (FGD #3 & #9). The little lands for farming within and around their settlements are also not spared. It is a common scene to see a slum within developed neighbourhoods with modern houses coexisting together in Abuja city centres (see figures 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3). Most of the modern houses within and around most of the slums are built by rich statutory landowners who have successfully *negotiated* their access to the land from the state or willing ISD.



Figure 5.1: A modern house (owned by statutory landowner) within a slum in Mabushi, Abuja
Source: Author, 2022



Figure 5.2: Modern houses being built (by statutory landowners) around Mabushi slum, Abuja
Source: Author, 2022



Figure 5.3: Jabi slum within a developed neighbourhood in Abuja

Source: Author, 2022

Another popular point of agitation of the ISD especially among their political leaders is the clamour for an indigenous FCT (Federal Capital Territory, Abuja) minister, and more senators and house of representative members that would represent them at the federal government level. Although this is an agitation by all the indigenous people of Abuja (including those living in *formal* spaces), the ISD believed that an indigenous FCT minister would understand and manage the plights of Abuja's indigenous communities better instead of a foreigner – persons appointed from other regions of Nigeria – (Interview #31). A traditional council member in Mpape added that:

'...an indigenous minister will understand our plight better, not a different man from a different state with different agenda...we will keep asking for that, that's what we want, you can't just carry someone from Kano state as the minister of FCT, what did he know about FCT? ... (FGD #8).

However, on this issue, a land lawyer remarked that: '

...they want Abuja to be governed like a state, but that's against the constitution and the vision of Abuja as a symbol of unity and equality to every Nigerians...what they were close to getting was a Mayor of Abuja during Abacha's (former military president of Nigeria) regime, but the idea was abandoned when other Nigerians were showing serious interests in the position...the constitution is clear on this, Abuja is for everyone...' (Interview #23).

The agitations from the ISD are quite difficult for the state to handle or grant. And most importantly, they are causing impediments to the developmental planning activities

around the settlements and Abuja in general (FCDA town planners – Interviews #7; #8; 11# & #16). The state planners agreed that most of the agitations of the ISD are genuine, but they are not feasible because of the huge costs involved. However, there are still pressures from other stakeholders to displace the ISD. So, the agitations of ISD are often contested and supported with different resistance practices that is discussed in the next session.

5.3. Resistance strategies of the informal settlements' dwellers

ISD are renowned for their place making initiatives and resistance practices against powerful forces to be part of the city. In the case of Abuja, ISD are resisting land grabbing from powerful developers and the state's development induced displacement and resettlements (DIDR). There were little or no active resistance to DIDR programmes in the past because of the government's use of force to instil fear on hapless communities (see also COHRE & SERAC, 2008); and probably because of people's ignorance or lack of awareness of their rights, privileges, and opportunities that are available to them. But since the era (early 2000s) of forced evictions and demolitions, resistance to arbitrary displacement among the ISD has gained momentum vis a vis the increasing awareness and support for their plight in the media by NGOs and human right activists.

According to the political leader of Mabushi and former speaker of AMAC (FGD #3), *the people are now stronger and wiser* to resist arbitrary displacement. Based on the previous antecedents especially the failed resettlement projects and past arbitrary displacements, the ISD have devised varieties of practices to prevent the state planning officials and powerful land grabbers from displacing them from their communities and farmlands. These resistance practices include modernization of their lifestyles, formation of associations, physical confrontations, going to court and support from some state actors among others. The dynamics of these resistance practices in the contentions around the informal settlements are explained as follows.

Modernization

Since the state usually use the excuse of uncivilized ways of life and old mud houses to demolish structures in the informal settlements, the dwellers are now stepping up to modernize their living styles, especially by rebuilding their old houses to conform with modern structures. According to a senior town planner in FCDA:

'...their economic power has gone up, they can build better houses, then they were into farming and menial works...many of them are now as educated as me and you, they sent their children to schools and now understand what we are doing, they study the same things we studied, they now advice the planning board...their children have gone out and seen modern way of living and are now making their parents to live the modern way... (Interview #37).

He explained further that:

'...they now have more educated and learned people among them, they are becoming more modern than the way you use to think...they have enjoyed the services of modernization close to them...if you had given them the right to expand you will see modern day houses...'

When I remarked that most of their houses are still like slum houses, like in Mabushi (see figures 5.4 and 5.5), many of their houses are on or beside gutters, he explained further that:

...see, it is because there is no space for them to develop, did you enter the houses? they have modernized the inside, it is the outside that is looking so tattered, most of them have AC (air conditioning) in their houses, sometimes you will even prefer to stay in those places not minding the environment, when you begin to look at them like that (from the modernizing perspective), they are not slum par se...' (Interview #38).

5



Figure 5.4: Slummy features in Mabushi

Source: Author, 2022



Figure 5.5: Slummy features in Mpape, Abuja

Source: Author, 2022

Relatedly, a developer remarked that the state planning agencies are trying as much as they can to displace (or resettle) the ISD, but the ISD are become more enlightened on their rights and ways to prevent the state from displacing them (Interview #48). For example, to counter the rationale of the state planning authorities in demolishing old (mud) houses that blight the city of Abuja, a politician in Mabushi pointed to his renewed house (see figures 5.6a, b, and c) and claimed that he started motivating the rich ones among them to follow suit. He said:

'...I started this structure in 2006, then my friends were warning me about the resettlement, I told them I can't wait for FCDA any longer for a resettlement that will never happen...I am happy some of them are now doing the same, anybody that get little opportunity of money, they demolish their house and start something...if you go up there you will see some (new) houses that is because they have kept aside the hope of resettlement, we are the ones resettling (or reintegrating) ourselves now...' (Interview #31).

The modernization of old houses is meant to prevent the state planning agencies from demolishing such houses under the excuse of substandard structures. But such modernizations are costly and can only be afforded by the rich ISD. It is also a risky venture, because as explained in chapter 4, old mud houses are some of the artefacts that symbolize customary ownership and indigenous identity that gave many ISD some levels of tenure security or immunity from arbitrary displacement.



Figure 5.6a: Modernizing old mud houses in Mabushi.

Source: Author,



Figure 5.6b: Modernizing old mud houses in Mabushi.

Source: Author, 2022



Figure 5.6c: Modernizing old mud houses in Mabushi.

Source: Author, 2022

Formation of associations and the use of media for mobilization

The ISD have formed various associations (such as the Nigerian slum/informal settlement federation, association of Abuja indigenous communities; FCT youth coalition, and other community-based associations) to organize most of their resistant practices. This can be attributed to the increasing awareness among the ISD. The association forming is both at the community level and across related informal communities. The activities of these associations include meeting and planning on developmental issues and contribution of resources to fight their cause. According to the Mabushi community council, most of the associations were formed '*because of the forceful collection of lands without due process*' (FGD #3). The Mpape residents also have an association (Mpape residents' association) that is legally registered with the state. According to a tribal head in Mpape, '*Mpape residents' association is legally registered (because) we are trying every means possible to counter any move they want to come with, we know the laws they are coming to quote for us...so, what's new...*' (Interview #44). On the potency of the associations as a resistance practice, a land agent (lawyer by profession) remarked that with the formation of duly registered associations, '*it will be very difficult for the government to do anything...*' (Interview #23).

The activities of the associations are also supported with several media platforms (like WhatsApp and Facebook) to create awareness and mobilize their members across Abuja for any action. According to the leaders of the ISD, the use of media to create

awareness on their plights and to mobilize ISD across Abuja for actions such as protests is another resistance strategy of the ISD (FGD #3; Interviews #44 & #47). A tribal head in Mpape (also a director at FCDA) explained that he granted a press conference on the plights and agitations of Mpape community and was invited by the FCT minister for rebuking and subsequently castigated. In his own words, he explained that:

'...I granted a press conference sometimes ago about our problems in Mpape, even the News Anchor (newspaper) reported it...I was invited by Bala (former FCT minister), he asked me why I release everything to the press...they removed me from my former office in FCDA to another department where they think I won't be able to talk, but I won't stop talking, I am only asking for one thing – integration, instead of demolishing our houses...' (Interview #44).

Using the media creates more awareness for the plights of the ISD, which will likely attract more human right activists to support their struggle. This is probably why the former FCT minister reproached the tribal head that granted the press conference.

Physical confrontations

Protests, road blockage, and attacks are the common physical confrontations for resisting displacement and land confiscations in the informal settlements. For example, Mpape ISD claimed they blocked the road on the judgement day to swing the court judgement in their favour. According to a youth leader:

'...we closed down Mpape on the judgement day, all the students didn't not go to school, we all went to the court...and that helped because they (top hierarchies) already asked the judge to approve the demolition, but when they saw all of us on the street, vehicles could not move until the judgement went in our favour...' (Interview #20).

Similarly, the Mabushi traditional council explained that their youths usually chase away development control officials anytime they come to their communities. The traditional leaders said the last time officials with the help of the military forcefully tried demolishing their houses, they all went inside their houses and asked officials and soldiers to demolish the houses while staying inside. (FGD #3). The land developers also attest to the physical confrontations of the ISD. One said:

'...they(ISD) can shoot an arrow at you from the bush if you don't consult them or go to the plot without an indigene or the owner of the land...' (Interview #46).

Accessing any controversial land requires the approval of the community head and the company of an indigene when going to the land. Many developers are experienced in navigating this even if they already have the statutory approval from the state.

Planting of economic trees

Another resistance strategy of the ISD involves planting economic trees like cashew (for example see figure 5.7) and moringa, or farming cash crops on vacant lands in the communities or the ancestral farmlands around them. Legally, such economic trees must be duly compensated before any statutory land claimers or developer can begin any structure on the land. The ISD who do not want to let go of their lands without adequate compensation have capitalized on this legal avenue to demand huge amount money for the economic trees. Developers, surveyors, and agents claimed they need to pay huge amounts of money for the economic trees before they can access the lands that have been statutorily allocated to them (Interviews #23; #30; and #46). A developer explained that:

'...we pay for cashew trees, moringa trees, palm trees, ...sometimes we can pay as much as 4 million naira (about 7000euros) per hectare...officially it is supposed to be 1500 naira (about 3euros) per tree for the nursery ones, 3000 (about 6euros) for those that are producing, 17000 (about 30euros) for cashew trees, but if we pay through the government, they (ISD) won't get the money, so it is better to bargain with them (ISD) directly...' (Interview #46).

The compensations for the economic plants provide most ISD the fund to start a new economic activity or relocate to a new location when their (farm)lands are bought from them by the statutory landowners.

Rejection of resettlement allocation papers and packages

The ISD explained that they have refused resettlement allocation papers from FCDA because that will be tantamount to accepting their displacement. This rejection of resettlement packages is considered a resistance strategy because without agreement by both parties, the state planning authorities cannot forcefully demolish their settlements as was done in past. A traditional council member at Kpadna explained:

'...we won't take it (allocation papers) unless they have done everything (a full resettlement package), if we take it, the next thing is, one day they will just give us (a) date to move, that we have been compensated, like last year they tried to give us the papers, but we didn't collect...' (FGD #9).

Similarly, an official of the resettlement department said the original inhabitants now outrightly reject compensation payments and packages, rather they dictate the values that are acceptable to them (Interview #39). The ISD believe that accepting allocation/compensation papers from state officials means they have accepted to be displaced regardless of the adequacy of compensation package. This is also the main reason why most of the ISD refused to hold my introduction letter/interview questions, they thought I was a state official coming to serve them resettlement allocation letter/quit notice.



Figure 5.7: Cashew trees for making indigenous land rights claim and for preventing arbitrary land confiscation
Source: Author, 2022

Vandalization of structures and spiritual threats

The act of vandalization or use of spiritual threats as resistance practices are usually reactionary to the activities of noncooperative statutory landowners. The structures of land developers that refused to amicably settle or negotiate compensation with the indigenous landowners are often vandalized in protest. A prominent political figure in Mabushi remarked that:

'...those that tried it (built on their farmlands with settlement), we sent our boys to put holes in their buildings at night, pursue the builders from the site...sometimes, we invoked the spirit of our ancestors on them...they don't usually come back after seeing different things (fetish stuffs) on the sites...' (Interview #5).

Spiritual threat (voodoo) was also used in the case of Mpape. A tribal head in Mpape hinted that they fought the Mpape court case both physically and spiritually. He said:

'...when it (Mpape court case) was assigned to Maitama high court judge, we fought physically and spiritually, and when the judge sees that the case is more than him, he resigned from the case and was transferred to Kwali high court...a misfortune also happened to Bala (former FCT minister)'s wife during the case, that's when they start realizing that what they are doing to Mpape people is bad...' (Interview #44 rephrased).

The use of voodoo/spiritual threats might not be common in the many reports of resistance practices of marginalized ISD in other contexts, but in Nigeria it is a potent weapon among contending actors. Many ISD boasted of the efficacy of such spiritual means in deterring statutory landowners and state officials that might want to use force to confiscate customary lands.

Litigations

According to many state planners, the ISD have mastered the act of instituting court cases to obtain court injunctions on state institutions to halt development control exercises within their settlements or the demolition of individual buildings. One major example is the Mpape court case (explained in previous chapter) that went in favour of the ISD. The success of the ISD on the Mpape case seems to have motivated the ISD to always seek solace in the judiciary. On the Mpape court case, a tribal head proudly expressed that:

'...the government said we have just 10, 000 houses here, go round and see for yourself, we have 10 times more than that...can you imagine the amount we raised for the court case, they were surprised that we could raise such amount of money in Mpape, we are so many, that's why they don't know what to do with us...' (Interview #21).

Most of the interviewed state planners explained that there are many active court cases/injunctions between the dwellers and the state planning agencies (especially FCDA and Development Control). These court cases are instituted by individuals or group of ISD to prevent the demolition of their buildings. The outcomes of the popular ones are usually reported in the news (for example, see Azu, 2020). Many of my interviewees (e.g., Interviews #12, #13 #37; and FGD #3) believed that these litigations have prevented the displacement of most ISD. A tribal head in Mpape remarked that *'the government can do anything anytime, if not for the court, they would have demolished all our houses'* (Interview #13). The litigations are also considered to have significantly enhanced the logjam around the informal settlements. According to a deputy director in FCDA, the ISD often *'rush to court to get injunctions or call their people in power'* to frustrate their planning activities (Interview #11). The multiple litigations from the ISD are one of the major problems around the government resettlement programme (Interview #39). However, the ISD seem to have found solace in the judiciary against state planning authorities and other contending actors, but sometimes, some of the court judgements are not in their favour (FGDs #2 and #4). There are many intrigues to these court case, but a detailed discussion of the complex dynamics of the judicial battles among contending actors and their associated effects on the overall developmental planning of Abuja are beyond the scope of this chapter/thesis.

Alliance with some state actors to use state institutions

The alliance that is sometimes formed between some state actors and the ISD provides an important resistance strategy. This alliance is therefore fundamental in the struggles of the ISD and is pivotal to the success of other resistance strategies because of the link with the state – the central actor that is capable of validating or refuting their claims and contentions.

Some of the ISD are holding or have held political appointments in state agencies (Interviews #25; #31 & FGD #3). For example, a political leader in Mabushi claimed that they have allies within the state planning agencies who pass on information on the various plans against the ISD allowing them to strategize before the plans are executed (FGD #3). In what can be described as clientelism, Mpape people boasted of a big population size that can determine the outcomes of municipal elections. According to them:

'...during (municipal) elections, even if a candidate wins other polling units, if Mpape result is not out yet, you can't be confident of winning, because Mpape population can win you any election, they don't joke with us...' (FGD #8).

Their involvement in the politics of Abuja has also attracted some developmental projects to some communities. For instance, a political leader in Mabushi said:

'...it was much later after some of us entered politics, that we were able to do more for the community, for example, during my tenure (as the Speaker of AMAC) I was able to influence the addition of more classrooms to the

government school and more transformers to the community, but we as a community are the initiators of all the developmental projects... (FGD #3).

The engagement of ISD in mainstream politics seems to have facilitated their penetration into the state institutions to make allies with some state actors and to garner supports for their agitations. The state actors on the side of the ISD include relatives/family members of the ISD, ISD working in state institutions, state officials that are simply sympathetic to their struggles, and some state actors with vested interest (e.g., personal businesses) in the informal settlements. The alliance of the ISD with many state officials is not hidden, many interviewees (state and non-state) acknowledged it as one of the major strengths of ISD (Interviews #23; #28). On why they are not using their alliance with the state actors to attract infrastructural development to their community, the political leader explained that:

'...the issue is that they might not really listen to us completely, but our agitations are now making impacts...part of the things helping us the indigenous people is that some of our people are working at FCDA, like the last director of water resources at FCDA that just retired was our brother, if about 2 to 3 of them serve at the right time it will be better for us...' (Interview #31).

The alliance of the ISD with many state officials and the subsequent support for their struggles highlights the paradox of the state in managing the ISD. The ISD are contesting the state's resettlement/displacement policies, yet some state officials are supporting their resistance practices. More insights on this complex relationship of the state with ISD are explained in the next chapter focusing on the state's relationships with non-state actors.

5.4. Solidarity and conflicting interests among non-state actors in the informal settlements

The common challenges of tenure insecurity and poor infrastructure in the informal settlements often make the dwellers look united in their struggle. Although, this is often the case, there are still areas of differences and frictions among the divergent dwellers within the settlements as revealed by my field experiences. This section explains the areas of solidarity and instances of disunity as gathered from various ISD.

The common areas of solidarity among the majority of the ISD is their unity in sourcing for resources for their community development, and cooperation to enhance peace in the communities. This is expected because most of them are deprived of some basic amenities from the state, and because a chaotic community can be a reason for the state to forcefully displace them. On the provision of amenities in their communities, the people of Mabushi said most of the basic amenities in their community are as a result of community efforts. Their traditional ruler said

'...some of the little shift in the standard of living here is by the collective efforts of the community such as the electrification of the community and provision of water... (FGD #3).

A community chief at Mpape also explained that:

'...we always do everything for ourselves through community contributions, but sometimes we beg the government for some help, like our health centre, we built it ourselves, then we beg Bwari area council for doctors...left for us, we can't pay them (the health workers) but we built the place ourselves ...anything that we want in this community, we always start it ourselves before we look for help, because the government will not come and do anything for you on their own...' (FGD #4).

On the peaceful coexistence in the community, he added that *'there is positive cooperation in the community to do a lot of things, any problem we are facing, we call the community leaders, and tribal heads together to discuss the way forward'*. Similarly, the tribal head of the Hausa migrants said:

'...there is no tribalism and no religion crisis between the Muslims and the Christians, we have been living peacefully, and we the leaders are not showing any religious difference, the leader (Mpape traditional ruler) does not discriminate. Anytime any issue comes up we have support from our neighbours too to maintain our togetherness... (Interview #15).

However, despite their unity or solidarity against external forces, there is a major area of friction or difference that is generating tensions and disunity within and around the settlements. This point of friction relates to the heterogeneous population of most of the informal settlements. The heterogeneity is a result of the rapid urbanization that made migrants from other parts of Nigeria mix with the indigenous or original inhabitants of the settlements. As explained in the previous chapter, the situation becomes complex when migrants of similar tribes cannot be differentiated from the original inhabitants for developmental planning purposes (especially for resettlement). The indigenous and non-indigenous dichotomy manifests itself in some important issues concerning the community such as financial contribution for community projects, demolitions, and tenure security. For instance, on financial contribution for community projects, a tribal head said, *'some indigenes are not cooperative in contributing money to do some things because they feel they don't have any problem; government can't touch them'* (Interview #43). Another tribal head added that some of the original inhabitants do work with some government officials to confiscate their lands because they will have a share in the confiscated lands (Interview #13). The youth leader of the migrant groups in Mpape also accused some indigenous political leaders of not being in support of their struggles. According to him:

'...not all of them (indigenes) are supporting us (non-indigenes), especially their politicians... sometimes, they (Gbagyi leaders) are the ones that work with the FCDA officials to come and demolish peoples' houses...' (Interview #20).

He further revealed that only a few of the indigenes contributed money for the famous Mpape court case and that:

'...many of them were not happy when we won the case and came back celebrating, they were not happy because they have already started planning on how to share our (non-indigenes) houses and lands after the demolition...'

The indigenous and non-indigenous differences are also manifested in the demolition of *illegal* houses and the tenure security of some ISD. Most of the respondents revealed that the migrants are the main targets of the state's demolition exercises. The indigenes are very confident that they are safe and protected because of their indigenous status of having customary or ancestral right to their lands (FGD #2; Interviews #13 & Interview #41). The indigenous ISD enjoyed the artefactual tenure security (explained in chapter four) more than the migrants because the indigenous ISD can speak the Gbagyi dialect, have the old mud houses, and are in possession of most of the farmlands with economic trees.

Apart from the different classes of ISD (indigenes and non-indigenes) that could sometimes be a source of disharmony, there are some stakeholders who have other interests that are influencing the overall stability of the ISD. These conflicting interests are usually among the community leaders (traditional chiefs) and political (administrative) representatives that are within or outside the informal settlements. For example, in one of the FGDs in Mpape, a tribal head explained the effort of some politicians outside the settlement to influence the leadership of the community by installing the ones that can cooperate with them in appropriating lands. According to a youth leader in Mpape:

'...they (some indigenes) don't like the present leader, they accused him of not supporting them to get lands (from the non-indigenes), they even want to kill him, that's why you can't see him, he is hiding from people...Philip Aduda (present senator representing the FCT in the senate) and Bwari LG chairman are trying to remove him and put another person there...there is faction among them, some of his chiefs are supporting him, some not...but his main supporters are the non-indigene tribal leaders, because he is straight forward and support the non-indigenes... (Interview #20).

As illustrated in the quote above, the people of Mpape explained that the government is not their problem, but rather, those persons among them that who are working with other influential actors to displace them. They claimed that these persons use the plights of the ISD to claim funds from the state for developmental projects, but they hardly execute such projects (FGD #8; Interview #25). Another community (Kpadna) also accused some of their leaders of not representing them well or defending their rights – and that, against their leaders' wish, they are ready to be resettled as soon as possible because they are suffering in their current situation without support from the leaders (FGD #9). The misrepresentation of the ISD by their leaders/politicians is also reported by other contending actors around the settlements. These actors accused

most of the ISD leaders of working against the good interests of the ISD and using their conditions for economic and political gains (Interviews #23; #26; #28 & #30).

The interviewed political leaders (Interviews #41 & #47) denied these allegations. However, the fact that most of the ISD political representatives in power have been accused (by both the ISD and other actors – some developers and state officials) of misrepresentation and having selfish interests (political and economic gains) shows that there is little to no synergy between the ISD and their political representatives. The complexity in this is that many of the leaders are still active in the dynamics around the informal settlements because of their wealth, power network and alliance with other powerful actors that are also interested in the lands of the ISD. The roles and impacts of these other non-state actors outside the settlements are discussed in the next session.

5.5. Contentions and roles of other non-state actors

In addition to the effect of state actors, the dynamics around the informal settlements of Abuja are influenced by key non-state actors such as statutory land claimers, the land developers, some self-proclaimed politicians without portfolio and NGOs. These actors (except the human right activists and NGOs) can be regarded as those that are in direct contention with the ISD over land ownership.

5.5.1. Statutory land claimers

These are the actors that have been officially allocated the lands that most ISD are presently occupying and/or using for farming. They include individuals from different parts of Nigeria, especially those in civil service, former heads of state, past and currently serving military personnel, and estate developers. As claimed by the ISD, these set of actors are the ones putting the pressure on them and on the state to displace them (FGDs #3; #9 & Interview #25). The statutory land claimers were officially allocated the land by the FCDA/Lands Department with the aim of developing the lands whenever the ISD are resettled or displaced. However, this resettlement or displacement is long overdue and most of the statutory land claimers are doing everything possible to access their official lands.

