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EVALUATION OF THE REASONS FOR INFORMAL CHANGES OF CADASTRAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOVERNMENT RESIDENTIAL LAYOUTS IN BAUCHI TOWN, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

In Nigeria, the Land Use Act requires that the cadastral attributes of ownership, size, and use by beneficiaries of statutory land allocation be changed only after obtaining the government's consent. It was observed that this requirement is violated in some residential layouts in Bauchi town. This paper sought the reasons why this is so. Data were collected from a low and medium-density layout where the changes were observed. A purposive sample of seventy-three respondents was interviewed using a designed template. Responses of the respondents were transcribed and coded into themes using the Nvivo 10 Software. The themes were summarised in percentages and the content was described. The reasons for the informal changes to the cadastral attributes of the layouts were found to be difficulty in accessing formal land (97.26%), ignorance of formal regulations (86.30%), and weak development control (84.93%). It is suggested that the government should catalyze the creation of layouts, scale up public enlightenment on policy requirements, and improve the efficiency of land agencies through capacity building and decentralization.

Keywords: Informal, changes, Cadastral attributes, Layouts,

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, like in almost all countries, the policy framework of the formal land administration system (the Land Use Act, No. 6 of 1979) requires permission from government agencies responsible for land administration before the cadastral attributes of size, use, and ownership of plots in government layouts can be changed. Specifically, section 22 of the Act restricts any person granted land rights by the government from tampering with the size and allowed use of his plot or alienating his right of occupancy through sale, mortgage, transfer of possession, sublease, bequeath or otherwise, without the consent of the Governor. This restriction is predicated on the need to ensure that the spatial and socio-economic objectives of spatial harmony, environmental protection, economic growth, and sustainable development are realized and preserved.

Several studies have reported the violation of this restriction through informal processes of land subdivision, land use conversion, and alienation of rights. Informal land subdivision involves further parcelling of statutory plots, hence, leading to the alteration of the physical form and densification of affected layouts with associated increased pressure on facilities that negate the liveability of the layouts (Abdullahi, 2004; Ayotamuno, Gobo & Owei, 2010; Imam & Rostam, 2011; Wali, 2019). Incidences of informal land use conversions (change of purpose for which a plot of land is officially allocated) reported include the conversion of residential plots to mixed, commercial, educational, agricultural, recreational, religious, and health uses (Sabo, 2013;

Garba, 2013; Sylvester, 2014; Usman & Ibrahim, 2015; Dan-Jumbo, Metzer & Clark, 2018; Okosun, Ogbaji & Nwachukwu, 2019), conversion of plots meant for educational use to residential use (Adeponle, 2013), conversion of green areas to other uses (Anzaku, Mohammed, Chunwante & Damachi, 2021) and utilization of industrial plots for various non-industrial uses (Wali, 2019). These informal land use conversions have altered the desired proportions of the various uses and introduced new ones that may not be compatible with the uses for which the layouts were designed. For example, the inappropriate introduction of commercial, educational, and recreational uses in residential layouts can generate traffic, noise, and other undesirable effects ((Ayotamuno, Gobo & Owei, 2010). Informal alienation of statutory land rights is affected through inheritance, gift, or sale in land markets. It is estimated that roughly 25% of urban land transactions involve land for which there is a certificate of occupancy, but the transactions are done without the required consent, payment of relevant charges, and registration (USAID, 2010). According to Owei & Obinna, (2008), a greater proportion of land developers in Port Harcourt undertake their activities on similar land.

It can be seen that despite the conversion of land is against the policy, the basic spatial (size) and non-spatial (use and ownership rights) cadastral attributes in government layouts are informally changed through a land delivery channel that operates outside formal regulations. This informal channel has established transaction procedures, relationships, regulations, and actors that interface with one another to operate, support, facilitate, and arbitrate land transactions meant to effect changes in the rights of plots of land (UN-Habitat, 2010). This implies gaps between policy and practice, an expression of poor urbanization, the failure of land policies, and bad land governance. Attempts at explaining why informal practices are superimposed on formally allocated plots have broadly situated the practices within three conceptions; Structure and Agency Theory (formal land rules are informally changed to suit prevailing circumstances) (Giddens, 1984 in Rakodi & Leduka, 2003), Societal Non-Compliance (informal land transactions and developments on them are protests against state rules by those that have been excluded from formal property rights) (Razzaz 1993, 1994 in Rakodi & Leduka, 2003), and Institutional Analysis (informal land transactions are regulated by social institutions developed by actors and operated on trust to provide cheaper alternatives to formal institutions) (Rakodi & Leduka, 2003). Typical actors in informal land markets are land buyers (those with the willingness and ability to pay to gain access to land rights), sellers (those wishing to exchange their land rights for money), agents (those who facilitate the exchange process by bringing land buyers and sellers together) and local leaders and witnesses (those that authenticate the transactions) (Thirkell, 1994; Opoko, Oluwatayo, Amole & Adeyemi, 2018).