One major way in which these statutory land claimers add to the dynamics around the informal settlements is through the (re)selling of their lands to various buyers willing to either wait for the uncertain resettlement or willing to negotiate and compensate the ISD with customary claims to the land. A Mabushi political leader explained the issues of the statutory land claimers like this:

'...nobody uses force when they come (to claim land), (especially) the ones that have to do with houses (officially allocated lands that are still being occupied

by the ISD), *we tell them we don't have issues with them. We only have issues with FCDA and equally they have problems with FCDA. At the end of the day FCDA will tell them they should go and wait and if they can't wait, they should apply for change of location, so that's it. After sometimes, like 3 to 4 years, another set of people will surface, some will end selling the lands from one person to another, you will see four to five people will end up buying the land because there is so many challenges (like not being able to develop it) having that land, and they end up selling the land...and most of the people buying the land, when they end up going to AGIS (to confirm the originality of the papers) and they feel the land is genuine, they do not bothered to know the location of the land. They will just go ahead and pay, until when they decide to go and see the land, the person will then discover it is somebody house that is there...*' (Interview #31).

Some of the statutory land claimers that have the means usually end up negotiating and paying off the ISD that have customarily tenure to the land before they can peacefully develop the land. This negotiation before development is more feasible with farmlands than with already built lands as the owner of the house must be willing to let go of the house and leave the city which is sometimes very difficult (Interviews #31; #35 & #41).

5.5.2. Developers, speculators, and other stakeholders

Real estate developers are another major set of actors in the dynamics of the informal settlements because of their economic interests and financial gains. The developers are very much interested in the lands of the informal settlements and would prefer their displacement. With their money and alliance with other powerful stakeholders, they can negotiate their ways through various means to acquire lands for developing commercial estates or shopping plazas that are most times too expensive for the poor majority of Abuja to afford. The ISD see the developers and the rich people of Abuja as one of their major threats. According to Mpape ISD:

'...another challenge we are facing, our farmlands have been taken by developers, most of our farmlands, the main challenge is where the community is (close to the neighbourhood of the high and mighty citizens of the country), the big people feel they have power, they choose to buy our community from the government...' (FGD #9).

On the other hand, the developers consider the presence of the ISD within the cities as a challenge to their businesses (Interview #30). Most of the powerful developers are cronies of highly influential state officials. For example, a land agent narrated a popular allegation of how the former minister (Hon. Bala) of the FCT used his cronies as

developers to seize lots of lands from the ISD in the name of land swapping¹ for developing the lands of the indigenous settlers for integration that never happened (Interview #23). This allegation against the former minister is well acknowledged among my interviewees, but it is difficult to prove it since there is no official record indicting the former minister. The developers also have access to top state officials in the lands department (AGIS) to influence or monitor land allocations. They monitor the allocation processes and the allottees in order to buy off the allottees with huge offers (Interview #30).

Most of the state officials accused the developers of many excesses (such as building against approved plans or reselling of allocated plots to individuals instead of developing the plots), yet their excesses are not checked by the state, probably because of their alliance with top state officials like the example of the former FCT above. The developers are often accused of not building according to standards or using land for designated purposes (e.g., affordable mass housing). For instance, an official at the development control office explained that:

'...government doesn't sell lands, what made the cost of housing unit to be high is because of provisions of infrastructures, if government is not able to provide primary infrastructure and is now shifted to the private developers certainly as businesspeople, they build it into the cost of houses. But some of them are also not being honest with the situation because it is on record that they don't even build houses, they divide the land to pieces and sell it to people to build because they want to make money...you know the land is given in hectares, maybe as a developer you are given 10-20 hectares that you put infrastructures, develop houses and sell to individuals but at the end of the day they will just do a layout, divide the land into smaller parcels and sell to individuals, it is actually the individuals (those that bought the lands from the developers) that build most of these houses you see in mass housing districts...' (Interview #35).

Another state planning official added that:

'...the developers are only building for the high class you will hear duplex (selling for) 60million, 25million, where do you see ordinary civil servant collecting like 100 thousand to buy such house?' (Interview #29).

Other accusations against the developers include encroachments on existing resettlement sites by land grabbers (Interview #39) and construction of substandard houses (Interview #29). However, some of the developers explained their rationality in building against approved plans and standards. They attributed their deviations to the unofficial practices of some state planning officials and several bureaucratic

¹ The land swapping is a type of resettlement arrangement where the indigenous people are allocated at least two plots of lands to sell one and use the money to develop the second – as an alternative to the government resettlement estates that are not forthcoming. The developers were accused of developing both plots of lands and then asked the affected ISD to pay for the houses which they could not afford. The ISD were reportedly coerced to sell the lands to a particular developer.

challenges. A developer explains (a similar explanation by another developer – interview #30) the reason for their unsanctioned excesses as follows:

‘...definitely, we must sell it (approved plots of land from the state) in pieces, though we are not supposed to sell the land, but how many people can afford the completed house if not mortgage? And if we are going by mortgage, we will still end up having issues at the end of the day because the process for mortgage is not an easy process. That's why at the end of the day, we pieces (divide into smaller units) the land and sell it at an affordable price and the people have to build the houses according to the prototype design... the problem with property in Abuja is that people don't understand until they get close. If you give me a land to develop for example 10 hectares and I pay government the money, and I go to the site, there are a lot of things involved, starting from the survey, design, approval and compensation for economic trees, and anything that falls in that property, it is also your duty to settle it (after completion), and (constructing) the perimeter fencing, so (imagine the costs) by the time you are done with these and start selling...

On the role of the government, he added:

the major problem we face is government, we face a lot of issues before approval. Imagine government officials having at least one house in all the estates in Abuja as bribe...we can't build small small houses (affordable mass housing), it won't favour us (to make profit), do you know how much we paid to get the lands, forget what they are saying that they gave us the lands for free, we paid millions (of naira) to get (unofficial lobbying) the lands, then we have to pay plenty money to different government agencies for papers, plan approvals...even if we build small small houses, how many people (the poor) can afford it?... (Interview #48).

Although most of the accusations against the developers are coming from the state officials, the responses of the developers show that many state officials collaborate with the developers in their excesses. And that is probably the main reason why their excesses are usually unchecked. Related to the developers are the land speculators and agents. The high cost of lands in Abuja has been attributed to land speculation and rich politicians (from all parts of Nigeria) willing to pay any amount just to get a piece of land in Abuja city. The land market in Abuja is unregulated, the rich can buy lands at arbitrary high prices at the detriment of the poor urbanites. A freelance land agent explained that:

‘...speculators are making Abuja lands to be very costly...and the politicians buying lands and houses with any amount, if a politician buys your neighbour's land for 50 million, a land that's not up to 1million, highest 5 million, you too will want to sell your own for 50 million naira, that's how the land prices keep increasing...see the small house the owner (politician) of Enyo filling stations bought for 200 million in Utako, just because he wants to have a house in Abuja...’ (Interview #46).

The rich people and developers that bought lands at high prices end up building unaffordable houses leading to the many vacant/abandoned houses and estates in Abuja while most Abuja residents still struggle with where to live (Interview #46; Elleh, 2016). A town planner in FCDA also attributed the ISD uncompromising resistance and high compensation demands to the lucrative businesses of the developers, speculators, and politicians (Interview #11). According to him, the ISD have seen the value of their lands, so they won't easily give it up without a huge compensation.

5.5.3. The NGOs

Another set of actors in the governance of informal settlements in Abuja are the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). This set of actors include private companies/industries and organizations such as the Nigerian Slum/Informal Settlement Federation and human right activists. The roles of NGOs in the dynamics of the informal settlements are mainly to create awareness of the plights of the ISD and to enlighten the ISD on their rights (especially in Mpape as gathered from FGD #8). They also make donations and provide some amenities in the informal settlements. The traditional ruler of Mpape confirmed the contributions of the NGOs in providing some amenities to Mpape community. He said: *'many NGOs are coming to help us; they are providing some amenities both in the urban centre (of Mpape community) and the neighbouring villages'* (Interview #6). The ISD in Mabushi also acknowledged donations from NGOs and private companies. They cited an example of boreholes in the community that were constructed by Julius Berger, a popular construction company in Abuja (FGD #3).

Some state officials (Interview #26; Interview #9) also acknowledged that NGOs, human right activists and advocacy groups are fighting for ISD and preventing their displacement. According to a senior planner, the displacement of Mpape dwellers have become more difficult because of the international awareness of their plights. According to him:

'...there is growth in advocacy and NGOs fighting for them ...but in the end, Mpape will still have to go, but it will be very difficult unless it is backed up with force and alternatives, because it is not possible in this modern era where all eyes are on Abuja to just demolish them without alternatives...that's possible in other cities of Nigeria but not Abuja...' (Interview #26).

The roles of NGOs and human right activists in the dynamics of the informal settlements have some positive impacts, especially in the areas of enlightening the ISD, awareness creation, material, and vocal support. But not much success has been achieved by them in securing a permanent tenure security for the ISD. A senior planner at FCDA opined that most of the external NGOs do not understand the real plights of the ISD, especially for them insisting on the integration of the settlements in the development planning of Abuja when the socio-economic status of the ISD cannot withstand the affluent lifestyles within the city. According to him:

'...my problem with these human right activists and international people like you is that you guys don't really know the realities on ground. Do you think the best option for this people (indigenous people to be displaced and resettled) is to integrate them? No! They cannot withstand the luxurious life of the city...you know living expenses in Abuja is very high...and these people are very poor with no stable income, their farmlands which is their main source of income have been collected... they actually want to be resettled because they will have more lands at the peripheries for their farming, but their leaders are playing politics with the issue and preventing them from being resettled...integration is not the way...they can't cope with the high standard of living, and modernization of Abuja...' (Interview #26).

However, this assertion of the state official that the ISD wants to resettle or need to be resettled is just one side of the divergent opinions among stakeholders on what is better for the ISD. The arguments (among other stakeholders) for or against the resettlement/integration of the ISD is examined in the next chapter. But based on the narratives of the ISD, they are happy with the efforts of the NGOs and human right activists in pleading their cause.

5.6. Discussion and Conclusion

The phenomena of informal settlements in the global south have been considered by many to be complex, messy, and dynamic (for example, see Alfaro-d'Alençon et al., 2018; Banks et al., 2019; Michelutti & Smith, 2014; Rubin, 2018). But little in-depth insights are provided into these complex and messy dynamics. As explained in Chapter Two, numerous studies have explained how the state's structural forces produce urban informality and resulting complexity of informal settlement governance with little attention to the agency of non-state actors in the complex dynamics. Some studies (such as Beier, 2021; Chiodelli et al., 2020; Chiodelli & Tzfadia, 2016; Deuskar, 2019; Goodfellow, 2019; Picker, 2019; Rubin, 2018) have explored the complexities of urban informality beyond the state structural forces to include the roles of other non-state actors. These studies highlight the roles of non-state actors in the production and dynamics of informal settlements. But despite their significant influences in the dynamics around informal settlements, the research focus on the non-state actors is often proportionately less compared to the attention given to the state. This chapter has attempted to fill this gap by focusing on the activities and politicking of non-state actors around the informal settlements of Abuja. In this discussion section, I focus on drawing together the threads around the complexities from the non-state actors, and then their relationships with the state.

In studying the governance of informal settlements in Abuja, a key observation has been the identification of a dynamic set of influential non-state actors who directly or indirectly complicate governance process through their activities. This finding is in line with insights identified by other informality scholars such as Michelutti and Smith

(2014)'s work on the grassroot realpolitik in the governance of Mumbai informal settlements; Rubin (2018)'s on informal relations with formal authorities in the development of informal settlements in South Africa; Beier (2021)'s on how the excesses of some powerful non-state actors hamper the state's formalization plans for Morocco's ISD; and Sørbye and Braathen (2022)'s on the contentious politics of slums in Rio de Janeiro. Like these studies, I identified the core of the non-state actors to include the ISDs, their community leaders and political representatives, statutory land claimers, land developers, speculators, and the rich elites/politicians of Abuja. While most of these related studies have their contextual focus on the struggles of ISD to belong to the city through formal and informal processes, the idea of this chapter, in line with the central focus of this study to unravel the complexities in the governance of informal settlements, is to show how the activities of both the ISD and other non-state actors complicate the governance and planning of the settlements.

Complexities from the ISD or place-making?

As a caveat, explaining the complexities from the ISD is not to undermine their heroics and struggles to be part of the city. In fact, from another angle, the dynamic resistance practices of the ISD, their alliance with other stakeholders and power relations across the state, are similar to what has been captured as place-making in related studies (Friedmann, 2007; Lombard, 2014; J. W. Scott & Sohn, 2018). These scholars used the concept of place-making to explain the everyday dynamic struggles of marginalized urbanites to consolidate their existence within the urban space. For example, Lombard (2014), using the case of some Xalapa's informal settlements in Mexico, used place-making to capture the spatial, social and cultural activities of ISD to belong to the city space. While her focus is to showcase the creative and productive efforts of the ISD to counter their popular marginalization discourses, she also highlights the intricate dynamics in their place-making activities. Like my findings, the intricate dynamics include the conflict within and outside the informal settlements, the place meaning and attachments of the ISD, and the politics and power relations involving the state.

Likewise. Abuja's ISD informal settlements dwellers are constantly involved in a complex variety of place-making initiatives to consolidate their settlements and become recognized part of the city. However, as Wacquant (2008) has noted, there are a host of forces influencing these initiatives. Such influential forces range from socio-spatial processes within the settlements to the government, through to bureaucratic programmes being implemented to displace the ISD. Yet the various place-making activities in these informal settlements, especially in housing and self-help infrastructural provision, are increasingly consolidating them as belonging to the city.

Since it is obvious to the ISD of Abuja that the government is not capable of funding their resettlement and their displacement seems uncertain for now, the infrastructural development of their communities is now one of their major agitations. But the infrastructural development of the informal communities is quite complicated with defining implications. The state developing or allowing the development of the settlements implies formalizing the settlements and integrating the ISD within the

development plans of Abuja. It also implies that the state must provide alternative lands to the current statutory land claimers. But that is not yet an option from the state. The main position of the state is that both the state and the ISD do not have the resources to develop the settlements according to Abuja development plans. The state and other stakeholders assume that only the statutory landowners (through rich developer) can develop the settlements accordingly – an assumption that is being contested by some ISD. Hence, their dynamic and complicating place making initiatives and resistance practices.

The resistance practices of the ISD are meant to protest or prevent displacement and land grabbing. The dynamic resistance practices (such as economic tree planting, modernization of their lifestyles and buildings, forming of associations, physical confrontations, going to courts, and alliance with some state actors) of the ISD have been effective to some extent in reducing arbitrary appropriation of land and displacements. But there are also complications around the resistance practices. As also noted by some scholars (such as Daskalaki & Kokkinidis, 2017; Kerkvliet, 2009; J. C. Scott, 1985; Vanden, 2016), the resistance practices of the ISD are multifaceted and directed towards different (powerful) stakeholders, not necessarily against the state as commonly assumed. Although the state is usually involved as ‘the target, initiator of claims, or the third party’ that mediate or validate claims of contending actors (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). From the various resistance practices explained in this chapter, it is obvious that most of ISD do not want to be displaced or resettled. But their agitations and resistance practices seem numerous and difficult for the state to handle, thereby causing impediments to the developmental planning activities around the settlements. This makes the agitations of the ISD, their uncompromising resettlement demands, and dynamic resistance practices a part of the complicated and messy dynamics around the informal settlements of Abuja.

Another source of complexities around the settlements is the acknowledgment by some of the ISD that there are some ‘bad eggs’ among them that are working against their interests. My analysis has shown that the ISD are not entirely homogenous or united in their agitations. There are groups within the ISD that connive with other actors at the detriment of the collective struggles of the ISD. Many state officials also considered the activities of these ‘bad eggs’ to be detrimental to the state plans for the ISD (see the next chapter for more details). The heterogeneity arose from the indigenous and non-indigenous dwellers dichotomy with varying degrees of tenure security. The level of tenure security of the original/indigenous inhabitants is higher than that of the non-indigenous migrants. The original inhabitants seem to have more tenure security and immunity from arbitrary displacement, but they are still not safe because their farmlands have been confiscated. Hence, they still unite regardless of their frictions or divisions to fight or resist land grabbing and displacements in most cases. This is manifested in some of their resistance practices outlined in this chapter. And despite the differences in the level of their tenure security based on indigeneity, all ISD are still subjected to the threat of displacement (either through resettlement or forced eviction

or demolition) and (farm)land grabbing. Hence the more the need of their solidarity against their opponents.

Complexities from/among other non-state actors

Another major source of complexities from non-state actors lies in the interrelationships among the community leaders and political representatives of the ISD, statutory land claimers, land developers, speculators, and the rich elites/politicians of Abuja. One major complexity around the informal settlements is the tension within the community/traditional leaders and the political/administrative representatives of the ISD. As explained by Drivdal (2016) in her examination of community leadership contentions in some informal settlements of Cape Town, there is no clear boundary between the administrative and political functions of the representatives of ISD. The Mpape case shows that the acclaimed local political representatives are not always on the same page with the traditional councils on developmental issues. Most of the ISDs accused their political leaders of misrepresentation and fighting for their selfish interests instead of the struggles of the ISD. Although the solidarity and united activities of the ISD are abundant and made them stronger, but the conflicting interests and differences of some of them or their leaders provide other actors the opportunity to take advantage of the dwellers, thereby enhancing land grabbing and displacements in some cases. The conflicting interests in the leadership of the ISD and other differences among the ISD are one of the avenues for other stakeholders to assert their land claims or appropriate lands in the informal settlements by allying with willing actors within and around the settlements.

As rightly noted by Wacquant (2008; 2015) in the case some Ghettoes in America and French cities, and Freeman and Burgos (2016) in the case of Rio de Janeiro favelas, the state often aligns with neoliberal economic forces of wealthy elites to dispossess marginalized urbanites. But my findings revealed that there are some ISD that also work with the wealthy elites and politicians to forcefully collect lands in the informal settlements. That is, addition to Wacquant's focus on the elite's collaboration with the state to confiscate lands, my case has shown that the wealthy elites can also connive with some non-state actors to grab the lands of the vulnerable. This compound the plights of the ISD from within. And such alliance among non-state actors to dispossess vulnerable ISD shows a bottom-up dispossession as against popular narratives of top-down dispossession from the state.

The other non-state actors that significantly contribute to the complications around the informal settlements are the statutory land claimers, developers, land speculators and Abuja rich elites. The statutory land claimers often work with developers to negotiate or struggle for their officially allocated lands. And in many cases, the conflict between them and the ISD is hardly resolved especially when some ISD are still living on the statutorily allocated plots. The complications usually caused by the statutory land claimers is through conniving with developers and putting pressure on the state to displace the ISD for them to access their official lands. As for the developers, their

wealth and connections to powerful state officials make them unavoidable in the governance of the settlements. They also work with some actors within the informal settlements to grab the land of the weak ISD. The excesses of the developers are enhanced by the unregulated land market in Abuja. The rich always have their ways in accessing lands with their money against the poor. This is similar to the assertion of van Dijk (2017)'s explanation on how it is impossible to have a world-class slum-free Indian cities. van Dijk argued that governmental neoliberal economic and development policies especially in housing and infrastructure, often favour the rich, real estate market and the land mafias at the expense of the urban poor. In the case of Abuja, the agency of the ISD to resist a direct displacement from the state is growing, but they are still at the whims of the rich developers that can go to any length to access lands in Abuja.

The developers are one of the major non-state actors that are complicating the governance of the informal settlements. The developers claimed that they usually spent huge amount of money (for buying lands from allottees and bribing of state officials) to get lands for development, hence, they need to make returns on their investments. However, the alliance of most developers with top state officials, rich elites, and politicians to acquire lands mostly for commercial gains is another complication in the governance of Abuja's informal settlements. With their powerful alliance with top state officials, their excesses are often unchecked. For example, some of them build structures that are different from the officially approved ones without punitive measures. As part of the effort of the state to enhance affordable mass housing that could reduce the problems and growth of informal settlements, hectares of lands are usually provided for willing estate developers to build affordable mass housing, but the developers usually end up building luxurious estates or sell the lands at exorbitant rates to the rich. This is also like Beier (2021)'s reported case of developers' excesses in the Morocco resettlement programmes for ISD. The activities of the developers, land speculators and the scramble for Abuja lands by the rich and political elites have made the costs of lands and houses in Abuja to be extravagantly high. This has aggravated the divergent interests and actors that are laying claims (genuinely or otherwise) to *assumed available* lands in the informal settlements. The developers not building the recommended affordable mass housing directly or indirectly influence housing problems in the city, which results in informal housing practices among the disadvantaged urbanites.

These dynamic contentions and politicking of different non-state stakeholders contribute significantly to the messy, complex, multi-layered, and poorly understood urban land issues in many African cities as have observed by many. They complicate developmental planning activities and can preclude feasible state interventions if there is no compromise among the stakeholders. As argued in my theoretical framework, the difference between my analysis and other similar works on the roles of non-state actors in the complexities around informal settlements is that I link their activities to the state. That is, their politicking is interdependent and connected with the state actors – in most cases both the state and non-state actors work together to complicate the

dynamics around the settlements. This led to my second point of discussion: the relationship between the state and non-state actors.

Contentious politicking of non-state actors and the state

As noted in my conceptual framework, I used *contentious politicking* (instead of the original concept of contentious politics) to focus more on the roles and impacts of non-state actors in the complications around informal settlements. But as I have shown so far, the politicking of non-state actors is not completely devoid of state's inputs. So, to complete the cycle of contentious politics that involved the state as the third party, mediator, and/or initiator of claim making (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015), there is need to discuss the relationship of the state with non-state actors in my case studies. Unlike related studies on contentions politics in informal settlements, my study shows the active engagement of many state actors with non-state actors to compound the complexities around informal settlements. For instance, using the case of three informal settlements in Mumbai, Michelluti and Smith (2014) explained that ISD seek inclusion into the formal city dynamics by building unofficial networks with municipal officials through mediators (NGOs and politicians), but such intermediators are not visible in the case of Abuja's informal settlements. Abuja's ISD have a quite direct access to many state actors and institutions in their struggle to be in the city.

A very related study to my findings in this chapter is work of Sørboe and Braathen (2022) on the contentious politics in three favelas in Rio de Janeiro. The focus of their study is to highlight the relative successes and failures of ISD in contentious politicking. But similar to the findings in this chapter, the resistance practices of the Rio de Janeiro ISD involves physical confrontations and networking with local leaders, sympathetic state officials, religious leaders, high ranking academics and other professionals to help counter the state's plans of displacing them. The emphasis of my study is the impact of these contentious politicking in the governance and planning of the informal settlements. Also, their study did not unpack the state to show how state actors collaborate with non-state actors in their contentious politicking. As shown in this chapter, the activities of the various non-state actors in collaboration with many state actors around the informal settlements of Abuja can make the state's responsibility of managing the settlements more complicated, especially as most of their activities, contentions, and ways of agitating for their claims are directly or indirectly involving the state.

A critical analysis of my case studies shows that the ISD could also find solace with the state against their enemies or powerful actors. Some of their resistance practices are enhanced or supported by the state. For example, the economic tree planting to prevent arbitrary appropriation of land is allowed by the state even if they demand arbitrary price for the trees. Their access to some insiders within the state planning agencies to provide them with prior information on unfavourable development plans (such as demolitions) is another alliance with the state in their resistance strategies. Tarrow (2011) described this as taking advantage of the defragmented components of the state

and the shifting opportunities in different government regimes. Most of the resistance practices of the ISD having the support of the state are effectively checkmating arbitrary land dispossession and preventing unfavourable state planning activities that could displace them. However, the infrastructural development of their communities is still a major challenge, especially for the fact that the state is yet to accept their existence in the overall developmental plan of Abuja.

As for the other non-state stakeholders (developers, speculators, rich elites, and politicians), their powerful alliance with the state institutions and top officials are obvious in the whole dynamics around the informal settlements. Many studies often focused on these set of actors because of their powerful influences. What my case has shown about these actors is more empirical details on how they negotiate their ways around all stakeholders and not just the state. That is, they form alliances with both the state and non-state actors including some ISD. Chapter 6 provides more details about the state's relationship with this set of actors and their excesses in complicating the governance of Abuja's informal settlements.