In Bauchi town, the capital of Bauchi State, northeast Nigeria, informal changes to the cadastral attributes of government layouts have been reported. For instance, Falola & Wali (2019) reported the informal subdivision of a low-density layout designed with 308 plots to 1473 plots. In addition to informal land use changes, Usman & Ibrahim (2015) reported the migration of land rights from formal allocation to purchase and gift in another layout in the town. The essence of this paper is to investigate why these changes are defiant of government land use policy.

Study Area

The study area is Bauchi town, northeastern Nigeria. It is located between latitudes 10° 19' 15" N and 10° 20' 58" N and longitudes $9^0$50'50" and $9^0$51'29"E (Figure 1). The town is essentially, an administrative town, being the capital of Bauchi emirate since 1809, a provincial capital in 1926,

and since 1976, a State and Local Government headquarters (Encyclopedia Britannica). As of 2022, the town is estimated to be populated by about 645,000 people (www.populationstat.com).

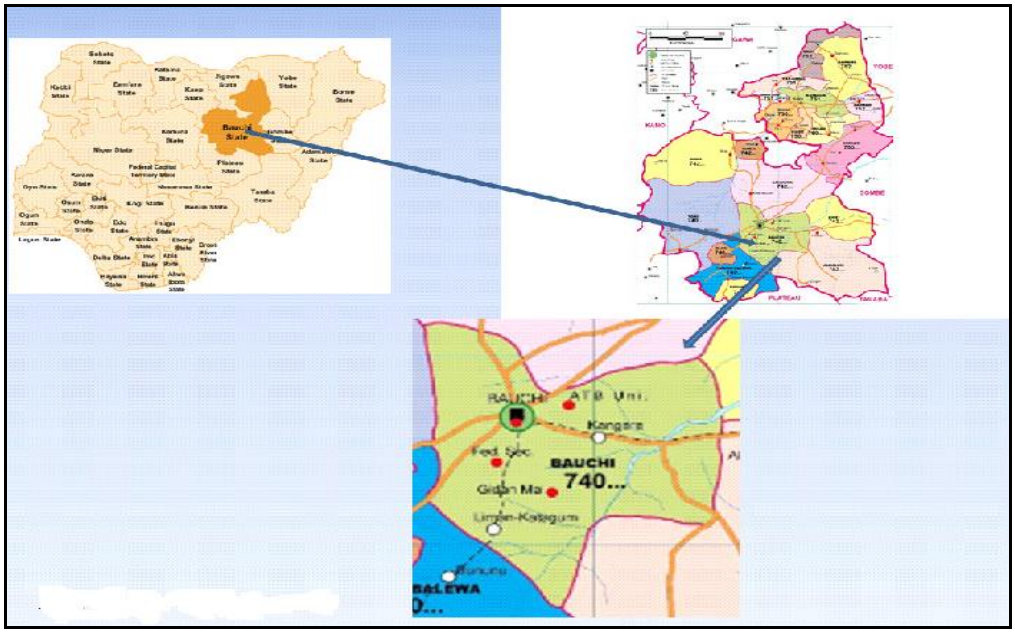

Figure 1: Location of Bauchi Town, Nigeria

The principal policy guiding land administration in the town is the Land Use Act of 1979. Other laws include: The Town and Country Planning Law CAP 130 of northern Nigeria, Bauchi State Edict No. 4 of 1979, Bauchi State Planning Authority Edict No. 19 of 1984, Bauchi State Urban Planning and Development Board Edict of 1990, and the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Act No. 88 of 1992 (Gumau, 2004; Bogoro & Nghalmi, 2014) and the Bauchi State Geographic Information Service Law; 2015. Together, the laws provide the basis for the government's control of access to land, its use, and development. The agencies responsible for the implementation of the land policies are the Ministry of Lands and Survey (responsible for general land administration, surveying, and mapping), the Bauchi State Development Board (land development control to ensure conformity with planning and safety standards), the Ministry of Justice (a rendition of legal services on land-related issues), and the State High Court of Justice (adjudication of legal contentions arising from formal land administration).