Another interesting insight on the non-state actors' relationship with the state actors is the presence of some generic actors. These 'across-the-board' actors include representatives of the ISD at the municipal levels, such as the district heads, councillors, municipal council chairmen, and some state workers living or having relatives in the informal settlements – for example, one of the FCDA's directors in Mpape, the former AMAC speaker in Mabushi, and many state workers living in informal settlements. For their statutory recognized roles and positions, they are state actors, but they can also be described as generic actors for their obvious affinities with the contending actors. This also include some state officials that are openly into Abuja land business and working with developers. The impacts of some top state officials having vested interests in the lands of ISD in addition to the difficulties of the state development planning officials in managing the settlements amid the politicking of other actors require more in-depth analysis. This is done in the next chapter. As suggested by some scholars (see Alfaro-d'Alençon et al., 2018; Banks et al., 2019; Christian Haid & Hilbrant, 2019; Koster & Nuijten, 2016), more exploration of the state-informality nexus is needed to unravel and understand the Janus-faced relationship of the state in dealing with the dynamic sets of actors with conflicting interests in the informal settlements. I hypothetically conceived the state as a stage in chapter two because of its amenability tendencies. But the elaborate roles of the state as a stage is expounded in the next chapter examining the (re)actions of the state and its actors in the contentious politics around Abuja's informal settlements.



Chapter 6

Informality and the state:
understanding the state in the
governance of informal settlements



Chapter 6

Informality and the state: understanding the state in the governance of informal settlements

6.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I explored how non-state state actors (especially the ISD, developers and statutory land right holders) shape the contentions around the informal settlements of Abuja in both direct and indirect ways that are connected with the state. In this chapter, I elaborate on the roles and impacts of the state and its actors in the management of the informal settlements. In reference to the contentious politicking of the non-state actors and the assertion of an amenable state in my conceptual framework, the state is presented in this chapter as a stage where claims and demands are made, validated, or negotiated by contending actors. Although the state contributes significantly to the challenges around the settlements through its policies and programmes, the state is not static. The changing regimes of the state often come with new state actors and sometimes new rules of the game. According to Tilly and Tarrow (2015), contending actors have mastered the act of taking advantage of shifting opportunities that are provided by regime changes within the state. That is, the state is no longer an exclusive tool of the rich powerful actors, it is also now available for the of the less powerful actors that have learnt the act of using the state. Based on the amenability of the state explained in chapter 2, this chapter is structured to explain the various components and actors of the state, the power relations within and outside the state, the incoherencies and complexities within the state and how they translate into the state's dynamic relationships with non-state actors. The discussion seeks to provide some insights into the commonly assumed complexity of the state in managing urban informality.

6.2. The state's components, actors, and complexities

The state is made up of different departments, agencies and governance levels that are sometimes neither incongruent nor coherent in their dynamic roles or mandates (see Christian Haid & Hilbrant, 2019; Hall et al., 2015; Lindell, 2008). Yet the state is often presented as a united homogenous entity. To contribute to the understanding of the state, I unpack the state using the case of Abuja's informal settlements to unravel who and what the state is governing in these contested spaces. The quest here is to understand how the state became complicated in its statutory role of managing the informal settlements. The section focuses on the roles of various state actors and components around the governance of Abuja's informal settlements and the incoherencies observed in their working mechanisms.

6.2.1. Divergent state actors and components

The components of the Nigerian state are the executive, the judiciary, and the legislature, all operating at different levels – local, state and national levels. The different components of the state at different levels and the various departments, agencies and parastatals of the state also have various actors across all the state organs. Many times, the various state actors have various mandates or roles that could be conflicting on contested issues concerning the governed. In the case of Abuja's informal settlements, the various state actors that are directly or indirectly involved in the contentions include the presidential authorities, the military, the law makers (legislature) and politicians, heads of state planning agencies, and the municipal area councils' representatives.

The presidency

The presidency is the highest authority and executive body. The presidential actors include the president, vice president, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) minister, and other officials that are directly working for or under the president. These set of state actors are very powerful to influence or interfere in the operations of any organ of the state. Most of the inefficiencies of the state in managing the informal settlements are usually ascribed to the highest authorities, according to most of the interviewed state officials, especially for their lack of political will to execute or implement pragmatic plans. The lack of political will by the top authorities has been linked to the socio-political dynamics of Nigeria. For example, it is a common belief in Nigeria that the FCT was deliberately relocated to its present location in Abuja by the northern political elites for political dominance and ownership of Abuja in case Nigeria breaks up (see Elleh, 2016; Interview #48). The indigenous communities/informal settlements dwellers in Abuja are predominantly tribes from northern Nigeria (especially the Gwaris, Hausa/Fulanis and Ebiras). The common conjecture for the lack of political will to finalize the resettlement of the indigenous communities is that the northern political powers in the presidency have realized over the years that rich investors from the southern parts of the country have systematically used their resources to statutorily accrue most of Abuja lands – including lands in the yet to be resettled settlements. Hence, displacing the ISD who are mostly from the northern part is considered detrimental to the political dominance of the north in Abuja because most of the statutory landowners are from the southern part (Interviews #30 and #34).

According to a former executive director of the development control department (Interview #34) and (Elleh, 2016), the Igbos from the southern part of Nigeria are in control of over 70% of Abuja lands. Most of the landed properties like estates, hotels, plazas and shopping malls in Abuja are owned by the Igbos (Interview #34) who are renowned for their industriousness, entrepreneurship, and huge investments in lands. Another popular belief about the Igbos is their connections and alliance with top state officials across most state institutions. That is, they can influence most state officials to do their bidding (e.g., allocation of lands/validation of land papers for development).

It is worthy to note here that the ministerial position of FCT minister to govern the affairs of Abuja has since the 1980s always been a political appointee that is from the northern part of Nigeria. But despite that, the rich southern investors are still seen to be in control of Abuja land markets. The affinities of some of the ISD to the northern political powers in the presidency has not translated to the development of their settlements, nor has it prevented the displacement threats around them. Also, as shown in the last chapter, most of the ISD are of the opinion that their political leaders are not representing their interests well. However, the direct way by which the presidency can interfere in the governance of the informal settlements can be seen in the explanation of a former executive director of DCD as follows:

'...so many challenges (around the informal settlements), political influence is one of them, there are times even you want to go by the legal procedures, there are one or two influences from the top that may stop you from doing your work...there are cases that when we already set out to demolish some of these communities that refused to leave after collecting their allocation papers that calls, orders from above will ask us to stop, at some point they (the top authorities) started challenging me that am taking the issue too personal as if I have vested interests...can you imagine the police taking over the Jibi resettlement estate, why? No sincerity...' (Interview #34).

This executive director was appointed by the president, and the orders from above can only emanate from the presidency, if not the president himself. Thus, in the example given in the quote, the police taking over the completed Jibi resettlement estate initially planned for the ISD could only have been approved or ordered by the president. This is an example of the power relations that exist across the state organs.

The Military

Historically, before the return of democracy in 1999, the military and its officials have been popularly accused of arbitrarily allocating lands to themselves and cronies against the developmental plans of Abuja. For instance, the presidential villa (Aso rock) built during the military era and the present cantonments around it has been considered informal (see Elleh, 2016) going by the provisions of the 1979 master plan that is being used to demolish other informal settlements. According to Elleh (2016), the present presidential villa is informal because its location is not in accordance with Abuja's master plan. The military (under the control of the presidency) whose top officials (past and present) have controversially confiscated several hectares of farmlands from the indigenous communities for yet to be defined military projects. Some top military generals allocated many lands in the yet to be resettled settlements to themselves. For example, the traditional council of Kpadna community explained that General Abdulsalam (a former military president) has been confirmed to be the statutory owner of most of their community lands including the present King's palace (FGD #9). However, with the fast pace of urbanization and development in Abuja, the surplus lands that were confiscated and not developed then are now objects of contention

among the indigenous communities who have now found their voices, the state, and the military - both active and retired military officials.

The military being very powerful can still use force to develop any piece of land against any resistance from others – including other state organs. For instance, a member of the Mabushi traditional council (FGD #3) narrated an incident of an extra judicial killing of an indigenous youth by the military in 2018 during one of their usual confrontations with military officers over the use of *their controversial* farmlands. According to their narrative, the presidency wasn't aware of the military excesses and that if not for the vice president's prompt reconciliatory moves, the situation would have degenerated because the ISD were ready to react through a chaotic protest. However, just like many other similar cases, the presidential judicial committee constituted to address the incident are still carrying out a never-ending investigation of the military culprit (FGD #3). This incidence is another example of the dynamic power relations within the state in managing the informal settlements – the presidency claimed not to authorize the military actions and many of the state planning officials I interviewed cannot verify the statutory ownership claims of the military. However, as shown in chapter 4, there are still many military signposts on several hectares of lands across Abuja warning people to keep off. None of my interviewees was able to provide any tangible information on who allocated the lands to the military and for what purpose. Presumably, and in line with Elleh (2016), the military officials might have arbitrarily allocated the lands to themselves during the military regimes. And probably because they still have some powerful influence in subsequent governments, the lands have not been or cannot be recollected from them.

The legislators and political appointees

Abuja as a capital city functioning as the administrative headquarter of the Nigerian government usually witnesses a new set of elected/selected state officials and political appointees in different government regimes every 4 years. They range from the elected legislators to appointed ministers, commissioners and heads of agencies and parastatals. Every new set of state officials usually lobbies for new houses/lands as part of their entitlements and/or just because of the desire to own a landed property in the highly coveted national capital (Interviews #20; #26; #28; #30; #34; #44; #46). The October 19, 2012, edition of the Premium Times (reported by Ibeh, 2012), published an expository report on the contentions among AMAC, FCDA, legislators, developers and some ISD on how Nigerian law makers and other political office holders used their political positions to confiscate lands in Abuja. The stories on the inordinate demands for Abuja lands by the law makers and politicians was confirmed by a top official of the DCD. According to him, the land demands of the law makers and politicians necessitated the demolition of some informal settlements. He said:

'...the senators and house of representatives usually use the time of budget allocation to demand for lands, even when several lands have been allocated to them...for instance, the demolition of millennium estate with over 190

houses was demolished for the national assembly members and other politicians... (Interview #34).

The millennium estate was being built for mass housing but had to be brought down (in the name of unapproved development) for some state officials to use the land. The developers of the millennium estate have used their power network to access the land but were short-changed when higher powers wanted the land. This shows how power play influences what is formal or informal, and the intrigues across the several organs of the state. This narrative is an insider exposition of what often transpired in demolition exercises. In the news and to the public, state planning officials often claim that they are demolishing *informal* settlements for violating housing regulations (see Hakim, 2011). But behind the scenes, they were arm twisted to confiscate lands for legislators and political appointees.

Some of the ISD also recognized the law makers and politicians as another problem in their struggles. A tribal head in Mpape explained that one of the reasons Mpape was planned to be demolished was to give their lands to the new senators of Abuja, but the disagreement between the senators and state governors also contributed to why Mpape has not been demolished (Interview #44). The governors wanted to use Mpape land for state government houses/branches in Abuja while the senators want their lands for personal houses. On the impact of the politicians in the land dynamics of Abuja, a freelance land agent attributed the high costs of lands/houses in Abuja to the unregulated land buying by the rich politicians. According to him:

'...speculators are making Abuja lands to be very costly because the politicians are buying lands and houses with any amount, if a politician buy your neighbour's land for 50 million, a land that's not up to 1million, highest 5 million, you too will want to sell your own for 50 million naira, that's how the land prices keep increasing...see the small house the owner (politician) of Enyo filling stations bought for 200 million in Utako, just because he wants to have a house in Abuja...they (politicians) are buying plenty houses and building estates that people cannot buy, that's the reason for all the vacant houses in Abuja, yet people are suffering and looking for where to live...' (Interview #46).

Also, a town planner in FCDA attributed the ISD uncompromising resistance and high compensation demands to the lucrative businesses of developers and politicians in Abuja. According to him, the customary landowners would also want millions of naira for their lands (Interview #11). The lucrative land business in Abuja involving developers, speculators and politicians is directly or indirectly putting pressure on the ISD as the demand for lands is increasing in Abuja. Abuja land market is not regulated, those with the resources can use huge amount of money to buy lands especially lands in contested spaces within the city.

Heads and staff of state planning agencies

These include the chief executives appointed by and answerable to the president/FCT minister and staff of FCDA, AGIS, Lands department and DCD. The main issue about these set of actors is the segmentation of planning duties around the informal settlements. For example, within the FCDA alone, there are at least four departments (survey and mapping; urban and regional planning, satellite town development section; and resettlement and compensation department) that are involved in one or two issues about the informal settlements. The Land department allocates land based on the inputs from FCDA, while AGIS serves as a digital information system for recording, storing, validating and issuing land papers. The Development Control department is mandated to ensure compliance to building standards and approval, and to bring down illegal/unapproved structures. Almost all the state officials I interviewed in the various government agencies acknowledged that there is no good working synergy among them. Vital information is hoarded to cover up illegal/unofficial dealings or not shared to enhance efficient land administration among the agencies (Interviews #28; #34; & #35).

Apart from the lack of good working synergy, another problem with the state planning agencies is the assertion by the chief planning officer (who had previously worked in resettlement department for 16 years) in the DCD that resettlement budgets are hardly executed by the agencies (Interview #28). According to him, the moneys meant for the resettlement programmes are being looted by the bosses without reproof from the top (presidency). This collaborates the interviews #34 and #35 on the existence of corrupt/unofficial practices across the state organs – from the presidency to the heads of planning agencies.

The municipal councils' officials

Municipal area councils also play a role in the governance of the settlements. They are statutory local government arms that make rules to govern local affairs in the communities, but whenever there is contradiction or overlap of mandates with other state organs, the decisions of the previous sets of state actors are superseded. But they are still influential political actors in the governance of Abuja/informal settlements as they represent the political leaders of the communities in official engagements. They sometimes provide services and basic amenities in the informal settlements through the statutory allocations from the national budget and/or internal revenues accrued from the settlements.

The prominent actors in the municipal councils include the council chairmen, the speaker of their parliaments, councillors, the municipal level town planners and district heads. Despite their statutory recognition as part of the state, the officials of the municipal area councils claimed they are not being carried along in the developmental planning of Abuja. This is another incoherency among the various state components. For example, a councillor of AMAC explained that all the councillors representing the

people of Abuja (including the ISD) cannot access the FCT minister to discuss grassroots problems. According to him, that is detrimental to developmental planning of Abuja because they (municipal actors) are the ones to mobilize the masses for compliance to any developmental project (Interview #47).

At the developmental planning level, the municipal level planners also feel excluded in the governance of the settlements. According to the municipal planners, local land allocations, documentations and plans are supposed to start from the planning/lands departments of the municipal councils before being finalized at the AGIS. But that's not the case because the federal government prefers a top-down approach. This is another missing link among the state organs. A resident planner at AMAC explained the situation as follows:

'...we are not involved in resettlement planning, but we mediate whenever there is problem in the community...we designed the communities and make recommendations to them (FCDA), but they hardly use our plans...that's why there are plenty land cases to settle, they don't work with us, but the people prefer us to them...' (Interview #36).

From the various state agencies and organs outlined so far, it is obvious that the lack of clear-cut mandates or overlapping responsibilities and the lack of good working synergy among them are major basis for complicating the governance of the informal settlements. The disunited or disjointed state organs/agencies, the political interference in planning activities from higher authorities, and unofficial practices from many state's officials are enough to complicate the governance of the informal settlements.

6.2.2. The generic actors

There are some actors that are generally known to be working for the state and at same time working in support of non-state stakeholders, either because they are part of the contentions, or they are simply on the side of any of the contending actors. I described these set of actors as generic actors in chapter 5. For the dual affinity to both the state and their *constituency*, their alignment with contending non-state actors is a significant source of complication in the state's planning around the informal settlements, especially when state's plans for the settlements are against their interests. As discussed so far and from the previous chapters, the actors that fall into the category of generic actors include the representatives of the ISD at the municipal area councils (eg, Hon. Hassan Mabushi, a former speaker at AMAC and still working with AMAC); the FCDA's directors in Mpape who is also the chairman of tribal heads in Mpape; the federal inland revenue staff who is also a land law agent; the AGIS staff (a surveyor) who is also a land speculator having lands to sell at Kabusa; some AGIS and lands department staff known to be collaborating with investors, land developers, and individuals for personal gains; state workers living or having relatives in the informal

settlements; and some state officials who are simply sympathetic to the plights of ISD, and are against the state's present management strategies around their settlements.

These generic actors have different degrees of alliance with the contending actors. As explained in chapter 5, the alliance of the ISD with some state actors serves as a form of resistance strategy. The generic actors are sources of support for the ISD within the state. Some of the representatives of the ISD acknowledged the support of many state officials in their struggles (Interview #25; FGDs #3 and #8). On the other hand, a developer (Interview #30) also explained how some staff of Lands Department/AGIS collaborate with investors/developers by allocating lands to them in order to share the proceeds after development. These set of state actors considered their involvement in Abuja land businesses as '*side hustling*' or side businesses in addition to their paid jobs with the state (Interview #46). This seems to be an acceptable norm as their activities are not hidden to the public.

The surveyor in AGIS who took me on a participatory observation through a land buying tour in Kabusa claimed to own (statutorily) a plot of land within the settlement but made clear that I will need to '*settle*' (compensate for any asset on the land) the customary landowner before I can do anything on the land (Interview #46). Here, the surveyor was no longer acting as a state worker, but as a statutory land claimer/investor/land agent on the other side of the contending parties. The legal officer (Interview #23), being a land lawyer preparing land deeds for land buyers and sellers, was also acting on the side of the contending actors against the ISD. He would prefer that more lands are bought from the ISD for him to get more commissions.

From the discussion so far, it can be noted that these across-the-board actors with various affinities or alliance with all the contending actors are significant set of actors in the complications around the informal settlements. They have both the understanding of the state's working mechanisms/loopholes and the field realities of the contending stakeholders. They can serve as major conduits for the non-state stakeholders to penetrate and manipulate the state, they can work in support or against the various contending actors. Their understanding of the working mechanisms of the state as insiders will avail their allies the necessary information they need to manipulate various state institutions. This is a major source of complication within the state.

6.2.3. Other incoherencies and unofficial practices of the state

Many stakeholders (including some state officials) around Abuja's informal settlements acknowledged that there are hosts of unofficial and corrupt practices by many state officials in the governance of Abuja's informal settlements. There are many reported corrupt practices in Abuja land administration (see Abdullahi, 2020; Adama, 2020a, 2020b; ICPC, 2015), but the ones discussed here directly concerns the ISD. Many such practices relate to the resettlement programmes. A senior planner at the FCDA believed that the resettlement imbroglio will not cease because of the corrupt practices around the programme:

'...the resettlement wahala (problem) has been on for a long time and will continue because the government is not sincere in the resettlement project or resettling anyone, they are just playing politics with it and using it to steal money...every year they keep budgeting for this resettlement, yet nothing is happening...' (Interview #26).

Another senior planner in the resettlement department also attested to the corrupt practices around the resettlement programmes. He said:

'...there are issues of corrupt practices... (who are those involved in the corrupt practices?) ...I can't mention their names...you want me to indict my department, but there are cases of mismanagement of the resettlement projects...' (Interview #39).

Other allegations (made by state officials) of corrupt practices around the resettlement programmes include looting of compensation packages (Interview #27) and allowing the construction of substandard resettlement houses (Interview #45). The corrupt practices also extend to land allocations – there are accusations of indiscriminate land allocations to underserving persons in the Lands Department and AGIS (Interviews #23; #27; #30). Apart from the top officials, a senior director working for both the Lands department and AGIS affirmed that some staff of his agencies are contributing to the complications around the resettlement programmes by providing sensitive information to their cronies on how to buy allocation papers from potential resettlers (Interview #45).

Another incoherency that was observed from the narratives of some state actors is that despite the official non-recognition of customary land rights, many land transactions in Abuja still requires the *blessings* of the traditional rulers to avoid crises. A senior planner at FCDA explained that:

'...the chiefs are still selling lands using the old tenure arrangement...I bought my own land from a chief before formalizing the agreement at AGIS, sometimes you just have to do that for peace to reign...although they are doing that illegally...' (Interview #26).

Although the customary arrangements are not officially recognized by the federal arm of the state, but the narrative above shows that the arrangements are not easily expendable. Also, in what can be considered as another incoherency within the state, another arm of the state (the municipal area councils) still acknowledges or believes in the customary land arrangements. According to a resident planner in one of the municipal area councils, a bottom-up land governance through the official recognition of customary land papers would have reduced the land crises in Abuja because the traditional leaders will not back out (Interview #36). She explained that despite not involving the municipal councils, most land buyers usually start their land registration with the municipal councils before contending with AGIS at the federal level. The importance of the municipal area council land papers is also confirmed by a tribal head in Mpape, who is also a director at FCDA. He said such papers are needed before

anyone can develop any land (Interview #44). He claimed to have used his privilege of working with FCDA to convert his municipal land papers to the federal land papers. But he is still classified as an ISD by living in Mpape.

In another instance of incoherence within the state organs, the tribal head continued his land paper story by describing the government as being *stupid* for classifying them as informal but still collecting revenues (ground rents) from them. He said:

'...they come here for revenue, yet they still come here to demolish buildings, is that not stupidity? why can't they give us their own paper (statutory papers)? why can't they integrate us? that is what I talked about in that paper (pointing to a newspaper where he granted a press conference on the agitations of Mpape residents) ... (Interview #44).

In addition to the several corrupt practices by some state officials around the management of the informal settlements, the recognition of customary land arrangements for practical purpose, the collection of revenues from the ISD is another anomaly of that state. If the ISD are formally recognized to pay ground rents, why are they being considered informal to be displaced? This is also one of their arguments against the state in the Mpape court case.

6.3. State's relationships with non-state actors

The discussions so far on the dynamic state actors and their divergent interests/opinions have provided some insights into the complexities of the state in managing Abuja's informal settlements. But the case of some state actors working with or being part of the contending actors is another remarkable complexity that's worth discussing. Hence the need to critically examine the dynamic relationships of the state with the contending non-state actors.

6.3.1. State's relationship with other stakeholders

The other stakeholders in the governance of Abuja's informal settlements that mainly engage the state over the contentions around the settlements are the (political) leaders and representatives of the ISD on one hand and the rich statutory landowners, developers or investors on the other hand. The state's relationships with the leaders and representatives of the ISD is complex. There are few instances where the leaders and representatives of the ISD work with the state in favour of the ISD, but they have been largely accused (by both the ISD and state officials) of working against the good interests of the ISD for selfish economic and political gains (FGDs #8 & #9; Interviews #25; #26; & #28). A senior planner that's privy to the planning meetings with the representatives of the ISD explained that there is disconnection between what the ISD wants and what their representatives are projecting, yet the state cannot avoid meeting

with them because of their stakes (Interview #26). This resonates well with one of the criticisms of Van Assche et al. (2012) on non-state actors' participation in official planning. They opined that such participations usually include popular stakeholders at the expense of the real victims. The other instances of the representatives abusing the state against the ISD are the hijacking/looting of developmental efforts from the state as explained by Mpape ISD (FGD #8) and collaborating with developers to put pressure on the state to grab/demolish the lands/structures of vulnerable ISD (FGD #9 and Interview #25).

The dynamic relationship of the state with the developers has been outlined all through this thesis. In addition to the corrupt practices of some state official in allocating lands to developers for profit sharing discussed earlier, another obvious alliance of the developers with some state officials is by working with AGIS/Land department to identify and go after statutory allottees to buy their lands with tempting offers. This unofficial alliance hampers the state's initiative to make lands accessible to all regardless their socio-economic status. The attractive offers from the developers have inspired many to obtain statutory allocations from the state at all costs just to sell to rich developers. A developer explained this lucrative transaction like this:

'...those that were allocated lands from AGIS meet us to develop the lands and share the profit...usually 60-40, the developer takes 60% while the land owner takes 40% because he is just bringing the land not money, but the developer will source for money and buyers when the plot is developed...the lands are allocated freely by the government but they sell it to developers at exorbitant prices, see the land we are developing where you met us, we bought it for over a 100 million naira (about 200, 000 euros) from the original allottee...and you still have to retain the name of the original allottee in the building papers because the processes of name changing is usually cumbersome...that's how we (the developers) get lands...the big developers have their connections in AGIS to monitor allocations, and go after allottees whenever there are new allocations...' (Interview #30).

The land developers/investors are more connected with the state than the ISD because of money. The developers offer more money/profits to the state officials; hence they can influence or manipulate the state (actors) more. And their excesses are often unchecked by the state because of their alliance with top officials (Interview #45). The case of the former FCT minister (mentioned in chapter 5) using his land developing company to confiscate lots of lands from the ISD in the name of land swapping is a typical example. Another way through which the land/estate developers seem to be out of the state's control is by building structures that are different from the officially approved ones. The defaulters are rarely punished because of lack of synergy among the planning and development control agencies. Building of mass housing as approved by the state could have reduced the pressure on the lands of the ISD (Interview #29). The resources of these other actors could only make their relationships with many state officials collaborative against the ISD. The activities and roles of the developers around the informal settlement can be considered one of the major challenges of the ISD. The

developers driven by the economic interests on the ISDs' lands can influence other actors (state and non-state) with their wealth to access lands. Their wealth and connections to powerful state officials and rich elites (including some representatives of the ISD) make them a strong force to contend with by the ISD.

6.3.2. State's relationship with the ISD

The common narrative in urban informality discourse is that powerful and rich actors collaborate with the state to marginalize ISD, or that ISD are heroically struggling against the state and powerful actors to be part of the city (see Lombard, 2014; Rocco & Ballegooijen, 2019; Sørbye & Braathen, 2022; Wacquant, 2008). These perspectives are not out of place considering the various inputs of the state in the emergence of the informal settlements and the challenges of the ISD. But from the insights provided in the last chapter, it can be observed that there are many instances of support from the state to the ISD. This is the other side of the narratives on state's relationship with ISD that is often underreported reported in literature. This section will highlight some of the alliances between the state and ISD in their quest to be part of the city. But this is not to relegate the fact that the state (or part of the state) is still being used to persecute the ISD. In order not to underplay the activities of the state against the ISD, it is important to reemphasize the various ways the state has acted or acting against the ISD before explaining the state activities that are in support of the ISD.

The poverty and very poor infrastructures within the informal settlements compared to their surrounding formal neighbourhoods are obvious signs that there is a structural imbalance in the governance of the informal settlements. That is, the state that could coordinate the infrastructural development of the formal neighbourhoods failed to extend such developments to the informal settlements. Although the several unresolved contentions around the settlements might have warranted this situation, it is the state that initiated their informalization status. Other anti ISD state activities include the nonrecognition of customary land rights, exclusion from infrastructural developments, and the never-ending demolitions and threats of displacements. The official nonrecognition of the customary land rights of most of the ISD is a fundamental problem for the ISD. The statutory land papers are not just expensive for many of the ISD, they are hardly given even when they apply. A long-time resident of Mpape and a Gbagi indigene explained that many of them have been applying for the statutory land papers for more than 10 years with no success (FGD #4). They needed the papers for tenure security, but the state is not helping with that.

There are several ways the state can be seen to be acting against the ISD. However, the insights from chapters 4 and 5 explain how issues are quite complicated by the activities of other non-state actors. In addition, the divergent state components and the internal power dynamics among state actors discussed earlier in this chapter indicate that the state is not acting united towards the ISD. Despite the reported multiple cases of state's anti ISD activities, there are also several narratives on how some state actors have been supportive of the ISD. Although the narratives on the support of the state

might be subjective experiences depending on the negotiation or resistance process of individual settlements/persons, but it still shows the other side of the state's relationship with ISD.

6.3.2.1. Some areas of alliance between the state and ISD

Clientelism

Clientelism is usually assumed to be the main reason why many state actors (especially politicians) support ISD. However, most of Abuja powerful politicians do not need the votes of the locals as they are from other parts of Nigeria converging in Abuja as the administrative headquarter of the country. Clientelist relationships are therefore mainly possible at the local municipal levels where municipal state executives are elected by Abuja residents. Even at that level, the clientelist relationships are not as fruitful as the ISD expect. According to some of the ISD, their (political) leaders are just using them as pawns for selfish interests (FGD #9). A top state official and a former executive director of DCD explained that the form of clientelism in Abuja has a national dimension beyond just the votes. It includes ethnic consideration for the dominant group that will occupy Abuja lands. According to him:

'...the FCT administrators are using them as political tools...the people in these slums are mainly Gbagyis and Hausas, if you displace them, the Igbos will take over the lands, and the North (political elites from northern Nigeria) don't want that...it will disrupt their voting power balance, they feel Abuja is theirs...if the Igbos take over and the indigenes are moved to the periphery, it will not be possible for them to rig elections within the city, because they can't use the Igbos for such (rigging)...even with such political calculations, they usually loose elections within the city...' (Interview #34).

The narrative above illustrates why many top state officials (dominated by politicians that are from the same ethnic background of most of the ISD) are not having the political will to forcefully resettle the ISD. The clientelist relationships could exist, but the fact that the ISD are still being threatened and are without tenure security shows that the clientelist relationships are not very fruitful. However, there are cases of state support that cannot be directly linked to clientelism because of the dynamic interests of those involved. Such support ranges from supporting or enhancing the resistance practices of the ISD to simple acts of empathy or street level bureaucracy. Similarly, Rubin (2018) described the informal *cordial* relationship of some state actors with ISD as 'moments of interpenetration and mutual permeation of formal and informal practices' (Rubin, 2018, p. 2239). This explains that the relationship between ISD and many state actors goes beyond clientelism.

Support from different organs of the state

As noted in chapter 5, most of the resistance practices are directly or indirectly directed towards the state for validation or support. This means that their resistance practices

will be difficult to sustain without adequate support from the state's various actors and organs. One important resistance practice of the ISD is the economic tree planting to prevent arbitrary displacement. The state has recommended and allowed the adequate compensation for any (farm)land that's to be developed by anyone having statutory lands within the settlements. Although the compensation is a legal requirement, there would be more crises among the contending actors if the state choose not to enforce or support it. All the stakeholders traced the practical normalization of the tree planting to the former minister of FCT (Nasir El Rufai). El-rufai is notorious for the past controversial demolitions and displacements in Abuja between 2003 and 2007 (see COHRE & SERAC, 2008). So, in another perspective, his institutionalization of the tree planting can be seen as a way of compensating the ISD for their losses. The tree planting transactions is supposed to be sanctioned by the state but negotiation between statutory landowners and customary landowners is now at the discretion or willingness of the later. Meaning if a customary landowner is not willing to accept any compensation (yet), the state cannot force them to (Interviews #23 and #48).

Another component of the state that commonly provide relieve or solace for the ISD is the judiciary. I noted earlier that the ISD have learnt the art of using one arm of the state against the other. That is, while some stakeholders are trying to use some of the state planning agencies to displace the ISD, the ISD are also using the state judicial institutions to prevent their displacement. In addition to the judiciary, the generic actors that are having affinities with the indigenous communities have also used their offices and power to work against their displacements or at least provide them with vital information that could enhance their resistance.

Empathy or street level bureaucracy

Some state workers, probably in the spirit of empathy or street level bureaucracy, are being rational and sympathetic to the struggles of the marginalized communities. These set of state workers do not have any obvious affinity with the ISD, they just seem to be taking objective position or being realistic about the contentions around the informal settlements. They are very much involved in the planning activities around the informal settlements. So, it is very possible that their position during planning and planning executions will likely be in favour of the ISD. For instance, a senior town planner in the resettlement department gave an extensive account on why he is totally in support of the agitations and resistances of the ISD. According to him, the ISD do not deserve displacement and should be offered better alternatives if they must be displaced. He said:

'...these people have being living in their communities for several years, according to international laws, they are supposed to be considered part of the city, and not resettled...they are now wiser and enlightened, they know their rights...the government should just find something else to do in their communities instead of insisting on resettlement, besides the government cannot afford the cost, the 1979 costs was around 3 billion naira, the government could not afford that then, imagine the costs now, where will they

see the money from...even if they have the money, do you think they will use it for the resettlement? ... (Interview #37).

The senior planner added that the compensation benefits for the ISD need to be increased if the government is insisting on resettlement. Another empathic support from the state includes the claim of some ISD that some FCDA and DCD staff do give them privy information about official meetings that concerns the ISD, especially to prepare against unfavourable state's developmental efforts.

Support with basic service provisions

The provision of basic amenities within the informal settlements are usually done by the municipal arm of the government. This is understandable because the municipal officials are elected by the locals including the ISD to represent them in governance. From the explanations of some ISD, most of the infrastructures are usually started/completed through community efforts before the interventions from the state. For example, regarding a small healthcare centre in Mpape, a community chief remarked that:

'...we built the place (the healthcare centre) ourselves then we beg Bwari area council for doctors, they usually post the doctors and other health workers to the health centre...left for us, we can't pay them (the healthcare workers) ...' (FGD #4).

The traditional head of Mpape and Mabushi also confirmed the presence of some government structures like market stalls, electricity transformers and primary schools, but they are not adequate (Interview #6; FGD #3). In addition to the efforts of the municipal councils, private business organizations and charity NGOs are also providing some basic amenities like water facilities for the ISD (based on the narratives from FGD #3, FGD #8 and Interview #6). And the state is generally not against the basic service provisions and donations from the municipal councils, business organizations and NGOs. This shows that despite the informality status of the ISD, the state is not kicking against the provisions of basic amenities to them – this is significant because such amenities can consolidate the existence of the ISD in the city.

Support from the present regime

According to many state officials, the current government regime (2015 till date) is doing more for the ISD than previous governments. For instance, a planner at FCDA claimed that the present government have initiated urban renewal projects and slum upgrading in some informal settlements towards integrating the settlements (Interview #8). However, this claim seems to be spurious or just in the proposal stage of the current government because most people I interacted with are not aware of such projects. The other claim on the support of the present regime for the ISD is on the resettlement programme. The current regime has mandated that both the indigenes and migrants in the informal settlements should be enlisted for resettlement if they are

having a house in the settlements. This is unlike the previous plans that were strictly for the indigenes alone. Explaining this, a resettlement official said:

'...resettlements are not regular, it depends on the political will of the government in power, for example, no attempt (to resettle) at all during the last administration (Jonathan's), the present administration (Buhari's) is trying, we are now making plans to resettle both indigenes and non-indigenes...' (Interview #39).

But from a critical angle, this might not be a feasible plan considering the costs. If the government could not resettle the smaller original inhabitants because of funding, what are the chances of resettling the larger community of ISD that are now populated by migrants? The reality is also that the present regime is already more than 7 years into their 8-year regime, and no resettlement has taken place. Meaning the numerous challenges bewildering the resettlement programme still linger.

The discussion so far has shown the complexities and incoherencies within the state and its relationship with non-state actors. I have provided some insights on the state's complication in the governance of informal settlements through its amenability to the contending actors. The complications and incoherencies have effects on the state's official mandate in managing the informal settlements. The complications are also reflected in the activities of the various state actors, especially the opinions of the state planners, on how best to manage the contentions around the informal settlements. In addition, the claim makings and politicking of stakeholders compound the present quagmire around what should be done to the informal settlements of Abuja. Officially, the present position of the state is to resettle the ISD, but from all indications, that has never been successful and there is no tangible sign that it will be successful sooner or later. Moreover, the state officials and planners that are meant to execute the resettlement plans have conflicting opinions on its feasibility or potentials to address the present challenges. The conflicting opinions among the governance actors on the resettlement of the ISD are examined in the next section.

6.4. To resettle or not: the precarious situation of the ISD

The official position or prevailing plan of the state is to resettle the informal settlements for the statutory landowners. However, due to the numerous challenges surrounding the resettlement plans, the popular opinion among the ISD and their leaders is the upgrading of their slummy settlements and integration into the developmental plans of Abuja, although there are some ISD that believed that resettlement would be a better option. For instance, the traditional council of Kpadna community explained that they are eagerly waiting for their resettlement because their community is now too congested as they no longer have space of their growing population, and that they want a better and permanent place (FGD #9). Their position supports the claim of the senior

planner that was highlighted in the previous chapter that human rights and NGOs' quest for their integration is not in the best interest of the ISD.

The position of the developers is obvious. They are more interested in what is good for their business. If the ISD are not resettled, they won't have access to their lands to develop for business. On the potentials of the resettlement for their businesses, the site manager of NovelPlus architecture and estate managers explained that:

'...having those villages around the city is a challenge, look at sharp contrast between Asokoro (highly developed neighbourhood) and Asokoro village (a slum), you see extreme affluence on one side and extreme poverty on the other side divided by a single wall...this is affecting us as developers, there are certain lands that are close to the (indigenous) villages that we can't buy because when you develop such lands, those coming to buy will be looking at becoming neighbours with the villagers and they don't want that, so in that case resettlement would be better...we have 3 lands at Guzape that we can't develop because they are directly facing the villages...' (Interview #30).

This explains why the developers would use their resources and power connections to pressure the state to displace the ISD. On the part of the state officials and planners, there are divergent opinions on what should be done with the settlements. Those that are in support of their displacement explained that it is not only too expensive and difficult to develop the slums, but the major challenge to integrating or upgrading the slums is the issue of land titles (FGD #7). That is, regularizing the informal settlements means the ISD must be given statutory land rights which will be dependent on the current statutory land holders willingness to let go or accept other alternatives. In addition to the new challenge that might emerge from the statutory landowners that are awaiting their resettlement, the Abuja South sector manager at the development control department explained that the present locations of the informal settlements have been planned for several amenities for Abuja residents. He explained many developmental projects like sewages, drainages, access roads, etc are also pending till when the ISD are resettled (Interview #35). For practical reasons, the Chief planning officer of development control department explained that any sort of development within the settlements would still require the displacement of the ISD (Interview #28). According to him, resettlement will be better for the ISD as there are no lands within the city for their congested and high population. He said:

'...resettlement will be better for them, they will have more lands for expansion, they can dictate their pace of development at the periphery...for integration, there is no space for them, in situ development is not feasible because their houses are so compacted and old, there is no way you can talk of improvement without bringing most of the houses down...' (Interview #28).

Some planners at FCDA also remarked that there are no good prospects in integrating the ISD as they are low-income earners who would not be able to cope with the affluence and high costs of living in Abuja city (Interviews #1; #10). Some opined that resettling

the ISD will take care of the squatters and shanties that serve as hideouts for criminals (Interviews #18; #23). Other reasons against their integration include the need to distort Abuja's master plan to accommodate them, and more costs for the government if the resettlement policy is changed (Interviews #10; #16; #27; #32); primitive lifestyle of the ISD (Interviews #10; #26); and lack of farming lands for the ISD within the city (Interview #26). In addition, a senior town planner at AMAC confidently asserted that the settlements will keep deteriorating because she is sure no one (government) would consider integrating them into the developmental plans of Abuja (Interview #36).

Arguments against resettlement among the state actors

Most of the state actors that are against the resettlements based their arguments on the numerous challenges that have made the resettlement programme unfeasible. These include the increasing resistance of the ISD. For instance, a senior planner at urban and regional planning unit of FCDA (Interview #26) who is pro resettlement acknowledged that it is not economically feasible to resettle the increasing population of the ISD; he explained that their affinity to the city life have made them to resist any displacement to an uncertain new settlement. However, some planners and officials at FCDA resettlement department believed that upgrading and integrating the informal settlements would cost lesser than resettling them (FGD#5). Another planner at the urban and regional planning unit of FCDA opined that integrating the ISD would be more feasible than resettling them. According to him:

'...it will cost more to take them elsewhere than to make that place (their current settlements) comfortable for them, so therefore it is best to upgrade the slum...where there are no good drainages we provide, where there are no good roads we upgrade, we provide facilities like schools for the inhabitants of the slums, provide health care portable water system...we (can) upgrade the slum in such a way that people living there will be comfortable, better than what it used to be...' (Interview #16).

Similarly, despite acknowledging that the resistance of the ISD dwellers would make resettlement difficult, the director of the resettlement department thinks it is better to displace the ISD while another senior planner within the same department believed that based on equity and fairness, it is against extant laws to displace them. The director said:

'...the Gwaris are very stubborn...if am to give my candid advice to the government on this issue (resettlement), I will suggest that instead of resettling a whole community with plenty money, taking long periods and plenty controversies, the government should just compensate or resettle those along the development corridors like the construction of main roads according to the master plan, this will displace a few and their communal bond weaken...with time the rest will have to sell their lands or houses to the government or highest bidders and move to the suburb...' (Interview #32).

The senior planner believed the ISD have lived in Abuja for so long and so should be integrated. He said: '*...these people (ISD) have been living in Abuja for so many years, even before the creation of Abuja, according to international laws, they shouldn't be displaced (from their communities) ...* (Interview #38). He added that the ISD have the capacity and manpower to develop their communities if the government give them the room to do so. That is, they have the potential to modernize but they are being reluctant to develop their communities because of the uncertainties around them. Supporting this argument and to counter arguments of the proponents of resettlement that the ISD do not have the financial means to live within the city, a councillor at AMAC (Interview #47) argued that the settlements can become modern if the government direct the huge amount of money budgeted for resettlement (with no positive outcome) to developing and upgrading the slums. He added that the ISD must not continue with farming as their economic activity – that farming was their grandparents' occupation, but the children are now educated like any other Abuja resident and working in various sectors of the economy in Abuja. So, they can be empowered with alternative socio-economic ventures like other urbanites. This is also the position of the senior planner in the resettlement department. Based on equal right, the opponents of resettlements do not see why the ISD should be resettled from their ancestral lands to unserviceable resettlement sites, where they will be reduced to second class citizens (Interviews #9; #11; #29; #37; #38; #47).

The arguments for or against the resettlements of the ISD show that there is no agreement among the managers (state actors) of the informal settlements on how to sustainably resolve the contentions around the informal settlements. It is expected that the contending non-state actors would have divergent opinions on the way forward, but the divergent opinions across the ranks of the state actors exemplify the incoherencies within the state. The conflicting opinions from various state actors on how the informal settlements should be managed are pointers to the fact that the state is not a united entity in managing the contentions around informal settlements. And that within the state, contending actors have allies to support their claims. This also highlights the boundless nature of governance actors and processes around contested spaces.

6.5. Discussion and conclusion

Apart from identifying the state as a major culprit in the messy complications around urban informality, studies that provide in depth understanding of the state and its working mechanisms around urban informality are rare. Understanding the state's working mechanisms is key to understanding the complications around informal settlements (see Boudreau, 2019; Christian Haid & Hilbrant, 2019). This chapter has attempted to unpack the state in order to unravel its working mechanisms and complications in the governance of informal settlements. In reference to the amenability of the state as outlined in chapter 2, I explained how the multiple sites, actors, and components of the state create dynamic power relations among the state

actors and their relationships with non-state actors. My analysis has shown how different governance actors (state and non-state) collaborate to manipulate to the state to their advantage. Four key insights can be deduced from this chapter on the state's roles and relationships in the governance of Abuja's informal settlements. These are: 1) the fundamental sources of the state's complication in managing the informal settlements; 2) the lack of agreement among the state actors on what is the best solution to the plights of the ISD; 3) the limitations of the state's powers in multi actor governance; and 4) the boundless interplay between state and non-state actors. I expand on these insights in the paragraphs that follow.

Some studies have highlighted that the state is made up of multiple components and sites of governance (see Christian Haid & Hilbrant, 2019; Hall et al., 2015; Lindell, 2008). As discussed so far in this chapter, the multiple organs and actors of the state in the governance of Abuja's informal settlements are the fundamental sources of complication for the state in managing the informal settlements. In addition to the conflicting or overlapping roles of the multiple departments involved in the dynamics around the settlements, there is no good working synergies among the various state departments. Power hierarchies among the state actors and unofficial practices compound the lack of synergies among the departments. Given that the top hierarchy within the state uses discretionary powers to indiscriminately interfere in planning activities and the conflicting roles, interests and unofficial practices of many state officials around the informal settlements, the evidence indicate that the contentions around the informal settlements might not abate in the nearest future. This is especially so because there is no consensus among the state actors and planners on what is best for the ISD – to resettle or to integrate them in Abuja's developmental plans.

The lack of agreement among the state planners on what to do with the quagmire that has been produced by the contentions around the settlements is another major source of complication in the governance of the settlements. Although the state's capacity to resettle (according to its official policy) the ISD is limited, the conflicting opinion among its planners can compound the infeasibility of resettling the ISD. This indicates how state actors can contribute to the failure of state developmental plans or projects either by good or bad intentions. In the case of resettling Abuja's informal settlements, the state actors supporting or sympathetic to the ISD has contributed significantly to the successful resistance of many ISD to *arbitrary* resettlement and displacement attempts. The alliance of many state actors with contending actors against official rules of engagement can be described as *the state against the state* in the governance of contentious issues. If there is no coherence or common strategy from the state, contentious issues will be difficult to resolve by the state alone. This shows that as long as multi-actor and multi-level governance is concerned, the powers of the state to have total control of contentions is very limited.

The ideas of Rhodes (1996) and Stoker (1998) on multi-actor governance, and Tilly and Tarrow (2015)'s contentious politics have explained that state powers are diminishing or hollowing out amid the dynamic influence of multiple actors. Multi-actor governance involves the state collaborating with other stakeholders (like rich investors and

developers) to fund and execute developmental projects. This gives leverage to the capital owners to determine or influence state (planning) activities to their interests. In some cases, as explained by Banks et al. (2019), some powerful and exploitative actors that provide basic amenities to ISD evades some of the state's regulatory measures because they are providing what the state could not provide. Consequently, the powers of the state to be effective in managing the informal settlements will be limited if developmental plans around the settlements are not in the interests of the rich investors. In addition, insights from my case shows that it is not only external actors that limit the powers of the state, but internal state actors can also deflate state powers. Here the relevance of the state in managing contentions is in question, especially in the context of African state where there are coherent institutional arrangements to unite the state against others. On this, Jammulamadaka and Murphy (2017) opined that the state can maintain its relevance and legitimacy by keeping the state-building project open to constant dialogue, engagements and change with and from multiple stakeholders and forces. But I would add that the ability of the state to enhance and stand by fairness, socio-spatial justice, equity, and equality in distributing national resources are key to the state struggle for relevance and legitimacy in managing the society and contending actors.

Finally, my analyses have shown the fluidity of the relationship that exist between the state and non-state actors, and the blurriness of the formal-informal dichotomy of governance practices. The fluidity in state/non-state actors' relationship is mainly enhanced by the different actors with different interests within the state, especially the generic actors. The inputs of the generic actors in the whole dynamics have shown that the interplay or boundary between state and non-state actors, formal and informal practices, is boundless. Most of the contending actors have a boundless access to the state to use its actors and institutions to support their interest. Some studies (for example Wacquant, 2008; 2016; Roy, 2009) considered only the powerful non-state actors (like land developers/investors and rich elites) to be the ones having the monopoly to use the state, but I have explained the ways through which the marginalized ISD can also use the state to their advantage. This does not relegate the fact that they are still contending with more powerful actors. However, it should be noted that the boundless interplay of state and non-state actors could be temporal or dependent on a particular actor's network and context. But as long as state officials cannot avoid engaging (officially or unofficially) with non-state stakeholders, contending actors would always find an ally within the state. More details on the boundless relationship between the state and non-state actors are explained in the next chapter that summarize the findings and arguments of this thesis.



Chapter 7

Discussion and Conclusion



Chapter 7

Discussion and Conclusion

In this thesis, I explored the dynamics of governance around informal settlements in Abuja, Nigeria. In this concluding chapter, I synthesize the findings and conclusions from the previous chapters to answer the research questions and discuss the overall contributions of this thesis to the understanding of urban informality and governance. As stated in chapter 1, the central aim of this thesis is to provide deeper insights on how and why land ownership rights and tenure security in Abuja's informal settlements are so controversial and remain unresolved for over 40 years since the creation of Abuja as the new capital city of Nigeria in 1978. As shown in the empirical chapters, this aim was achieved by exploring the contentions and governance mechanisms around Abuja's informal settlements over land rights and tenure security. The roles and impacts of state and non-state actors around the settlements were collectively analysed to provide a holistic understanding of the dynamics of governance around informal settlements. The overall research question that guided the explorations and analyses in this study is:

How has the historical and current interplay of governance actors produced the complex dynamics around the informal settlements of Abuja?