The spatial objectives of the government for the town were set out in a master plan produced by Maxlock Group in 1976 (not yet revised). The master plan segregated the town into different land use zones which guide the creation and allocation of formal lands such that incompatible uses are not located in the same land use zone. Thus, the town has areas reserved for industrial, commercial, and residential uses.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Literature review and physical observation were used to confirm the incidence of informal changes to the cadastral attributes of plot size, allocated use, and use rights in two government residential layouts in the town; a low-density residential layout (DP 23), and a high-density layout (DP 8A). The study aimed to guide the development of a template of open-ended questions that focused on awareness of land policy requirements for changing the attributes of plots in government layouts and why those requirements were breached. The essence of the

templates was to subject the respondents to the same questions while collecting data for the study. Answers to the questions, collected qualitatively using the interview tool, provided the data required for the study.

Purposive sampling was used to identify plots and respondents relevant to the aim of the study. Gatekeepers in informal land transactions (land agents), and local leaders of the wards in which the layouts are located were used to identify appropriate respondents for the study. Data were collected from a sample of seventy- three respondents comprising fifty-one unofficial owners of plots, two allottees who sold their plots, twelve land agents, two local ward leaders, and six key informants. According to the wishes of the respondents, their responses were either recorded with a recording device and saved or hand-written in notebooks. To validate the data collected, it was triangulated through collection from multiple sources and confirmation with key informants against the backdrop of their official and personal experiences. Audio records of the interviews were transcribed and coded along with the written notes. The Nvivo 10 software was used to code the data by creating nodes (themes) that formed the basis for the content description of the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The profiles of the study layouts and respondents and the identified reasons for the informal changes to the cadastral attributes of the layouts are presented and discussed hereunder.

Profile of the study layouts

Official records indicate that DP 23 was designed with three hundred seven (307) plots as a low-density residential layout in 1985. Out of these plots, two hundred and eighty (280) were meant for residential use, twenty -three (23) for commercial use, while mixed (residential/commercial), medical, recreational, and security uses were allocated a plot each. The size of the plots ranges from 922m^2 to 10200m^2 with the average being 2467m^2. DP 8A is a high-density residential layout designed to have 366 plots that was approved in 1991. The plots were distributed thus: three hundred and fifty- seven (357) for residential use, four (4) for religious use, one (1) for commercial use, two (2) for public housing, and two (2) for public institutions. The average size of the residential plots is 536m^2 while the range is 245m^2 to 1210m^2. From the list of allottees, the plots in both layouts were allocated to individuals, government agencies, financial institutions, and companies.

Profile of Respondents

The profile of the educational, and occupational, experience in informal land transactions and work in land agencies the respondents is presented in Table 1. From the table, among the unofficial owners of the plots and allottees, a significant percentage (58.49%) possess graduate and postgraduate levels of education; notably, three of them hold PhD degrees. This educational profile of these respondents suggests adequate literacy to be aware and appreciative of complying with formal land regulations. The other respondents in this category have primary (7.55%), secondary (18.86%), and diploma (15.10%) qualifications. Occupationally, the civil service employs most (62.26%) of the respondents. The others were engaged in business (28.31%), artisanal work (5.66%), and farming (3.77%). The dominance of civil service employees among these respondents implies that their engagement within the formal sector should be expected to be familiar with formal land regulations. The highest educational qualification of the land agents is a diploma (41.62%). Other qualifications are primary school (25.00%) and secondary school (23.33%). While 75% of the land agents are engaged in other

primary life support activities (civil service, business, artisan, and farming). That is, they engage in land agency to augment their incomes. The remaining 25% are full-time land agents. The relatively lower educational qualification of the land agents can be attributed to the fact that the decision to practice land agency was purely made from personal choice; there are no formal requirements and rules of practice. The agents had practiced their vocation for between six to twenty-one years, the average being thirteen years, a period long enough for them to have a good vista of the informal land practices in the town.

Table 1: Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category of Respondents							
	Unofficial owners & allottees		Land agents		Local ward leaders		Key informants	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Educational Qualification								
Primary	4	7.55	3	25.00				
Secondary	10	18.86	4	33.33	1	50.00		
Diploma	8	15.10	5	41.67	1	50.00	1	16.67
Degree/HND	20	37.73					3	50.00
Masters	8	15.10					2	33.33
PhD	3	5.66						
Total	53	100	12	100	2	100	6	100
Occupation								
Civil servant	33	62.26	3	33.33	1	50.00	6	100
Business	15	28.31	3	33.34	1	50.00		
Artisan	3	5.66	1	11.11				
Farming	2	3.77	2	22.22				
Total	53	100	9	100	2	100	6	100
Experience (Years)								
Range			6-21		9-28		26-35	
Mean			13		18.5		31	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

For the two traditional ward leaders, one has secondary while the other has diploma level education. They discharge their responsibilities alongside their primary livelihood activities of civil service, business, and farming. On average, they had experiences of close to nineteen years. The educational levels of the key informants included diplomas (one), degrees (three), and Master`s degrees (two) in Cartography, Urban and Regional Planning, Estate Management, and Land Surveying. In addition, they are registered members of their professional bodies and have work experiences that range from 26 to 35 years, the average being 31 years.