Three sub questions structured the empirical chapters: what are the historical antecedents that influence the dynamics around the settlements? (Chapter 4); what are the roles and impacts of non-state actors in the dynamics around the settlements? (Chapter 5); and what are the roles and impacts of state actors in the dynamics around the settlements? (Chapter 6). The findings and insights from this study on these questions are outlined in the following section.

7.1. Answering the research questions

The impacts of historical antecedents

The current dynamics and complexities around the informal settlements of Abuja are defined by 5 critical historical antecedents (see Table 4.2). The creation of Abuja in 1976 as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) with the FCT Act initiated the informalization of the pre-existing communities in Abuja by abolishing all primordial claims to Abuja lands. The 1978 Land Use Act complemented the FCT Act to formalize the non-recognition of primordial customary land rights in Abuja, thereby initiating the present land ownership contentions between customary and statutory land claimers. This was because most of the lands of the present ISD were allocated to other persons for development based on the recommendations of Abuja's master plan. The master plan also recommends the resettlements of the ISD to make way for statutory allottees.

As demonstrated in chapter 4, the FCT Act, the Land Use Act, the Abuja's master plan, and the conflicting past land allocations based on different tenure practices, in addition to the past forced eviction (attempts) for acclaimed developments based on an outdated master plan, represent the critical junctures that have defined and still are influencing current dynamics around Abuja's informal settlements. State and non-state stakeholders disagree over who should own or can access lands within and around the informalized indigenous communities. These contentions produced the current complications in the developmental planning and governance of the settlements, such as the unaccepted resettlement plans, deteriorating living conditions in the informal settlements, the pressure from developers and statutory land claimers to displace the ISD, the Janus-faced relationship of the state with contending actors, and other interconnected socio-political issues.

The roles and impacts of non-state actors

Although the state's past and present management practices might have initiated the informalization of the settlements, the growth of the settlements and their subsequent dynamics goes beyond the state's influence and control. Looking beyond the culpability of the state in producing the informal settlements of Abuja through official policies and plans, chapter 5 showed how the activities of non-state stakeholders within and outside the informal settlements are (re)defining the dynamics and complexities around the settlements. The divergent non-state actors around Abuja's informal settlements are the ISD (the indigenous and nonindigenous), their community/tribal leaders, and supportive NGOs on one side, and the political representatives of the ISD, land developers, and statutory land claimers on the other side. The politicking of these actors is very complicated.

On the part of the ISD, growing resistance practices of the ISD against forced displacement and confiscation of their lands has stalled developmental planning activities around the settlements, because the issues of resettlement and landownership rights are yet to be resolved. The resistance practices of the ISD include modernization of their lifestyles, formation of associations, physical confrontations, going to court, and garnering support from some state actors against their *opponents*. The ISD agitation for the infrastructural development or upgrading of their slummy communities is another controversial issue when their land rights and tenure security are not yet guaranteed.

The pressures on the state from statutory land allottees to displace the ISD and numerous legal tussles also contribute to the complications in the governance of the settlements. This is in addition to the lobbying and scheming of developers to access lands using their powerful resources. These practices of non-state actors are not abnormal around informal settlements, but they complicate the governance of the settlements. What makes the contentious politicking of non-state actors even more significant in the case of Abuja is their boundless access to state institutions and actors to garner support for their various claims and interests.

Another significant source of complication in the settlements are the divergent interests among the community leaders and political representatives of the ISD. Numerous sources across all the stakeholders acknowledged that there is no harmony between the community leaders and political representatives in working for the best interest of the ISD. The political representatives were accused of being after their personal economic or political gains at the expense of the ISD. Like in the case of Mpape, they could use their political powers to intimidate uncooperative community/tribal leader. According to many sources, the political leaders work with some ISD (especially the indigenes), land developers and some state officials to confiscate the lands of vulnerable ISD. This shows that the ISD are not entirely homogenous or united in their agitation to be part of the city. Most of them are under pressure from within and outside the settlements. Also, the subtle difference in tenure security of indigenous and migrant ISD complicates resistance practices and developmental planning around the settlements. For instance, the proposed resettlements that were originally meant for only the indigenous settlers now need to accommodate the migrants who constitute the majority of the ISD. The need to accommodate the migrant ISD in the resettlement plans has increased the costs and infeasibility of resettling all the ISD. Yet, there is no alternative solution or policy to address the quagmires around the settlements.

The roles and impacts of state actors

The state's past antecedents and policies in negating customary land rights laid the structural imbalance that made the ISD more vulnerable to powerful influence of the elites. The ineffective planning and programmes of the state also contributed to the multiple challenges around the informal settlements. However, I examined the amenability of the state and showed how the dynamic state actors, multiple governance levels, and power hierarchies have complicated the state's mandate in managing the settlements. First, the existence of divergent state actors across different governmental levels has led to multiple challenges around the informal settlements. There are numerous departments with conflicting mandates/interests in managing the informal settlements. The lack of cooperation among the various departments and state agencies provides non-state actors possibilities to exploit the loopholes within the state. The interference of top presidential officials in official development control activities of planning agencies also significantly complicates the situation.

Similarly, the conflicting opinions and activities of many state actors on the management of Abuja's informal settlements constrain developmental planning activities around the settlements. It is a case of the state against the state where those (especially the generic actors like one of the FCDA's director living in Mpape) that are not in support of the state's plans for the settlements overtly support the ISD against the state plans. The activities of state actors for or against different contending actors enhanced the state's amenability and complications around the settlements. As a result, the state is becoming almost powerless in its official role to manage the settlements. This is especially because there are multiple avenues within the state for

contending actors to explore to their advantage. As I explained in chapter 6, there is a boundless interplay between the state and non-state actors in the dynamics around the settlements. This further complicates the governance and planning of the informal settlements.

The collective roles of all the governance actors

Based on the above, it can be concluded that the complexities around Abuja's informal settlements are collectively or mutually produced by both state and non-state actors. Historically, the coproduction of these complexities started when both state and non-state stakeholders allocated lands to people with different tenure arrangements, with little or no synergy among the stakeholders. The subsequent disputes between statutory and customary land rights claimers produced a temporal and fragile tenure security for the ISD. A tenure security that is dependent on some artefacts like old (mud) houses, firewood, Gbagyi dialect, cashew trees and temporal court injunctions. This form of tenure security for the ISD is not officially recognized but is widely acknowledged by all the governance actors (state and non-state). This acknowledgement and the many unresolved contentions and court cases involving both the state and non-state stakeholders over the land ownership rights and tenure security are examples of the collective contribution of all the governance actors to complexities around the settlements. The mutual production of the complex dynamics around the settlements is also observable in the alliance among the political representatives of the informal settlements, some indigenous ISD, some state official and developers in confiscating lands from vulnerable ISD. Other complex dynamics include the collaboration between the ISD and state actors in their resistance practices, and the business relationship between state officials and developers in Abuja land businesses.

In conclusion, governance decisions, processes and outcomes (positive or negative) around the informal settlements of Abuja are collectively and mutually produced by both state and non-state actors. As demonstrated in this study, it is not sufficient to blame just one party when all the governance actors are responsible. Moreover, this study showed the limitations of the state's powers in multi-actor governance. The unavoidable relationship between state and non-state actors and the limited resources of the state have empowered some non-state actors that use their resources to support the state's quest for socio-economic development. This has made mass housing developers and investors in service provisions very influential in governance decisions and processes. However, regardless of the social-economic status of contending non-state actors, the analyses of my case study have shown that the state is merely a stage for contending actors. This includes the marginalized ISD that have networked their ways into the state institutions to find allies in their resistance practices. Therefore, the success of most state development plans around the informal settlements, and feasible resolutions of contentions will be dependent on the compromises, negotiations, or agreements among contending non-state actors.

7.2. Insights and discussions

To extend the findings and conclusions of this study to the discourses on urban informality, governance and planning in wider contexts, this section is structured along the six perspectives or gaps that were highlighted in the introductory chapter. They are land rights and tenure security in informal settlements; historical antecedents in the governance of informal settlements; power, structure and agency in the governance of Abuja's informal settlements; the amenability of the state; the formal-informal divide in urban governance and planning; and perspectives from the global south in studying urban informality.

7.2.1. Land rights and tenure security

The fundamental importance of land rights and tenure security in the dynamics around informal settlements cannot be overemphasized. They are connected to the vital issue of infrastructural development of the settlements and related disputes around the settlements. As explained in most of the preceding chapters, the contentions over land rights and tenure security are usually between statutory and customary land right owners or claimers. However, the de facto dynamics of land rights and tenure security in most informal settlements are beyond the normative binary of statutory and customary. This is the reason why some studies (see Patel, 2013c; van Gelder & Luciano, 2015) have advocated for looking beyond the de jure arrangements on land rights to exploring the functional ways of securing land rights and tenure security. This study has explained the dynamics of land rights and tenure security in the informal settlements of Abuja, especially how the disputes over them have produced the current form of tenure security that I described as artefactual tenure security. How this form of tenure security influences other dynamics around Abuja's informal settlements is one of the contributions of this study to the discourses in informal settlements studies.

The several indicators (see chapter 2) for evaluating tenure (in)security in informal settlements include methods of acquisition, litigations, political factors, duration of access (length of occupation), legal titles, level of resistance, power of contenders, threats of displacement, level of community acceptance, and land administrative processes. Based on these indicators, the artefactual tenure security in Abuja's informal settlements can be described as a fragile tenure security that is derived from customary practices of ancestral land inheritance or ownership. The customary land ownership rights have empowered most of the ISD to contend their entitlement to the lands using various means at their disposal, including litigations against other contenders. The artefactual tenure security does not give most of the ISD official legal titles to their lands, nor does it guarantee their permanent entitlement to their lands because of the official nonrecognition of customary land rights. But the recognition of their ancestral claims by other stakeholders and for having dwelled in the lands for a long time serve as the de facto tenure security they presently enjoy. The peculiarity of the artefactual tenure security is the emphasis on the artefacts (old (mud) houses,

firewood, Gbagyi dialect, cashew trees and temporal court injunctions) that I have explained to be constantly evolving – thereby still making the ISD to be vulnerable to displacement and other pressures from powerful contenders.

The artefactual tenure security in Abuja's informal settlements indicates a functional understanding of tenure securities among contending stakeholders beyond the customary and statutory land rights dichotomy. Access to lands in the informal settlements of Abuja is defined by the evolving interplay and politicking of governance actors involving both the statutory and customary tenure practices. Most of the statutory land rights claimers cannot access their lands because they are still being occupied by the customary land claimers. And the ones that could access the uninhabited lands still need to settle with traditional institutions and their customary practices. But this does not mean that the ISD have a permanent and sustainable tenure security over the lands. As explained earlier, the current artefactual tenure security that most of the ISD enjoy is temporal and evolving. The politicking and negotiations among contending actors can always change the dynamics. Moreover, the uncertainties around the artefactual tenure security are also a source of insecurity for the ISD and for potential land investors. This is similar to the observation of van Overbeek and Tamás (2018) in the case of Bukavu, Congo.

In their explanation of the land governance dynamics in the periphery of Bukavu, Congo, van Overbeek and Tamas (2018) remarked that some state actors' recognition of land titles along ethnic or autochthonous lines in land tenure contentions is capable of increasing tenure insecurity in contested areas, and capable of diminishing state legitimacy and powers. In the case of Abuja, the various ways actors navigate the corridors of power to secure their land rights have led to the state ambiguous roles and inefficiency in managing the disputes. The infrastructural development of the settlements is another important challenge. The contentions have relegated to the background the discourse on the much-needed infrastructural development of the settlements. Most of the ISD are mainly preoccupied with the agitation for the recognition of their right to the city and resisting displacements. Also, developmental efforts through individuals, community and NGOs are also subjected to the dynamics around the land rights and tenure security. Most of the stakeholders would rethink the sustainability of many developmental projects along the unresolved issues of land rights and tenure security of the ISD. Hence, issues of land rights and tenure security remain fundamental in addressing the complex challenges around informal settlements.

7.2.2. History matters

Historical explorations are fundamental to the understanding of the complexities around informal settlements. The findings and insights from the retrospective analysis of the past antecedents in this study are pointers to the fundamental importance of history in understanding the complexities in informal settlements' governance. In other studies, land rights and tenure security (and other interconnected issues like poverty,

marginalization, infrastructure, development, displacements, resettlements, inequalities, etc) in informal settlements have been explored in relation to their local socio-political practices, national political economy or ecology, global neoliberal, and capitalist forces. What is not common in informal settlement studies is a retrospective exploration of how the currents dynamics around the settlements have evolved over time through past critical governance moments (critical junctures). Therefore, the use of the concepts of critical junctures and path dependency in this study as the framework for the historical exploration in informal settlement studies is quite novel.

The insights from my analysis in chapter 4 show how one path-dependent critical juncture can morph into another, or how the conflicts over a critical juncture can lead to the production of another. The critical junctures around Abuja's informal settlements are interconnected and influence the present dynamics around the settlements. To be specific, the creation of Abuja was constitutionalized with the FCT Act which empowered FCDA to produce an FCT master plan. The master plan recommends Abuja as the new FCT and the resettlements of its indigenous communities. Unsuccessful resettlement programmes combined with the unchecked influx of migrants into Abuja led to the expansion of the indigenous communities into slums that became too big and too costly to resettle. The migrants or ISD found an easy alternative to their housing needs by accessing lands through customary tenure practices. The customary landownership rights of the ISD are not valid based on the 1976 FCT and 1978 Land Use Acts. The state's reallocation of the same lands that have been customarily allocated produced the contentions between customary and statutory land claimers. All these accumulated into the present dynamics around Abuja's informal settlements. My analysis of the critical moments shows that their effects on the current dynamics around the informal settlements are interwoven or transiting into one and another.

Based on this interconnectedness, I considered all the significant past antecedents as critical as much as there is empirical evidence to support their significance and path-dependent trajectories in the current dynamics. That is, I did not evaluate the criticalness of one over the other as suggested by some scholars (see Capoccia, 2015; Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007). This is because they all have interconnected long-time structural effects or path dependent influences on the current contentions around Abuja's informal settlements. The usual references of stakeholders to the various historical antecedents and critical moments discussed in this study are good indicators of how critical they are to the present dynamics. Hence, I suggest that in using the framework of critical junctures and path dependency in the study of informal settlements, all critical governance moments and decisions should be considered and analysed chronologically and relatedly without the unnecessary assessment of their individual level of criticalness. This is to avoid discarding important details that could enhance a holistic understanding of the dynamic issues around the settlements. The caveat here is that choosing and analysing critical junctures and their path dependencies on issues of interest should be considered vis a vis the stakeholders' reference to them. The more the reference, the more the criticalness. In other words, historical exploration of issues through a mosaic of the interconnected critical moments

is more holistic and practical than undermining or overemphasizing one critical moment over the other.

7.2.3. Power, structure and agency

The agency of the governance actors amid the state's structural forces in defining the dynamics around Abuja's informal settlements has been the core of the arguments of this study. The state institutions are rather amenable to the influence of governance actors instead of the other way round. This observation is not new. However, while some studies (see Roy, 2009b; Wacquant, 2008, 2015) primarily see the state to be working with powerful elites against marginalized urbanites, my study has shown that marginalized ISD can also form fruitful alliances with the state. Many governance structures and powerful forces might have marginalized the ISD into their precarious situations. But the resilience of most of the ISD to sustain a prolonged resistance to arbitrary displacement for more than 40 years (since the creation of Abuja in 1978), despite the assumed authoritarian powers of the state and other powerful actors, points to the fact that power is indeed relational and not totally constellated at any side of the coin.

The designation of some spaces as informal or unworthy to exist within the city is a major structural force in the contentions around Abuja's informal settlements. Designating a place informal already connotes a power hierarchy and marginalization of the less powerful. Officially, land administration in Abuja is administered in a top-down process. The state owns all lands in Nigeria and the FCT. The state also has the official power to allocate/confiscate lands and the power to include/exclude whom to be part of the land governance. As explained in chapter 4, the powers of the state in Abuja land administration are gazetted in the 1976 FCT Act and the Nigerian Land Use Act of 1978. However, as demonstrated in the empirical chapters, Abuja land governance is complicated beyond the *de jure* state's regulation. The top-down land administration system of the state conflicts with traditional customary practices. The original inhabitants of Abuja are not ready to relinquish their ancestral customary land rights without a fight or at least without a suitable alternative. In addition to the resistance practices of the ISD, the support they get from their allies within the state also indicate that the ISD are a force to reckon with. The resistance practices and politicking that characterized Abuja's informal settlements indicate a dynamic power struggle among various actors.

Considering the dynamic powerplay of different actors in using the state to support or validate their demands, and how the state always tilts to various pressures from different stakeholders (even the marginalized informal settlements dwellers), one can conclude that the exercise of power in this case is not one directional. Different power relations and networks are being established by the contending stakeholders to have more leverage. However, the ISD are still vulnerable to some powerful actors. With the Land Use Act, the state claims to have good intentions of coordinating land allocations to ensure fairness, equity in accessing lands, but on the ground, it is a free-market

affair where the rich and powerful can use their resources to buy the lands at the expense of the poor ISD.

Although the Land Use and FCT Acts are still the state's top-down tools of land administration, land transactions in Abuja are not without the inputs of local traditional institutions and customary practices. Otubu (2018) noted that whilst trying to remedy the inadequacies in the existing land laws, the 1978 Land Use Act created its own genre of problems in land administration in Nigeria. In the context of Abuja, there are studies and reports of the ineffectiveness of the land laws, corrupt and unofficial practices around the land administration – practices that favour the rich and elites in accessing lands at the expense of the marginalized urban poor (see Abdullahi, 2020; Adama, 2020a, 2020b; ICPC, 2015)).

The interplay of structural and agential forces around socio-political phenomena cannot be separated when the collective actions of individuals in the society are influenced by their relationship with socio-political structures of governance (March & Olsen, 1984). The common understanding in many literatures is that both social actors and structures are mutually dependent on each other for their makeup and activities in the society (see DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Hodgson, 2006; G. Jackson, 2010; North, 1991; Peters, 2019; Steinmo, 2015; Thelen, 1999). Very few studies on informal settlements have empirically shown the agency of non-state actors in the dynamics of informal settlements. Studies such as Lombard (2019) in the case informal housing sheds in UK, and Beier (2021) in a study of Morocco resettlement programme for ISD, have empirically shown the agency of non-state actors in the dynamics of informal settlements. My study has also shown the agency of all governance actors in the complicated dynamics around informal settlements beyond the population accusations of the state.

7.2.4. The amenability of the state

The amenability of the state explained in this study questions the neutrality of the state and the monolithic image of the state as a single powerful entity. The state might have been an exclusive exploitation tool of powerful capitalists and elites, but the current era of increasing social movements and dynamic contentious politicking has changed the state-society relationships. According to Tilly and Tarrow (2015), the state can now tilt towards other actors and not only the powerful. The state is always evolving along new states actors, their politics, and different modes of engagement. And many contending actors have learnt how to take advantage of the shifting opportunities in state regime changes. Most of the studies on urban informality cited in this study presented the state as a monolithic entity in the governance of informal settlements. But this study has shown the divergent components, powers, and actors of the state in managing urban informality. Hence, the need for caution or specificity (on which part of the state? or which state actors?) when using the state (or *government*) in academic and public discourses.

The studies that have attempted to show how the state tilts in the governance of informal settlements presented the state and its actors as the powerful side at the top of the power hierarchy without showing how and why the state tilts to actors around urban informality. For example, Christian Haid (2016)'s Janus-faced approach of the state in managing informality in Berlin's parks, or Rubin (2018)'s explanation of the state's relationship with ISD as clientelist relationship, by the whims of the state actors, sees the state's tilting as the prerogative of the state. What my study has shown is that the state is already a tiltable entity for powerful governance actors to tilt. That is, the dynamics of governance around Abuja's informal settlements has shown how and why the state could have a Janus-faced approach in governance. Or how the tilting of the state goes beyond the state's discretion to the agency of contending actors.

The amenability of the state resonates with the main argument of this study that the roles and impacts of both the state and non-state actors are interwoven and co-constitutive in defining the dynamics around informal settlements. The works of Tarrow (2011) and Tilly and Tarrow (2015) on contentious politics provided the theoretical lens to explain the politicking and complexities of the non-state actors, and how they relate with the state in their various contentions around the informal settlements of Abuja. The theoretical framework of contentious politics is also useful in explaining how non-state actors can skilfully use the state to their advantage. The analysis of my case study resonate well with Tilly and Tarrow's (2015) notion of the tiltability of the state towards various non-state actors demands. But unlike their suggestion of the state having sole authority to determine where and how to tilt, my case study has shown that the agency of the non-state actors tilts and complicates the state. That is, unlike their perception of the state as the *fulcrum* for the contentious politicking of different actors, the state can be better described as the *lever* that different actors try to tilt to their side. However, the extent to which the state tilts lie in the power network and alliance different governance actors. Still on the lever-fulcrum analogy based on Tilly and Tarrow's (2015) perception of the state as a fulcrum and me seeing it as a lever, and in reference to the state's impact in the contentions around Abuja's informal settlements, I would say the fulcrum represents the critical junctures and rigid institutional structures that have defined the current contentions around the settlements.

However, the fact that some actors (especially the statutory landowners) already had some advantage based on the past governance decisions means the fulcrum is faulty, or partially constructed for some actors to have more leverage in the lever (the state) tilting contest. But there is the possibility that the continued tilting of the lever (as exemplified in the contentious politicking around Abuja's informal settlements) can lead to the realignment or reconstruction of the fulcrum. This does not undermine the existence of power hierarchies among the contending actors. Power struggles are common in contested spaces. As explained by Lombard (2014) in her examination of the place making efforts in the informal neighbourhoods of Xalapa, Mexico, the different power relations of the non-state actors with the state actors can enhance or constrain the efforts the marginalized urbanites. In another comparative analyses of governance

structures in some informal settlements in India and South Africa, Saharan et al. (2022) explained how ISD are increasingly connecting with state officials to agitate for their rights and development of their communities. So, from another perspective, the state can also be conceived as a stage for the contending actors, the stage might have been built with structures that favour some actors, but the workers or managers of the stage are now accessible to *all*.

The amenability of the state at its extreme is a minus for addressing the governance challenges around urban informality because of the persistence of contentious issues and complex problems. Many contending actors can access the state and use its tools to stagnate or aggravate developmental plans or projects. The abuse of power/office; actors not playing by the rules; generic governance actors; street level bureaucracy; political solutions to complex problems at the expense of existing laws; etc make the state undefinable with multiple contradictory features. But some (for example, Jammulamadaka & Murphy, 2017 in their explanation of postcolonial states) have argued that the ever-changing features or fluidity of the state is an advantage for the state – that by keeping the state-building project open to dialogue, engagement and change, the state ensures not only its continuity, but also its legitimacy in the face of multiple contradictory influences and pressures (Jammulamadaka & Murphy, 2017). In other words, the roles and characteristics of a postcolonial state like Nigeria are constantly changing to align with contemporary challenges and dynamic influences from multiple actors. The fluidity in the state and non-state actors' relationships and the informal practices of the state as shown in this study requires another discussion on the formal-informal dichotomy in urban governance and planning. Related studies that subtly insinuate the amenability of the state are often presented in formal and informal dichotomy debates in urban governance and planning literatures (see McFarlane, 2012; Van Assche, Beunen, & Duineveld, 2014). Hence the need for the next subsection to discuss the contribution of this study to the debate.

7.2.5. Re-examining the formal-informal divide

What or who is formal or informal in state-society relationship has become an ambiguous question in informality studies. There is a consensus among scholars and professionals that contemporary planning and governance processes involve both formal and informal practices. But the areas of ambiguity that this study would contribute to are on the questions of *where* is formal or informal situated; *who* is formal or informal; *what* practices and processes are formal or informal; and *how* the formal-informal interplay is defining governance mechanisms. The discussions on formality-informality in academic literatures are usually along these four questions where they are manifested in governance and planning. Similarly, McFarlane (2012) and Van Assche et al. (2014) captured these questions under spatial organization, institutions, government management tools, and governance processes and practices

The spatiality of formality and informality

Informal housing or economic activities are those that are not in line with the *official* regulations. But informality accounts for the larger portion of both the housing and economic sectors in global south cities. In terms of settlements, informal housing has been considered an indispensable and affordable alternative mode of housing production in global south cities (see Dovey et al., 2020). The ambiguity or suitability of using the term 'informal' to describe informal settlements have prompted some scholars (Yiftachel, 2009) (McFarlane, 2012) to suggest the rethinking of using the term. For example, Yiftachel used the term 'gray space' in the struggles of the indigenous Bedouins in Israel/Palestine context. Dovey et al. (2020) also argued that using the term informal beclouds and undermines the significant processes and agitations of marginalized urbanites. They opined that 'slum' is still a better label.

Insights from this study show that there is also no homogeneity in the informal settlements of Abuja. The degrees of impoverishment and threats, the legal and socio-political status of ISD and their tenure (in)security and power networks vary across the different contested spaces in Abuja. However, considering the increasing difficulty in displacing the settlements, they can be considered continuum spaces within the city. Continuum spaces that are yet to be developed or planned since they have become almost indispensable. Also, from personal observations and critical reflection, I think the use of the term 'informal' to describe the controversial spaces and their residents connotes a subtle support towards the entrenchment of the structural forces that have marginalized the poor urbanites. Or the undermining of their struggle for a better city life. However, there are still parts of these controversial spaces that can be described 'informal' for their flagrant violations of officially approved processes and housing regulations.

Formal and informal institutions

Institutions and other societal organizing structures are another area to examine the ambiguity of formality/informality. It is widely acknowledged across social science disciplines that formal and informal institutions are dependent on each other for organizing society. Formal institutions usually work with diverse informal organizations and groups to produce formal plans and planning processes. The interplay of formal and informal institutions in the governance of Abuja's informal settlements has been explained earlier under the discussion on power, structure and agency. Like many African contexts (see Foster & Amman, 2018; Onyishi et al., 2020; Smith, 2018;) effective urban governance in Abuja requires significant inputs from informal groups. Some scholars have also opined that informal practices and informal institutions are indispensable part of governance in Africa (see also Olowu & Erero, 1995; Routley, 2016). As this study has shown so far, and for a more holistic analysis, I would argue that the formal-informal label should be discarded in describing the governance institutions around informal settlements since both are interwoven/indispensable in the governance and planning of the settlements. Moreover, most of the informal

institutions or organizations are officially registered or recognized by the state, hence they have some formal status (for example, the customary institutions of Nigeria; Mpape Residents Association; Nigeria Slum/Informal Settlement Federation; and many others).

Formality and informality as a governmental tool

One critical opinion on how the state can use formality and informality as a governmental tool is that the state can deliberately label some practices or people informal in order to keep them submissive (see Banks et al., 2019; Chiodelli & Tzfadia, 2016). This involves the use of official plans and policies for spatial organization and planning activities such as housing and development control. This is where the distinction between formality and informality is mostly visible because most plans and policies are officially documented on paper with rigid structural effects (for example the master plan of Abuja). This opinion is not far from the truth because the fear of displacement or persecution from the state can make the *informalized* to be humble amid many unfavourable conditions. However, the disputes over formal plans and policies in this study show that formal plans as governmental tools of controlling the populace can also be challenged or rejected. As shown in chapter 5, there are cases where formal paper plans and official policies are difficult to implement because of resistance from within and outside the state. This shows that formal plans as state controlling tools could be ineffective under the contentions of affected stakeholders. Also, what is informal in one governmental level might be formal at another level, as for example the recognition of customary land practices in the municipal area councils of Abuja and their nonrecognition at the federal government levels.

Formal and informal governance processes and practices

While formality appears to be the official or acceptable way of organizing the society, informality has long been considered as the natural way of societal organization (Roy, 2005; J. C. Scott, 1998). In governance and planning studies, the interplay of formal and informal practices has been expressed in different slants such as participatory, communicative, iterative and interactive planning. But the question is who is being formal or informal in governance or planning practices. The notion that formality is synonymous with the state and informality with the other actors/institutions is no longer tenable. Many studies (including this) on urban informality have explained the informalities of/within the state, and how informal practices are not exclusive to non-state actors. What this study emphasized is how both the formal/informal practices of all the governance actors coevolve or morphed each other to produce the dynamics around urban informality. My study has also shown the incoherencies and anomalies that can be found within the state, hence the need to focus on the fluid identity and roles of all governance actors.

To conclude the formal-informal dichotomy discussion, both the formal and informal sides mutually dependent for the success or otherwise of developmental planning projects as shown in this study. According to van Assche et al. (2014), formal-informal dialectics in spatial planning have effects that cannot be exhaustively mapped,

categorized or assessed (Van Assche et al., 2012, p. p; 2014). And despite its significant importance and negative connotations, urban informality has been described as an organizing logic and norms that governs urban transformation (Roy, 2005); as the new way of urban life (Alsayyad, 2004); and as compendium of practices and urban operations that counter and transgress political boundaries and hierarchic economic models (Alfaro-d'Alençon et al. (2018).

The indispensability of formal and informal practices and processes in governance and planning has been explained by many scholars. The visible and invisible mutual manifestations of these two sides of the coin have also warranted many approaches, concepts, frameworks or labels to fuse the two inseparable sides together. Hybridity, multiplicity, or pluralism are common theoretical lenses for explaining the complexities and intricate relationships that characterize multi-actor governance especially when addressing the problems of the global south. Hybridity in formal-informal relations centres around the notion of different categories (of actors, rules, institutions, norms, and practices) coexisting together, with or without disagreements, in managing societal resources and issues (see Lemay-Hébert & Freedman, 2017b). According to P. Jackson (2017), hybridity is a new label for something that already exists: the fluidity of social systems, actors and their politics. However, considering the many insights from this study, hybridity (or other similar labels) might not be suitable to describe the governance processes and arrangements around Abuja's informal settlements. The next subsection explains why.

7.2.5.1. Hybridity or governance without boundaries

Unless we adopt different ways of thinking about the exercise of political power, we will find contemporary forms of rule hard to understand. It will thus be difficult to make proper judgment of the alternatives on offer (Rose & Miller, 2010, p. 299).

Governance is already established as a complex interplay of different actors – interwoven in their practices and politics in managing societal resources and problems. State/formal and non-state/informal might be relevant in classifying the relative position of governance actors and their practices, but in reality (especially in the complex governance structures of African societies) the distinctions between them are hardly noticed. The boundaries between the actors and their practices are interwoven and blurred. Just like the plural undefinable 'informal' practices of the non-state actors, many studies have shown that the state actors can also engage in informal practices (usually in the name of clientelism, street level bureaucracy, nepotism, corruption, or unofficial practices). At the background of the contentious politicking of different actors and the motion of amenable state in this study, it is observable that formality or informality is no longer an inherent attribute of any governance actor.

Considering the blurry dichotomies of state/non-state formal/nonformal relationships in this study, hybridity is the most relatable concept to explain the governance

dynamics around Abuja's informal settlements. The advantage of seeing the state as amenable or at least '*hybrid-able*' is to enable the understanding of complex governance arrangements beyond conventional concepts of 'the state or the government', 'institutions', 'social contracts' etc. Hybridity provides an explanatory framework to understand complex governance processes by looking beyond conventional binaries or categories in state/non-state relationships in governance. Using hybridity to explain land contentions in the post conflict region of Bukavu (Congo), van Overbeek and Tamas (2018; 2020) remarked that hybridity offers more than a normative and functionalist framework of classifying actors and practices in the everyday governance processes. Like this study, they explained how authorities, institutions, relationships, and identities are continuously constructed and reconstructed along the everyday practices of the urban dwellers seeking to protect their access to and control over land (see van Overbeek & Tamás, 2018).

Although hybridity has been explained differently or more critically to capture complex governance arrangements in different contexts, its inherent semantics have made it inadequate to aptly capture practices and processes (at least in this study) where dichotomies are blurred; where divides are crossed; where rules of engagement are not followed; where actors/actions are noninherent and generic; where identities are fluid and relative; where state actors engage in informal practices; where non-state actors can formally and informally access the formal spheres of the state to manipulate the state; and fundamentally, where the interconnected boundaries of contested issues are indefinite or difficult to delimitate. Hence, my idea of *governance without boundaries* (not the physical territorial boundaries but the common divides of the state/non-state actors and formal/informal practices) to aptly capture these complicated everyday governance practices around Abuja's informal settlements.

Hybridity connotes the emergence of both formal and informal practices where the state would normally be perceived as the formal side. But governance without boundaries implies boundless and indistinct governance practices and processes among actors. That is, formal and informal practices can be found among all governance actors. The main divergence of my notion of governance without boundaries from the conventional hybridity in governance is discarding the idea that there are actions, processes or practices that are inherently essential to any category of the governance actors. That is, where hybridity is hinged on the idea of two or more *distinct* actors or institutions coevolving and coproducing different processes and practices in *peculiar* ways (see Visoka, 2017), governance without boundaries connotes the idea that there are *indistinct* actors and institutions coproducing different governance processes and outcomes in *similar* ways. It is worthy to emphasize here that the boundlessness in governance without boundaries is on the practices, processes and outcomes of governance actors and institutions and not their *relative identity or position*.

Some instances of governance without boundaries in this study include: some ISD calling upon top officials in the presidency to stop the development controls officials from demolishing their houses; the presidency interfering in the official duties of

planning agencies; top government officials involvement in the land businesses around contested lands; the generic actors that openly oppose official developmental plans and programmes; the developers' alliance with some government officials in confiscating lands; the ISD's alliance with some government officials to enhance their resistance practices; and many other anomalies in the interplay of state and non-state actors in the governance of Abuja. Most of these instances do not conform with the tenets of hybridity in academic literatures because of their complex or unconventional nature.

Hybridity has also been critiqued by some scholars for its analytical inadequacies in explaining some complex governance arrangements. For example, in compensating for the analytical deficiencies of hybridity, van Overbeek and Tamas (2018; 2020) used ideas from governmentality to explain Bukavu (Congo)'s complex governance processes around land tenure contentions. Also, Riches (2017) used the concept of normative pluralism as more suitable approach to understanding how legal norms and societal norms intersect in the complex interplay of orders, processes and heterogeneous actors. That is, with normative pluralism, the focus is no longer on the primacy of law but on the primacy of societal norms, especially where the enforcement of laws is limited. Similarly, Goodfellow and Lindemann (2013) using the case of the land disputes in Buganda kingdom of Uganda opined that hybridity does not accurately describe every situation in which state institutions coexist or interact with non-state ones (GoodFellow & Lindemann, 2013). They explained that institutional multiplicity aptly captures both the 'concordant' and 'discordant' governance relationships between state and non-state institutions.

In the case of Abuja's informal settlements, I see governance without boundaries as a more practical approach to avoid the binaries in multi-actor governance, because there is the need to start seeing social actors and practices as a whole in order to understand complex and evolving governance in different contexts. That is, there is need to relegate the idea of distinct elements or entities fusing together (as in hybridity, multiplicity or pluralism) in governance processes. Like in the case of this study, there was never a (limiting) boundary between the actors and their practices. In other words, multi-actor governance is governance without boundaries.

Visoka (2017)'s figuration of liquid assemblages' approach to hybridity, and the decolonization inspired southern planning theory (SPT) of Satgé and Watson (2018) and Watson (2009, 2016) provide the inspiration and basis for my notion of governance without boundaries. To avoid the *risk of essentialising and re-entrenching binaries*, Visoka explained that hybridity should be conceived as a figuration of liquid assemblages. According to him:

"In a liquid world, all entities are hybrid because they are not fixed entities, they have displaced identities and are products of multiple political and cultural compositions. In the context of assemblage, hybridity can signify the placement of individuals in multiple different assemblages which have delineated identities."

Finally, hybridity in the context of figurations represents the dynamics of social interactions and emerges as unplanned outcome” (Visoka, 2017, p. 318).

Visoka’s explanation indicates the fluidity of actors/identities in social interactions, which validates the idea of governance without boundaries. To really understand the praxes of governance without boundaries in relation to my case study, Watson’s SPT explains the need for using the frameworks of postcolonialism to situate southern planning issues with locally generated and applicable ideas or concepts. Governance without boundaries offers a more suitable conceptual framework for analysing governance interactions and processes in a fluid system. Governance without boundaries is meant to explain unconventional governance processes and practices in the context of Nigeria that cannot be aptly categorized under the umbrella of hybridity. The conception of the governance of Abuja’s informal settlements as governance without boundaries has some analytical components that can be applicable in similar contexts in any region of the world.

7.2.5.2. Analytical components of governance without boundaries

Using the insights from this study, governance without boundaries can contribute to the understanding of the complexities around urban informality in many contexts. Borrowing from Young (2008)’s four Ps query tools for diagnosing institutions, governance without boundaries can be observe through the *problem, politics, players and practices* around informal settlements of Abuja.

Starting with the problems and issues around informal settlements, informal settlements are places just like any other urban space. Every place has an issue or problem that is deeply connected to wider issues and contexts. As Massey (2005) explained, a place is a product of socio-political interrelations at both local and global levels and a sphere of multiplicity, plurality, coexisting heterogeneity, and contemporaneity. According to her, a place is always under construction - building upon the past and present social relations at all levels. Relatedly, the issues, problems, and contentions around informal settlements are like most socio-political problems that have boundless interconnections with other local and global phenomena. Similarly, the problems of informal settlements are like what some scholars have described as wicked problems. Wicked problems are always evolving, making them difficult to understand over time and space. They seem difficult to address with policy and planning frameworks, making them elusive to understand or solutions with conventional governance interventions (see Head, 2019; Peters, 2017).

The problems and challenges around Abuja’s informal settlements can be considered wicked problems due to their complex connections with larger socio-economic and political issues. Historically, the difficult-to-resolve issues around the settlements are connected to wider national issues beyond the 1978 FCT Act that this study departs from. National issues such as the politics around the relocation of the FCT from Lagos to Abuja; the northern and southern Nigeria political power relations and the relative

advantage of the location of Abuja to the northern part; and the northerners being the majority of the ISD while majority of the statutory landowners are southerners. Beyond the historical and local politics, the dynamics around informal settlements have been explored in relation to their local socio-political practices, national political economy or ecology, global neoliberal and capitalist forces in many studies cited in this research. All these show the boundless nature of informal settlements' complex problems. But the good thing is, all these dynamics offer suitable avenues to explore and understand urban informality. My own entrepôt was through the historical antecedents and interplay over land rights and tenure security.

The politics, players and practices

Problems could be wicked, but the complexity or identity of a problem is defined by the politics, players and practices around the problem. According to Young (2008), problems vary with regards to the identity of actors. This study has extensively explained the dynamic nature of actors, their politics and players around informal settlements. Governance without boundaries can aptly explain the boundless interplay of governance actors, their indistinct formal and informal practices, interdependent of governance institutions, the diverse and relative power networks, and the boundless contentious politics around informal settlements. My case study has shown that the processes that produced the settlements, their growth and current dynamics are holistically embedded in the contentious politicking of all the stakeholders through an amenable state. Governance without boundaries as an analytical framework can therefore be described as a more realistic or pragmatic approach for analysing the practices (formal or informal) or politicking of governance actors over complex issues with indefinite sphere of influence using an amenable state as a stage for contention. However, governance without boundaries recognizes the reality of power hierarchies in socio-political contentions.

Governance without boundaries doesn't relegate the obvious reality of power hierarchies among actors in socio-political interactions. Just as hybridity is not evidence of parity between the subalterns and the powerful actors (Lemay-Hébert & Freedman, 2017a), governance without boundaries does not mean equal power relations, or that the marginalized ISD do not receive some ill treatments from more powerful actors. Governance without boundaries is meant to critically analyse the intersection or expression of power relations between the weak and the strong without exaggerating or underplaying any side. This is to avoid the encapsulating tendency of hybridity to side-line uneven power relations or ignore hierarchies of subordination (Visoka, 2017). The analysis of the governance dynamics around Abuja's informal settlements shows the power sources, hierarchies, and networks of contending actors, and where the imbalances of power lie or the different strengths of agential forces.

Notably, there are two different narratives on the state relationship with the ISD, one is on the persecutions from the state for powerful actors, and the other is the various support from the state for the ISD. This is also why the state's relationship with informality was described as Janus-faced by Christian Haid (2016). The insight from

this study is that the support or persecution that might be faced by the ISD depends on the changing regimes of the state – the next regime might be harder or softer on them. But considering the several reasons for the amenability of the state examined in this study, the ISD *could* always find allies within the state at any regime. This is highly possible because a larger portion of the economic sector and workforce of many African cities are on the *informal* side. So, sympathetic state actors, generic actors and street level bureaucracy will not be out of supply for the ISD. Also, the growing force of the ISD in (re)defining the socio-spatial and political dynamics in urban centres have been explained in many studies on urban informality or marginalization (see Aceska et al., 2019; Amin, 2014; Michelutti & Smith, 2014; Paller, 2017; Rubin, 2018; Saharan, Pfeffer, & Baud, 2018; Saharan et al., 2022).

This study acknowledged the power and agency of the ISD as shown in how the resistance practices of the ISD have influenced the government approach towards their displacement, but this study also reveals that the agentic forces of the marginalized urbanites in influencing a lot of things in the city is a bit exaggerated, temporal and not potent enough to guarantee a sustainable tenure security nor attract adequate infrastructural developments to the marginalized neighbourhoods.

In conclusion, the notion of governance without boundaries emerged from the case of Abuja, but its applicability in other contexts requires adequate and extensive data at the background of local peculiarities and dynamics. The manifestations of governance without boundaries might not be very pronounced in some contexts, but a critical examination of governance processes around urban informality across the world will indicate some similarities. However, governance without boundaries offer fresh perspectives from a global south context for rethinking the governance of urban informality.

7.2.6. Seeing urban informality from the southern perspective

In the recent 2022 Netherlands land academy (Landac) annual conference on @evolution for future land governance, one of the keynote speakers (Laura German) remarked that one of the ways to revolutionize land governance is to ‘read the works of scholars who self-identify as indigenous and/or colonized and analyze how their understandings and experiences differ from dominant constructs’ (LandPortal, 2022). Her position supports the propositions of SPT proponents advocating the need for understanding and explaining urban planning issues in the global south through the realities, practices and challenges that are peculiar to the region. They argued that issues around identity, ethnicity and race, societal conflict, gender and sexuality, post-coloniality and struggles for citizenship that are fundamental and more severe in the Global South than in other parts of the world should be conceptualized through local perspectives and peculiarities (see De Satgé & Watson, 2018; Helen, 2017; Watson, 2016). They also explained that the use of term ‘southern’ does not necessarily refer to a geographical South, but more of a perspective or orientation from different parts of the world.

Global south researchers need to understand that the rapid urbanization, weak and fractured civil society, poorly resourced and incapacitated institutions of governance, informal urban economies and high levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality that characterized many global south cities cannot be sufficiently explained by planning ideas (based on different socio-economic and political contexts) of the global north (Satgé & Watson, 2018). They added that there is little fit between the dominant planning concepts and models from the global north and ‘on-the-ground’ realities of the south. For instance, Förster and Ammann (2018) argued that the formal/informal dichotomy is rooted in western theoretical history with little or no applicability in the context of African governance. Another example is from this study: the manner at which different actors (the good, the bad and the ugly) blatantly manipulate the state institutions can be considered an anomaly from the western perspective, but it is the norm in most African states. The potential mismatch that could arise between dominant western theories and the actual everyday governance practices in the global south cities warranted the postcolonial or decolonization ideas of SPT. The inspiration drawn from SPT in this research is to ensure that significant details of urban informality in global south are not undermined.

However, contrary to popular perceptions and assumptions of urban informality as an eccentricity of only global south cities, many studies from the global north (see Chiodelli et al., 2020; Christian Haid, 2016; Christian Haid & Hilbrant, 2019; Jaffe & Koster, 2019; Koster & Nuijten, 2016; Lombard, 2019) have shown that urban informality is a global phenomenon. Therefore, my take on the regional perspectivism debate in urban informality studies is that both the global north and global south scholars have a lot to learn from each other. The global north scholars can learn the relevance and applicability of their theories globally from the perspectives of global south scholars. Here, the global south scholars need to be vocal in their theorization of global south issues with adequate contextual and empirical understandings. With this, the lacunas in many dominant theories can be filled by contextualized perspectives from both sides. And the applicability or suitability of any theoretical lens in exploring any phenomena in any context will be critically examined before making conclusions. The ever-changing dynamics of urban informality across the world require different perspectives from different contexts and regions to holistically under this global phenomenon in planning and governance. But it is an understatement to state that most studies on urban informality (especially those from the global south) are explored through western theoretical lenses without critical considerations of local peculiarities and socio-political dynamics of the global south cities. As shown in this study, many global south cities have unconventional governance practices that are quite elusive to western *good* governance theories.

7.3. Scholarly contribution and avenues for further research

The theoretical and empirical insights from this research led to the coinage of some innovative slants, concepts, and arguments that can contribute to the understanding of governance and urban informality in many contexts. They include the *amenable state*; the category of *generic actors* in governance; *artefactual* tenure security; and the notion of *governance without boundaries*. In addition, this study has provided some insights into why the challenges and contentions around informal settlements in many African cities have persisted so long without any foreseeable improvement. Although my approach in using governance as an overall framework is holistic – I explored both the past and present governance dynamics that are (re)defining the trajectory of Abuja’s informal settlements – there still exist areas in (Abuja) informal settlements that require more in-depth explorations. For instance, there are dynamic arguments among all the governance actors (my interviewees) making case for the resettlement or integration of the ISD of Abuja as the best way forward. Hence, the issue of resettlement in Abuja requires more in-depth exploration on why there are no alternative plans for the settlements despite the obvious difficulties in resettling the ISD.

Another area that this study did not fully explore is the relationship between the provisions of infrastructures in the informal settlements and the tenure security of ISD. Calls of the infrastructural developments of the informal settlements is popular among local and international NGOs, but empirical evidence on the extent to which provision of infrastructure, slum upgrading and or placemaking activities of ISD guarantees tenure security is scarce. An assumption from this study that is worth confirming is that powerful stakeholders that are interested in the ISD’s lands are sabotaging developmental efforts in the informal settlements to avoid consolidating their existence on the lands or rights to the lands.

It is also worthy to note here that this research is more exploratory and theoretical, unlike action research seeking for interventions to solve the many problems around informal settlements. The findings and insights from this research might not immediately offer solutions to the challenges around (Abuja) informal settlements, but the understanding of the genesis of the problems; the complex areas of contention; the intrigues of the contending actors; and the working mechanisms of the state can be handy for those looking for feasible and pragmatic solutions.

Informal relations and practices are the dominant norm in the socio-economic, political, and spatial organizations of many global south countries. As a personal research ambition, I would like to extend the insights from this research to exploring topical anthropogenic issues around climatic change, food security and ecosystem services. These are areas where the dynamics of urban informality have not been fully explored. For example, many statistical estimates have indicated that two-third or about 70% of the African city dwellers are either living in informal settlements or engaged in informal economic activities. Yet, scientific/empirical studies on the nexus between urban informality and climate change discourses in African cities are limited

(see Finn & Cobbinah, 2022), especially on how the dynamics of informal governance processes and practices can (re)define climate change discourses or mitigation measures.

7.4. Concluding remarks

The discourses (academics and public) around urban informality are often from two perspectives. One perspective is usually on the romanticization of the heroics and resistance struggles of the marginalized informal dwellers to be part of the city. The other perspective often focusses on the inefficiencies of state's structures and policies to address inequality. As noted by Rocco and Ballegooijen (2019), the pitfalls in these two divergent discourses is the romanticization of poverty or marginalization to the discredit of governments when the heroics of the informal dwellers are exaggerated; and the tendencies of (entrenching) paternalism when too much focus is accorded to the state structural forces or vulnerabilities of marginalized urbanites. To avoid these pitfalls, I critically examined both the structural and agential forces around the dynamics of Abuja's informal settlements. This is to explain the collective roles of all governance actors in the complexities around the informal settlements without supporting or blaming any side. However, to lend my voice to the debate among the stakeholders in the governance of Abuja's informal settlements on whether to resettle the ISD or not, I would like to point out the possible implications of both sides based on my insights from this research and familiarity with the study area.

On resettling the ISD, the advantages for the ISD in relocating to new sites include the opportunity to get statutory land rights; space for expansion or more economic activities (e.g., farming); and the opportunity to dictate the trajectory of their new community based on the lessons from past experiences. They can still agitate for more amenities while dwelling in the new sites. I take this position because there is no foreseeable solution to their poor living conditions and degrading slummy environment. The new resettlement sites offer greater prospects for a fresh start. Staying in their present locations amid uncertainties could intensify their challenges while waiting for a perfect resettlement that might never be feasible based on past antecedents. The losses in relocating from the city include the loss of their ancestral affinities to their current lands and the social allures of the city, including the basic amenities they currently enjoy. This is painful but based on past events a change in governmental regime or the ISD's power networks can still make a forceful displacement from their ancestral lands possible. Moreover, many state planners are of the opinion that upgrading the slummy conditions of the ISD would still require demolishing their old/substandard houses.

Integrating the settlements into the developmental plans of Abuja would require other contending actors to make some sacrifices or compromises in order to have a way forward. And it will also be dependent on the willingness and capability of state to develop the settlements amid limited resources and other developmental challenges

across the city. Hence, to resettle or integrate is a dilemma for all the stakeholders. A way out is the practice of some rich statutory landowners adequately compensating the ISD that are willing to relocate from the contested spaces to any place of their choice. Many of the statutory landowners that cannot wait for the not-forthcoming state's resettlements of the ISD are already doing this. But for those that do not have the resources to pay off the ISD, the state can revoke their statutory land rights to the lands in the informal settlements and compensate them with other alternative location (if possible, the controversial resettlement sites that most of ISD are rejecting) around the city. However, the sentimental attachment to the affluence or life of the city; the rich political class all over the country wanting to live in Abuja, the administrative headquarter and seat of power of Nigeria; the closeness to the city centre and social amenities; and other socio-political issues are key factors that would affect the choices of all the contending actors. Like every complex social problem, there is no straight way forward or perfect solution to the challenges and problems of the contested urban spaces in Abuja, Nigeria.

In addition to my suggestion in chapter 6 on how the amenable state can maintain its relevance and legitimacy through fairness and equality in socio-spatial administration of justice and resources, another way for the Nigerian state to overcome its amenability tendencies in urban land contentions is to encourage and oversee good governance processes from bottom up. That is, rather than having (neoliberal) national policies that create tensions with peculiar local and customary practices, customary tenures practices should be formalized in Abuja land administration. The involvement and formalization of customary land tenure practices in Abuja land management can ease lots of the tensions around the land conflicts. Especially for the fact that stakeholders like the traditional rulers, chiefs, community leaders and many ISD are still actively involved in the land buying and selling business of Abuja even with the state's official nonrecognition of customary land rights. In most cases, all the land stakeholders acknowledged the need to settle with customary land claimers for peace to reign. The positive impacts of adapting customary land tenure practices in land governance have also been observed in many African countries like Ghana, Ethiopia, south Africa, Kenya, Rwanda, Burkina Faso, Namibia, Tanzania, and Cameroun.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Interview introduction letter

 **WAGENINGEN**
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

P.O. Box 47 | 6700 AA Wageningen | The Netherlands

To whom it may concern


RECEIVED
16 NOV 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

This letter is to introduce Ismail Nuhu Adeiza, a PhD candidate the Cultural Geography Chair group of Wageningen University and Research, the Netherlands. Ismail Nuhu Adeiza is working on a research project focusing on the roles and impacts of governmental and non-governmental organizations on land rights, tenure security and formation of informal settlements in Abuja, Nigeria. He will be conducting fieldwork in Nigeria in October and November 2020. I would highly appreciate if you assist him in respect of his research.

With kind regards,


Prof. V.R. (René) van der Duim
Emeritus Professor
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Environmental
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Research Topic: The Roles and Impacts of State and Non-State Governance Actors on Land Rights, Tenure Security and Formation of Informal Settlements in Abuja, Nigeria

Overview: The research seeks to explore the governance mechanisms and roles of different actors around Abuja informal settlements (slums, shanties, ghettos, squatters, and other illegal structures). I am specifically interested in issues such as the resettlement programmes of the government, development controls exercises, demolitions, and land disputes among others around the slum (Mpape) and indigenous (Mabushi) settlements in Abuja. This research is to contribute to the understanding of the complex, multi layered and multifaceted urban land problems in Abuja through the exploration of the contested settlements which are critical in the overall governance and development of Abuja. I believe this understanding is necessary because addressing the problems of land rights and tenure security have also been widely acknowledged to be pivotal in addressing and mitigating the numerous problems of informal settlements in urban centres

Researcher: Ismail Nuhu Adeiza (PhD Candidate at the Cultural Geography Group of Wageningen University and Research, Netherlands).

Dear respondent/participant,

I want to interview you because I consider you (and your office) as a major stakeholder and resource person on the issues/communities I outlined above concerning my research. Your sincere responses are of great importance for my research and could enhance more understanding of the issues towards finding sustainable interventions. Please kindly take note of the following:

1. Participation in this interview/FGD is entirely voluntary and you are free to leave if you become uncomfortable with the interview/FGD at any point.
2. The information you provided will be used anonymously (unless you preferred otherwise) for this research and cannot be directly traced back to you (or your office also if you want)
3. The outlined questions below are subject to amendment or addition (or follow up questions) depending on your answers, the content, context and direction of our discussions.
4. Unless you object, I would like to record our discussions strictly for this research and my personal remembrance.

Thanks for your precious time.

Do you have any question/objection/observation/clarification before we proceed?

Appendix II: Interviews and FGDs Details

Interviews/FGDs	Details	Type
	October 2019- January, 2020	
Interview #1 SA	Interview with FCDA staff, Monitoring unit14/03/2019	Unstructured
Interview #2 SA	Interview with F.C.D.A staff resettlement unit 09/04/2019	Unstructured
Interview #3 NSA	Interview with Baba and wife (longtime residents of Mpape/Gbagyis) 11/10/2019	Unstructured
Interview #4 NSA	Interview with Mabushi Traditional ruler (Esu-Sa Maupeyi Akuyie III) 12/10/2019	Unstructured
Interview #5 NSA	Interview with Honourable Haruna (Pseudonym) A Politician in Mabushi 17/10/2019	Semi- structured
Interview #6 NSA	Interview with the traditional head of Mpape- Al Gimba, Gbagyi Indigene 20/10/2019	Unstructured
Interview #7 SA	Interview with FCDA planner URP unit, 23/10/2019	Unstructured
Interview #8 SA	Interview with FCDA resettlement official 23/10/2019	Unstructured
Interview #9 SA	Interview with Director of information AGIS/LAND 24/10/2019	Semi- structured
Interview #10 SA	Interview with PA (Director's office, URP, FCDA) Tpl.04/11/2019	Unstructured
Interview #11 SA	Interview with Deputy Director (URP- Abuja, South, FCDA) and 2 Town Planners 05/11/2019	Semi- structured
Interview #12 NSA	Interview with the chairman, council of tribal chiefs (representing all tribal heads, Mpape) 29/11/2019	Unstructured
Interview #13 NSA	Interview with the Igbos tribal head, Mazi and Wife Mpape 17/01/2020	Unstructured
Interview #14 NSA	Interview with a member of Apo resettlement scheme committee representing the indigenes 17/01/2020	Semi- structured
Interview #15 NSA	Interview with Sarkin Hausa Mpape 20/01/2020	Unstructured
Interview #16 SA	Interview with FCDA town planner URP unit 21/01/2020	Unstructured
Interview #17 SA	Interview FCDA staff 21/01/2020	Unstructured
Interview #18 SA	Interview with FCDA resettlement official 21/01/2020	Unstructured
Interview #19 SA	Interview with FCDA staff (Town planner) 21/01/2020	Unstructured
	October – November, 2020	
Interview #20 NSA	Interview with an Igala Migrant and Mpape Youth President 20-25/10/2020	Semi- structured
Interview #21 NSA	Interview with Sarkin Nupe- a migrant and Nupe tribe community leader in Mpape 21/10/2020	Semi- structured
Interview #22 NSA	Interview with Utako village community leader, a Gbagi 24/10/2020	Semi- structured
Interview #23 NSA	Interview with Lawyer/Land Agent also working with the Nigeria federal inland revenue service 24/10/2020	Unstructured
Interview #24 NSA	Interview with Youth leader, Kpadna Jabi 26/10/2020	Semi- structured
Interview #25 NSA	Interview with the youth representative, Mabushi and his father) 27/10/2020	Semi- structured
Interview #26 SA	Interview with Senior planner, PA to the Director, URP unit 29/10/2020	Semi- structured
Interview #27 SA	Interview with 3 staff of FCDA resettlement unit (Monitoring unit) 05/11/2020	Semi- structured

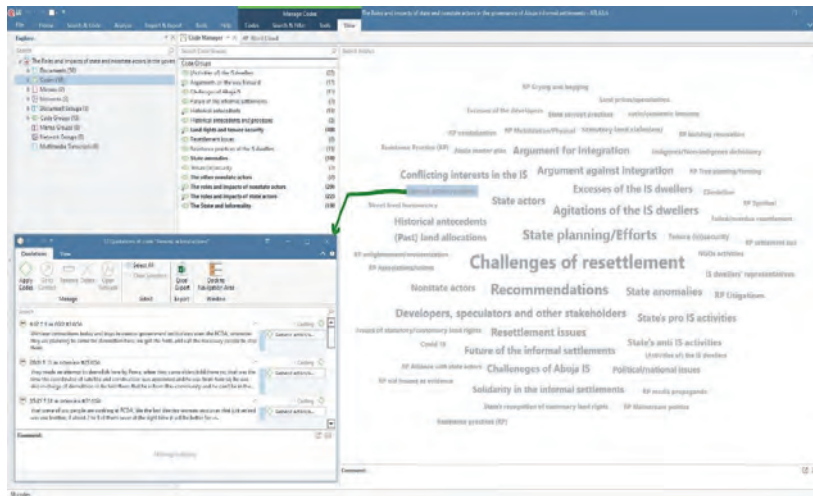
Interview #28 SA	Interview with the Chief planning officer, Development control department, AMMC) and former staff of Resettlement department, FCDA 03/11/2020	Semi-structured
Interview #29 SA	Interview with 2 FCDA town planners, URP North section, FCDA 5/11/2020	Semi-structured
Interview #30 NSA	Interview with the Site Manager, Novel Architects and Estate Managers, Abuja 06/11/2020	Semi-structured
Interview #31 NSA	Interview with Honourable Mabushi Political leader 08/11/2020	Semi-structured
Interview #32 SA	Interview with the Acting Director, Resettlement department, FCDA) 08/11/2020	Semi-structured
Interview #33 SA	Interview with the HOD, GIS Department, AGIS 10/11/2020	Semi-structured
Interview #34 SA	Interview with the former Ex-Director of Development Control Dept, AMMC 10/11/2020	Semi-structured
Interview #35 SA	Interview with Abuja south Sector Manager, town planner at Development Control, Abuja 11/11/2020	Semi-structured
Interview #36 SA	Interview with Senior Planner, AMAC, Kuje Zone and Assistant 12/11/2020	Semi-structured
Interview #37 SA	Interview with a Senior planner at FCDA resettlement department 12/11/2020	Unstructured
Interview #38 SA	Interview with a Senior planner at FCDA resettlement department 13/11/2020	Semi-structured
Interview #39 SA	Interview with a Senior planner at FCDA resettlement department 13/11/2020	Semi-structured
Interview #40 SA	Interview with AMAC staff- (Revenue office) 13/11/2020	Unstructured
Interview #41 NSA	Interview with Mabushi district head (AMAC) 14/11/2020	Semi-structured
Interview #42 NSA	Interview with Sarkin Hausawa (representing the hausa tribe in Mpape) 14/11/2020	Semi-structured
Interview #43 NSA	Interview with the chairman, council of tribal chiefs (representing all tribal heads, Mpape 15/11/2020	Semi-structured
Interview #44 NSA	Interview with the Oba of yorubas, Vice Chairman, council of tribal chiefs (representing the Yoruba tribes) 15/11/2020	Semi-structured
Interview #45 SA	Interview with Director of Information AGIS/LANDS 16/11/2020	Semi-structured
Interview #46 SA	Interview with Surveyor, Staff AGIS/FCDA (Survey and mapping department) and a land agent 17/11/2020	Unstructured
Interview #47 SA	Interview with a Councillor of AMAC 18/11/2020	Semi-structured
Interview #48 NSA	Interview with the manager of Zoe New Dawn Estate Builders and his assistant 18/11/2020	Semi-structured
	Focus Group Discussions	
FGD #1 SA	FGD with 3 staff of FCDA Monitoring and Evaluation units 19/03/2019	Semi-structured
FGD #2 NSA	FGD with 5 Gbagyi longtime residents and market woman leader, Mpape 12/10/2019	Unstructured
FGD #3 NSA	FGD with Mabushi community council leaders (traditional chiefs) 7 persons 19/10/2019	Semi-structured

FGD #4 NSA	FGD with a community chief and 3 neighbours (Garki Indigenes) Mpape 22/10/2019	Unstructured
FGD #5 SA	FGD with 5 FCDA resettlement officials (monitoring unit) 23/01/2020	Unstructured
FGD #6 SA	FGD with Deputy Director, URP, Abuja South, FCDA) and 3 others 23/01/2020	Semi-structured
FGD #7 SA	FGD with 4 staff at the Deputy Director's office, URP unit, FCDA 29/10/2020	Semi-structured
FGD #8 NSA	FGD with the Prince and Secretary, council of tribal heads, Mpape, a youth leader and 3 tribal heads 06/11/2020	Unstructured
FGD #9 NSA	FGD with Prince Esu Jabi Kpadna and 3 traditional council members 07/11/2020	Semi-structured
FGD #10 SA	FGD with 5 FCDA staff (Planning section) 09/11/2020	Unstructured

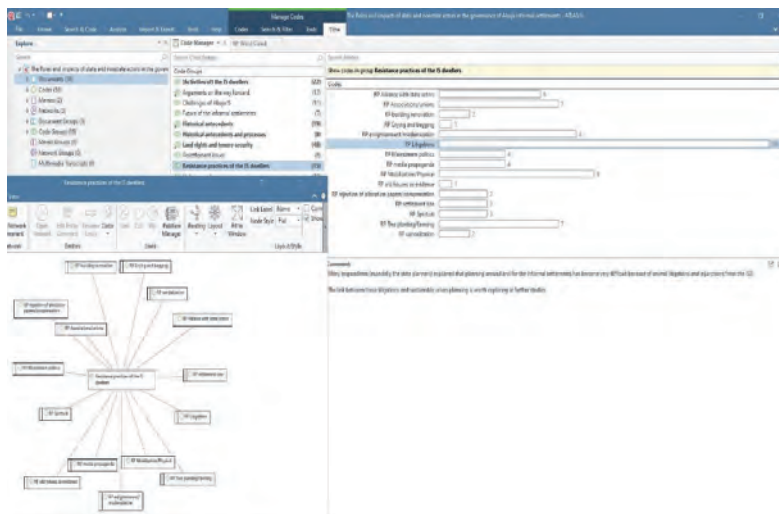
SA: State actors

NSA: Nonstate actors

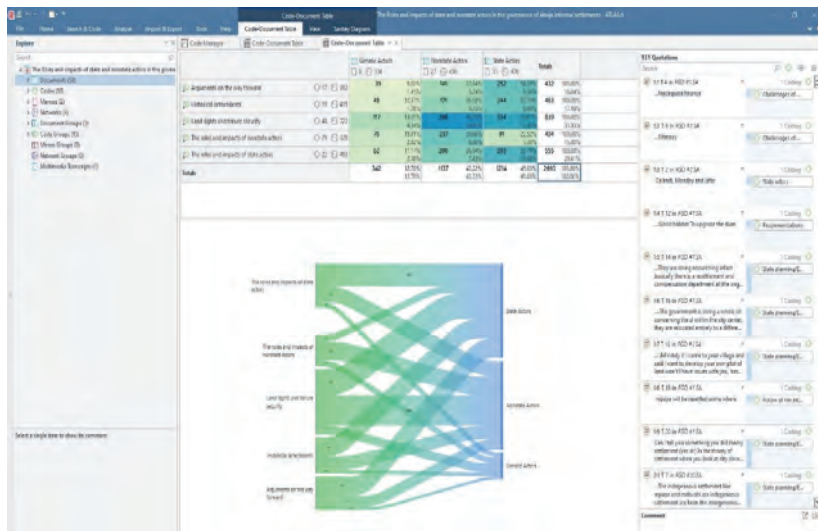
Appendix III: Atlas.ti screenshots and tables



First level codes



Second level axial code groups



Code-Document table

Second level code-document table

Code Groups	No of quotations/documents (transcribed interviews)			
	Nonstate Actors Gr=456; GS=27		State Actors Gr=476; GS=31	
	Absolute	Row- relative	Absolute	Row- relative
(Activities of) the ISD Gr=219; GS=22	161	73.52%	58	26.48%
Challenges of Abuja IS Gr=245; GS=11	90	36.74%	155	63.27%
Future of the informal settlements Gr=169; GS=7	58	34.32%	111	65.68%

Historical antecedents and processes Gr=147; GS=8	74	50.34%	73	49.66%
Resettlement issues Gr=190; GS=6	83	43.68%	107	56.32%
Resistance practices of the ISD Gr=79; GS=15	54	68.35%	25	31.65%
State anomalies Gr=202; GS=10	94	46.54%	108	53.47%
Tenure (in)security Gr=111; GS=7	57	51.35%	54	48.65%
The other nonstate actors Gr=110; GS=7	77	70.00%	33	30.00%
The State and Informality Gr=373; GS=19	144	38.61%	229	61.39%
Totals	892	48.35%	953	51.65%

Third level thematic smart grouping code-document table


Code Groups	No of quotations/documents (transcribed interviews)			
	Nonstate Actors Gr=456; GS=27		State Actors Gr=476; GS=31	
	Absolute	Row- relative	Absolute	Row- relative
Arguments on the way forward Gr=393; GS=17	141	35.88%	252	64.12%
Historical antecedents Gr=415; GS=19	171	41.21%	244	58.79%
Land rights and tenure security Gr=722; GS=48	388	53.74%	334	46.26%
The roles and impacts of nonstate actors Gr=328; GS=29	237	72.26%	91	27.74%
The roles and impacts of state actors Gr=493; GS=22	200	40.57%	293	59.43%
Totals	1137	48.36%	1214	51.64%

Groundedness of codes (Gr) is number of quotations coded by a code or documents (the transcribed interviews). GS represents the number of documents in a document group

Appendix IV: Using the state against the state (Minster of justice vs FCT Minister)

**SOLICITOR-GENERAL OF THE FEDERATION
AND PERMANENT SECRETARY**
FEDERAL MINISTRY OF JUSTICE
PLAT 718,
SHEHU SHAGARI WAY
MATTAMA ABUJA, NIGERIA

PAF/E. No 192
Telegram SOLICITOR
Telephone 09-6720170
Telex



SGF/PS/MFCTA/259
Ref. No.
Date 16th August, 2012

The Honourable Minister,
Ministry of Federal Capital Territory
Administration,
Garki Area 11
Abuja

RE: SUIT NO: CV/3998/2012
JACOB OBOR & 4 ORS V FCDA & 2 ORS

I am to inform you that the attention of the Honourable Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice has been drawn to the above captioned petition in respect of the pending Suit before the FCT High Court which has to do with the demolition exercise planned for Mpape Village in the FCT (a copy of the Petition is attached hereto for ease of reference).

2. In the light of the self explanatory contents of the petition, I am to respectfully convey the advice of the Honourable Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice that all proposed actions be stayed in respect of the subject matter pending the determination of the substantive suit and any appeal arising therefrom. This is in consonance with this administration's avowed commitment to the enthronement of the rule of law.

3. Please accept the assurances of the high regards and best wishes of the Honourable Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice

ay
ABDULLAH A. YOLA, OON
Solicitor-General of the Federation
& Permanent Secretary

cc: Femi Falana, SAN

Summary

Abuja, the federal capital territory (FCT) of Nigeria, was founded in the late 1970s. Like many other African cities, informal settlements are one of the defining features of Abuja. The slummy settlements are coexisting within and around the highly developed neighbourhoods of Abuja. As rightly observed by many urban informality scholars, the dynamics around informal settlements are messy and difficult to understand. This is because of the complex entanglements between the numerous challenges and governance actors around the settlements. In the case of Abuja, major planning and development control activities of the state, such as demolitions, forced evictions and resettlement schemes, have not shown significant effects to the growing challenges of Abuja informal settlements. In addition, the contentions over land ownership rights and tenure security have produced a dynamic of contentious politicking involving the informal settlements dwellers (ISD), their representatives, land developers and the state. This includes the dynamic resistance practices of the ISD over displacement (threats) and the scheming of land developers to acquire lands for business.

The central aim of this thesis therefore is to provide deeper insights on how and why land ownership rights and tenure security in Abuja informal settlements are so controversial and remain unresolved for over 40 years since the creation of Abuja as the new capital city of Nigeria in 1978.

The central research question addressed in this thesis is: *How has the historical and current interplay of governance actors produced the complex dynamics around the informal settlements of Abuja?*

To answer this question, three common interconnected themes in the discourse of (African) urban governance and planning guided my conceptualization of governance of informal settlements. They are: the historical antecedents that initiated current contentions, the politicking of contending actors, and the complex role of the state. Based on insightful readings from interrelated social science disciplines like geography, political science, sociology, anthropology, development studies and organizational studies, I conceptualized the governance of informal settlements as an historically defined process through which an amenable state and influential non-state actors interact, using various institutions for claim makings, resistance, contentious politicking, powerplay and negotiations, over landownership rights and tenure security. Specifically, I used ideas from the concepts of path-dependency and critical junctures in historical institutionalism, contentious politicking in resistance and social movement studies, and distinct theories of the state in many social science disciplines to develop my conceptual framework for this study.

The framework guided the exploration and explanation of the mutual and collective roles and impacts of both state and non-state actors in the complex dynamics around Abuja informal settlements. Notably, the notion of the state being amenable to the manipulations of governance actors is to unconventionally present the state as a stage for the contending stakeholders. This is to go beyond the usual conclusions on the state to unravel the deep intrigues, working mechanisms, and (formal/informal)

relationships of the state with the contending actors around informal settlements. I have explained in this study that the state is amenable because of its multiple governance sites, actors and components. Other factors that enhanced the state's amenability include the power relations and networks across the various state organs; the influence of traditional institutions and customary practices in African urban governance; the informal practices of the state, the state's limited state resources; and neoliberal economic forces.

In common with most other studies on urban informality, this thesis is a qualitative research. I took a critical interpretivist position to explain the various ways governance actors construct the realities around Abuja informal settlements amid historically embedded power relations. The research data were from stakeholders' interviews, document analyses and participant observations. The overall thesis is comprised of 7 chapters. The introductory chapter provides the background and rationale for the research, the research aim, questions and methodological approach. The second chapter reviews and examines relevant literatures to build a theoretical and conceptual framework for the thesis. Chapter 3 explains the operationalization of the various concepts of this study, data collection and analysis methods, and features of the study areas. It also provides the rationale for the chosen methods and case studies. This includes the philosophical background that warranted this qualitative case study research and the axiological influences in the research. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are the empirical chapters that address the research questions, while the last chapter summarizes this thesis with concrete answers to the research questions and discussions of the research findings.

The insights from the theoretical and conceptual frameworks were used to structure the empirical chapters of the thesis into three parts. The first is the use of ideas of critical junctures and path-dependency to explore the past antecedents that have influenced or still influence current contentions around Abuja informal settlements. The critical historical governance moments in the dynamics around Abuja informal settlements include the 1976 FCT Act; 1978 Land Use Act; 1979 Abuja master plan and (unsuccessful) resettlements; unharmonized customary and statutory land allocations; and the past indiscriminate demolitions/displacement threats. The retrospective exploration provided insights in how the informal settlements became informalized, and why there are different land ownerships claims and tenure arrangements in the informal settlements. Notably, the contentions over statutory and customary land rights claims have produced a temporal and fragile *artefactual* tenure security for the informal settlements' dwellers. A tenure security that is dependent on some artefacts like old/mud houses, Gbagyi dialect, cashew trees and court injunctions.

The second empirical chapter explains the contentious politicking of non-state actors around Abuja informal settlements. This includes the exploration of how the different land claim makings, contentions, resistance practices, and negotiations of contending actors is defining the dynamics of infrastructural development, access to land, and the resettlements or displacement (threats) around the settlements. The analyses in this chapter shed more light on the significant contributions of non-state actors in the complications around informal settlements. These non-state actors include the informal settlements' dwellers (ISD), their community leaders and political

representatives, statutory land claimers, land developers, speculators, and the rich elites/politicians of Abuja. The empirical details of their activities in the chapter provides an insight into how contending non-state actors have a boundless access to the state (institutions and actors) in search of support for their various claims and interests. The chapter also explains the significant roles of a set of across-the-board actors that facilitate the non-state actors' boundless access to manoeuvre the state.

To understand the state and its usually assumed complexity around urban informality, the third empirical chapter explores the state's working mechanisms around Abuja's informal settlements and its multifaced relationships with contending actors. In this chapter I presented the state as a stage and an amenable entity that can be used by the various contending actors (including the ISD) towards supporting or validating their claims. Presenting the state as an amenable entity is quite different from the popular assumption of the state as the despotic actor that works with powerful elites to marginalize or suppress powerless/unprivileged informal settlement dwellers. The chapter also expatiates the hypothesis of the amenable state by showing how the dynamics of state actors, components, multiple governance levels, and power hierarchies within the state complicate the state's mandate in managing the settlements.

There are multiple avenues within the state for contending actors to explore to their advantage. There is a boundless interplay between the state and non-state actors that further complicates the governance and planning of the settlements. The activities of state actors for or against different contending actors enhances the state's amenability and complications around the settlements. Research results show the limitations of the state's powers in multi-actor governance. The state operates between two contending forces: the growing agency of the ISD to be part of the city's socio-political space and the powerful elites with the resources to modernize the city at the expense of the ISD. And here lies the dilemma of the state: the state's quest for relevance through socio-economic development cannot do without the elite's resources and their governance influences. But also, the agency of the marginalized urbanites can derail state's developmental plans. In these complex dynamics, I opined that *fairness, equality, justice, and good governance* are some governance approaches that could enhance the state's powers, legitimacy and relevance.

I summed up the governance mechanisms around Abuja informal settlements with the notion of governance without boundaries – a boundless interplay of governance actors and their practices. This entails the blurry dichotomy between state and non-state actors, their indistinct formal/informal practices, and their interwoven power relations. I concluded that governance decisions, processes and outcomes (positive or negative) around the informal settlements are coproduced mutually by both the state and non-state actors. That is, it is not sufficient to blame just a party for the complexities and challenges around the settlements when all the governance actors are culpable. Also, in addition to the dynamic (and sometimes conflicting) components of the state, the contentious politicking of non-state actors can derail any feasible state developmental plan. In other words, the success of any state plan will be dependent on the compromises, negotiations, or agreements among contending non-state actors. This shows the limited powers of the state in multi-actor governance of contentious issues. Governance without boundaries is meant to explain the everyday unconventional

governance practices of the African states that are quite elusive to normative western theories of the state.

The findings and insights from this research might not immediately offer solutions to the challenges around (Abuja's) informal settlements. But the understanding of the genesis of the problems, the complex areas of contention, the intrigues of the contending actors and the working mechanisms of the state are important for those looking for feasible and pragmatic solutions. Inspired by southern planning theory, the theoretical and empirical insights from this research led to the coinage of some innovative slants, concepts, and arguments that can contribute to the understanding of governance and urban informality in many contexts. They include the *amenable state*; the category of *generic (across-the-board) actors* in governance; *artefactual* tenure security; and the notion of *governance without boundaries*. In addition, this study has provided insights into why the challenges and contentions around informal settlements in many African cities have persisted for so long without any foreseeable improvement.

Samenvatting

Abuja, de federale hoofdstad (FCT) van Nigeria, werd eind jaren zeventig gesticht. Zoals in vele andere Afrikaanse steden zijn informele nederzettingen ook in Abuja een van de bepalende kenmerken. De sloppenwijken bestaan naast en in de hoogontwikkelde wijken van Abuja.

Zoals veel wetenschappers op het gebied van stedelijke informaliteit terecht opmerken, is de dynamiek rond informele nederzettingen moeilijk te begrijpen. De talrijke uitdagingen in en actoren van invloed op de nederzettingen zorgen voor een complexe situatie. In het geval van Abuja hebben belangrijke plannings- en ontwikkelingsactiviteiten van de overheid, zoals sloopwerkzaamheden, gedwongen verplaatsingen en programma's om bewoners elders te vestigen, geen noemenswaardig effect gehad op de groeiende uitdagingen van de informele nederzettingen in Abuja. Bovendien hebben de geschillen over landrechten en grondbezit geleid tot een dynamiek tussen de bewoners van informele nederzettingen (ISD), hun vertegenwoordigers, projectontwikkelaars en de overheid, met inbegrip van de verzetspraktijken van de ISD tegen verplaatsing en het gekonkel van projectontwikkelaars om land te verwerven voor zakelijke doeleinden.

Het centrale doel van deze dissertatie is daarom dieper inzicht te verschaffen in hoe en waarom eigendomsrechten en eigendomszekerheid in de informele nederzettingen van Abuja zo controversieel zijn en sinds de oprichting van Abuja als nieuwe hoofdstad van Nigeria in 1978 onopgelost blijven.

De centrale onderzoeksvraag in dit proefschrift luidt: *Hoe heeft het historische en huidige samenspel van actoren geleid tot de complexe dynamiek rond de informele nederzettingen van Abuja?*

Om deze vraag te beantwoorden heb ik me laten leiden door drie gemeenschappelijke, onderling verbonden thema's in het discours over (Afrikaans) stedelijk bestuur en planning. Dat zijn: de historische antecedenten die de aanzet hebben gegeven tot de huidige conflicten, de politiek van de betrokken actoren en de complexe rol van de overheid. Op basis van inzichten uit verschillende sociale wetenschappen (zoals geografie, politicologie, sociologie, antropologie, ontwikkelingsstudies en organisatiestudies) heb ik het bestuur van informele nederzettingen geconceptualiseerd als een historisch gedefinieerd proces waarin een kwetsbare overheid en andere invloedrijke actoren met elkaar interacteren, gebruik makend van diverse instellingen voor het maken van claims, plegen van verzet, uitoefenen van controversiële politiek, machtsspelletjes en onderhandelingen over eigendomsrechten en eigendomszekerheid. Meer specifiek gebruikte ik de concepten van 'pad-afhankelijkheid' en 'kritieke momenten' uit het historisch institutionalisme, 'controversiële politiek' (contentious politicking) uit de studies over verzet en sociale bewegingen, en verschillende theorieën over de rol van de overheid om mijn conceptueel kader voor deze studie te ontwikkelen.

Het conceptuele kader leidde de verkenning en verklaring van de wederzijdse en collectieve rollen en effecten van actoren binnen en buiten de overheid in de complexe

dynamiek rond de informele nederzettingen in Abuja. Met name het idee dat de overheid vatbaar is voor de manipulaties van andere actoren is een onconventionele voorstelling van de overheid als podium voor strijdende belanghebbenden. Hierdoor was het mogelijk om de diepgaande intriges, beleidsmechanismen en (formele/informele) relaties van de overheid met de strijdende actoren rond informele nederzettingen te ontrafelen. Ik heb in deze studie uitgelegd dat de overheid vatbaar is voor manipulaties vanwege onder andere de machtsverhoudingen en netwerken tussen de verschillende overheidsorganen; de invloed van traditionele instellingen en alledaagse praktijken in het Afrikaanse stedelijke bestuur; de informele praktijken van de overheid, de beperkte staatsmiddelen en neoliberale economische krachten.

Net als de meeste andere studies over stedelijke informaliteit is dit proefschrift een kwalitatief onderzoek. Ik nam een kritisch interpretatieve positie in om de verschillende manieren te verklaren waarop verschillende actoren de realiteit rond de informele nederzettingen in Abuja construeren te midden van historisch verankerde machtsrelaties. De onderzoeksgegevens zijn afkomstig van interviews met belanghebbenden, documentanalyses en observaties.

Het proefschrift bestaat uit 7 hoofdstukken. Het inleidende hoofdstuk beschrijft de achtergrond van het onderzoek, het onderzoeksdoel, de vragen en de methodologische aanpak. Het tweede hoofdstuk bespreekt en onderzoekt relevante literatuur om een theoretisch en conceptueel kader voor het proefschrift op te bouwen. In hoofdstuk 3 worden de operationalisering van de verschillende concepten van dit onderzoek, de methoden voor gegevensverzameling en -analyse en de kenmerken van de studiegebieden toegelicht. Het geeft ook de beweegredenen voor de gekozen methoden en casestudies. De hoofdstukken 4, 5 en 6 zijn de empirische hoofdstukken, terwijl het laatste hoofdstuk deze dissertatie samenvat met antwoorden op de onderzoeksvragen en een discussie naar aanleiding van de onderzoeksbevindingen.

In hoofdstuk 4 heb ik de concepten 'kritieke momenten' en 'pad-afhankelijkheid' gebruikt om de antecedenten uit het verleden te onderzoeken die de huidige discussies rond de informele nederzettingen in Abuja hebben beïnvloed of nog steeds beïnvloeden. De kritieke historische momenten omvatten de FCT Act van 1976; de Land Use Act van 1978; het masterplan van Abuja van 1979 en de (mislukte) hervestiging, het niet op elkaar afgestemd zijn van traditionele en wettelijke manieren om land toe te wijzen en dreigementen om nederzettingen te slopen of te verplaatsen. Het onderzoek leverde inzicht op in hoe de informele nederzettingen geïnstitutionaliseerd werden en waarom er in de informele nederzettingen verschillende claims op grondbezit en -eigendom bestaan. Met name de geschillen over wettelijke en gewoonterechten hebben geleid tot een tijdelijke en kwetsbare 'artefactuele' eigendomszekerheid voor de bewoners van de informele nederzettingen. Een eigendomszekerheid die afhankelijk is van enkele artefacten zoals oude huizen (gemaakt van modder), het Gbagyi-dialect, cashew-bomen en gerechtelijke bevelen.

In het tweede empirische hoofdstuk (hoofdstuk 5) wordt de omstreden politiek van actoren buiten de overheid van Abuja toegelicht. Dit omvat de verkenning van de manier waarop de verschillende vormen van landclaims, geschillen, verzetspraktijken en onderhandelingen van de betrokken actoren de dynamiek van de infrastructurele ontwikkeling, de toegang tot land, en de hervestiging of verplaatsing (of bedreigingen

daarvan) rond de nederzettingen bepalen. De analyses in dit hoofdstuk werpen meer licht op de belangrijke rollen van actoren buiten de overheid in de verwickelingen rond informele nederzettingen. Hiertoe behoren de bewoners van informele nederzettingen (ISD), hun leiders en politieke vertegenwoordigers, wettelijke landeigenaren, projectontwikkelaars, speculanten en de rijke elites en politici in Abuja. De analyses van hun activiteiten geven inzicht in de manier waarop deze actoren op zoek gaan naar steun voor hun verschillende claims en belangen. Het hoofdstuk licht ook de belangrijke rol toe van een reeks specifieke actoren die de toegang van niet-overheidsactoren tot de overheid en politici vergemakkelijken.

In het derde empirische hoofdstuk (hoofdstuk 6) worden de rollen van de overheid rond de informele nederzettingen van Abuja en haar veelzijdige relaties met andere actoren onderzocht. In dit hoofdstuk heb ik de overheid voorgesteld als een podium die door de verschillende strijdende actoren (waaronder de ISD) kan worden gebruikt om hun claims te ondersteunen of te valideren. Deze presentatie van de overheid verschilt nogal van de populaire veronderstelling dat de overheid en de politiek autoritaire actoren samenwerken met machtige elites om machteloze bewoners van informele nederzettingen te marginaliseren of te onderdrukken.

De onderzoeksresultaten tonen de beperkingen van de bevoegdheden van de overheid bij multi-actor governance. De overheid opereert tussen twee strijdende krachten: de groeiende macht van de ISD om deel uit te maken van de sociaal-politieke ruimte van de stad en de machtige elites met de middelen om de stad te moderniseren ten koste van de ISD. En hier ligt het dilemma: de zoektocht naar sociaal-economische ontwikkeling kan niet zonder de middelen van de elite en hun invloeden op het bestuur. Maar ook de invloed van gemarginaliseerde stedelingen kan de ontwikkelingsplannen van de overheid doen ontsporen. In deze complexe dynamiek zijn eerlijkheid, gelijkheid, rechtvaardigheid en goed bestuur enkele uitgangspunten die de bevoegdheden, legitimiteit en relevantie van de overheid kunnen vergroten.

Ik heb de complexe situatie in Abuja samengevat met het begrip 'bestuur zonder grenzen' - een grenzeloos samenspel van actoren en hun praktijken. Dit impliceert een vage tweedeling tussen actoren binnen en buiten de overheid, hun onduidelijke formele/informele praktijken en hun verweven machtsrelaties. Ik concludeer dat beleidsbeslissingen, -processen en -resultaten (positief of negatief) rond de informele nederzettingen gezamenlijk door alle actoren worden geproduceerd. Het volstaat niet om slechts één partij de schuld te geven van de complexiteit en de uitdagingen rond de nederzettingen, aangezien alle betrokken actoren schuldig zijn. Met andere woorden, het succes van elk plan zal afhangen van de compromissen, onderhandelingen of akkoorden tussen strijdende actoren buiten de overheid. Dit toont de beperkte bevoegdheden van de overheid in het multi-actor bestuur van geschillen.

De bevindingen en inzichten uit dit onderzoek bieden misschien niet onmiddellijk oplossingen voor de uitdagingen rond de informele nederzettingen (in Abuja). Maar inzicht in het ontstaan van de problemen, de twistpunten, de intriges van de strijdende actoren en de verschillende rollen van de overheid zijn belangrijk voor wie op zoek is naar haalbare en pragmatische oplossingen. De theoretische en empirische inzichten van dit onderzoek hebben geleid tot enkele vernieuwende invalshoeken, concepten en argumenten die kunnen bijdragen tot het begrip van bestuur en stedelijke informaliteit

in vele contexten. Daartoe behoren de ‘ontvankelijke overheid’ ; ‘artefactuele’ eigendomszekerheid; en het begrip ‘bestuur zonder grenzen’ . Daarnaast heeft deze studie inzicht verschaft in de vraag waarom de uitdagingen en twistpunten rond informele nederzettingen in veel Afrikaanse steden al zo lang voortduren zonder dat enige verbetering te verwachten valt.

About the author

Nuhu Adeiza Ismail was born on the 23rd of March 1985 in Okene, Kogi State, Nigeria. He was raised in Okene and Ondo town for his early education before proceeding to the University of Jos, Nigeria to obtain his B.Sc. degree in Geography and Planning in 2010. His passion for research started during his B.Sc. programme when wrote a dissertation on the abuse of street children in Jos Plateau to obtain his B.Sc. degree. He worked as Geography Teacher in a secondary school in a one-year post-graduation national youth service programme (NYSC) from 2011 to 2012 before his employment as a Graduate Assistant in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, Kogi State University, Nigeria in 2012. In 2016, Nuhu completed his M.Sc. programme in Geography with a specialization in regional development planning. He wrote an M.Sc. thesis on rural development planning in Nigeria where he developed a framework for measuring and planning infrastructural development in rural areas. He won a Nigerian government scholarship (Tertiary Education Trust Fund) in 2018 to start his PhD in Netherlands with the Cultural Geography Group of Wageningen. His PhD research is on the governance of informal settlements in Abuja, Nigeria. The PhD research contributes to the understanding of the complexities around governance, urban informality, and the state in African cities. He would like to extend the insights from his PhD research to exploring contemporary issues around migration, urban development, and climate change governance and adaptation strategies in Africa cities. In sum, Nuhu is an interdisciplinary social scientist with a strong passion for the academia – his teaching and research areas of Interest include (but not limited to) Human Geography, Governance, Land Conflicts, Urban Informality, Urban and Regional Development Planning, Migration, Policy Analysis, African studies, and Qualitative Research Methods.

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List of publications

Ismail, N. A., Aceska, A. & Adu-Ampong, E. A. (under review). "We closed down Mpape on the judgement day": Resistance and place-making in urban informal settlements in Abuja, Nigeria. *Urban Forum*.

Ifatimehin, O.O., Eneche, P. S. U. & **Ismail, N. A.** (2020). Flood Vulnerability Assessment of Settlements in the Niger-Benue Trough, Central Nigeria. *International Journal of Environment and Climate Change* 10(11): 50-67, 2020. ISSN:2581-8627; DOI: 10.9734/IJECC/2020/v10i1130266.

Ismail, N. A., Adeniji, T. A. & Paul, O. I. (2018). Assessment of Tricycles Operations as an Alternative Means of Urban Transport in Lokoja, Kogi State. *Confluence Journal of Environmental Studies* 2018: 12 (1): 53- 62.

Musa, S. D., **Ismail, N. A.** & Akoji, P. U. (2017). An Assessment of the Sustainability of Resettlers Livelihood Assets in the Apo Resettlement Scheme of Abuja, Nigeria. *Asian Research Journal of Arts & Social Sciences* 4(3): 1-16, 2017. ISSN: 2456-4761; DOI: 10.9734/ARJASS/2017/35162.

Onwuka, S. U., Eneche, P. S. U. & **Ismail, N. A.** (2017). Geospatial Modelling and Prediction of Land Use/Cover Dynamics in Onitsha Metropolis, Nigeria: A Sub-pixel Approach. *Current Journal of Applied Science and Technology* 22(6): 1-18. ISSN: 2231-0843; DOI: 10.9734/CJAST/2017/35294.

Ismail, N. A., Elejo, O. A. & Adebisi A. (2017). A Spatial Analysis of Some Indicators of Development in the Rural Areas of Okene, Kogi State, Nigeria. *Journal of Geography, Environment and Earth Science International* 10(1): 1-22. ISSN: 2454-7352; DOI: 10.9734/JGEESI/2017/28165.

Ifatimehin O. O., **Ismail N. A.** & Balogun M. (2015). Bioclimatic Conditions of Urban Residents through Deteriorating Ecosystem Practices in an Emerging City of Nigeria. *International Journal of Ecosystem* 2015, 5(3): 75-79

Conference presentations

2022 International Geographic Union (IGU-UGI) Centennial Congress, Paris: Time for Geographers. Presented paper: *Understanding the State's complexity in the governance of informal settlements: The case of Abuja, Nigeria* – Session: Local and Urban Governance: Stability, Variability, And Innovation.

2021 LANDac Annual Conference, Netherlands: Land, Crisis and Resilience. Presented paper: *Path Dependence and Critical Junctures in the Land Rights and Tenure Security Dynamics of Informal Settlements in Abuja, Nigeria* - PhD Session.

Wageningen School of Social Sciences Annual PhD Day (2021), Wageningen University and Research, Netherlands. Presented paper: *Resistance and Contentious Politics in Informal Settlement Governance: Understanding the State and Indigenous People's Reactions to Displacement and Resettlement in Abuja, Nigeria*.

Africa Knows! Conference (December 2020 – February 2021): It is time to decolonize minds. Organized by Leiden African Studies Assembly (LeidenASA), Netherlands. Presented paper: *Path Dependence and Critical Junctures in the Governance of Informal Settlements: The Interplay of*

State and Non-state Actors over Land Rights and Tenure Security in Abuja, Nigeria - Panel E32: Slums as Places of Innovation, Ingenuity and Creativity.

60th Annual Conference of Association of Nigerian Geographers 2019, Kaduna State University, Nigeria. Presented paper: *The Roles and Impacts of Multi-Actor Governance Structures on the Formation and Growth of Informal Settlements in Abuja* – Session: Conceptual and Theoretical Issues.

58th Annual Conference of the Association of Nigerian Geographers 2017: Geography, Nation Building and Environmental Change at Nasarawa State University, Nigeria. Presented paper: *Assessment of Tricycles Operations as an Alternative Means of Urban Transport in Lokoja, Kogi State*.

International Congress of Environmental Research (ICER-2016) at University of Applied Sciences, Luebeck, Germany. Presented paper: Determinants of the Health Problems of the Elderly in Rural Areas of Kogi State, Nigeria.

57th Annual Conference of the Association of Nigerian Geographers, 2016: The Geographical Perspectives on National Development at University of Lagos, Lagos 2016. Presented paper: Hierarchy of Rural Settlements in Okene Area of Kogi State, Nigeria.

Nuhu Adeiza Ismail

Wageningen School of Social Sciences (WASS)

Completed Training and Supervision Plan



Name of the learning activity	Department/Institute	Year	ECTS*
A) Project related competences			
A1 Managing a research project			
WASS Introduction Course	WASS	2019	1
Research proposal writing	WUR	2019	6
PhD presentations and seminars - Annual GEO PhD Day, Monthly PhD workshops	GEO	2019 – 2022	1
PhD writing retreat	CSPS/WCSG	2019	1
Visiting researcher Doctoral training in urban studies and planning	Department of Urban Studies and Planning, University of Sheffield, UK	2022-2023	3
<i>'The Roles and Impacts of Multi-Actor Governance Structures on the Formation and Growth of Informal Settlements in Abuja'</i>	60th Annual Conference of Association of Nigerian Geographers, Kaduna State University, Nigeria	2019	1
<i>'Path Dependence and Critical Junctures in the Governance of Informal Settlements: The Interplay of State and Non-state Actors over Land Rights and Tenure Security in Abuja, Nigeria'</i>	Africa Knows! Conference: It is time to decolonize minds. Organized by Leiden African Studies Assembly (LeidenASA), Netherlands.	2020/2021	1
<i>'Resistance and Contentious Politics in Informal Settlement Governance: Understanding the State and Indigenous People's Reactions to Displacement and Resettlement in Abuja, Nigeria'</i>	WASS Annual PhD Day, Wageningen University and Research, Netherlands	2021	0.5
<i>'Path Dependence and Critical Junctures in the Land Rights and Tenure Security Dynamics of Informal Settlements in Abuja, Nigeria'</i>	LANDac Annual Conference, Netherlands: <i>Land, Crisis and Resilience</i>	2021	1
<i>'Understanding the State's complexity in the governance of</i>	International Geographic Union (IGU-UGI) Centennial Congress, Paris: Time for Geographers.	2022	1

*informal settlements: The case of
Abuja, Nigeria'*

A2 Integrating research in the corresponding discipline

Natural resources and conflict: Theorizing governance, resistance and violence	WASS	2018	3
NVIVO-based qualitative data coding and management training for social scientists	WASS	2019	1
GEO reading group	GEO	2019 – 2021	1
Institutions and social transformation, CPT 57802	WASS	2020	2
Land governance for development	Summer school/ Utrecht University	2020	1.5
Critical perspectives on social theory	WASS	2021	4

B) General research related competences

B1 Placing research in a broader scientific context

Financing infrastructure in African cities	MOOC – IHS/Erasmus University	2020	0.5
Advanced qualitative research data collection design, GEO 56806	WUR	2019	6
Qualitative data analysis: Procedures and strategies, MAT 50806	WUR	2021	6

B2 Placing research in a societal context

Wageningen Geography Lectures	GEO/WASS	2019 – 2022	1
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C) Career related competences/personal development

C1 Employing transferable skills in different domains/careers

PhD Carousel	WGS	2022	0.3
PhD writing retreat/ Organization	CSPS/WCSG/WASS	2022	2


Total ECTS	45.3
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*One credit according to ECTS is on average equivalent to 28 hours of study load



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