Reasons for the Informal Changes

The respondents identified seven reasons for the informal changes that have taken place on the study layouts. These are normality of informality, difficulty in accessing land through the formal channel, ignorance of formal regulations, weak development control, involvement of government officials, temporal increase in land values, and defects in the design of the layouts. The narratives of the respondents are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Reasons for Informal Changes to Government Layouts

Reason	No. of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Difficulty of Accessing Formal Land Allocations	71	97.26
Ignorance of Formal Regulations	63	86.30
Difficulty of Compliance with Formal Regulations	10	13.88
Weak Development Control	62	84.93
Involvement of Government Officials	56	76.71
Temporal Increase in Land Values	45	61.64
Defects in the Design of Layouts	27	36.99
Normality of Informality	72	98.63

Source: Field Survey, 2023

i) Difficulty in Accessing Formal Land Allocations

There was unanimity of opinion among the respondents (97.26 percent) that access to formal land allocation is very difficult in Bauchi town. This difficulty is the outcome of the previous slow and contemporary freezing of the creation of layouts by the government. For instance, official records suggest that within the decade 1993-2003, only ten layouts were created, that is, an annual average of one layout. Considering the status of the town as a State capital, this supply of formal plots is far below the requirements to support the formal expansion of the town, implying the build-up of unmet demand for land. To exacerbate this trend, since 2003, the government has not created a new layout in the town, implying the freezing of formal land supply for two decades. According to the key informants, new layouts have not been created because of associated costs and non-prioritization by the government. Thus, the supply of formal land has been restricted to the creation of `infills` in existing layouts and institutional lands.

While the supply of formal plots remains frozen, the population of the town and hence, the need for land to support its spatial needs, has been increasing due to natural growth and migration from persons displaced by ethno-religious conflicts in neighboring Plateau State and the *Boko haram* insurgency in other States of the north east region of the country. The constricted supply of formal land in the face of increasing demand has intensified competition for access to formal land allocations. Expectedly, in such competitions, individuals deployed their socio-economic advantages to influence access to the available plots. Those without such advantages had their applications unattended for years. Some of the respondents reported their futile wait for government allocation for more than six years. Others, being mindful of the difficulty of getting formal land allocation, did not even contemplate the option. To them, access to formal land is reserved only for those with the `right` socio-economic powers. In addition, literature suggests that elite bias, coupled with very slow, cumbersome, opaque, and corrupt allocation procedures have characterized the formal land allocation system as exclusionary of the majority of urban residents (Bello, 2009; UN-Habitat, 2010 p 25; Ejaro & Oladele, 2013; Duguma, 2016; Agheyisi, 2018; Ehwi, Tyler & Morrison, 2018; Kalabamu, n.d). The majority of respondents in a study by Aliyu, Kasim & Martin (2011) in Bauchi town had assessed the formal land acquisition process to be either difficult or very difficult due to, in addition to other reasons, deliberate frustration by officials of the land agencies. According to (Charissa, Kawadza &

Bandauko, 2014), for the majority of urban dwellers, the formal channel is almost dead, engendering wide gaps in formal land ownership, a threat to shared growth and social cohesion (Kihato & Napier, 2014).

Arising from the difficulty of formal access to land, the respondents in this study resorted to informal practices to avail their land needs within available government layouts. Since the land has ready market value, those that were allocated plots in the layouts were subdivided and sold to ready buyers. This circumstance can be viewed as a response mechanism to the failure of the formal Land Administration System to provide the land needs of the respondents who were, as De Soto (2000) aptly described, forced to "step outside the law because they were not being allowed inside". It is instructive that the problem of difficulty of access to formal land is still relevant more than four decades after it was identified as part of the challenges of land administration in Nigeria (Nwaka, 1980). This scenario depicts the inertia of formal LAS in the country and justifies the need to catalyze it for the actualization of the global agenda of achieving sustainable development through pro-poor land administration.

ii) Ignorance of Formal Land Regulations

Despite being written on title documents, the majority (86%) of the respondents claimed ignorance of the formal regulations regarding the change in the ownership, use, and size of government-allocated plots. This unawareness transcended the formal educational levels of the respondents as even those with the highest level of education, (Ph.D, were unaware of them. Responsibility for this situation can be attributed to three reasons. First, the trust between transacting parties, the associated confidence in social recognition of the transactions, and the emphasis on sales agreements have relegated the title documents to mere appendages to the transactions that were not read or understood. Second, because of the issue of affordability, respondents who bought land did so only once and so have not experienced multiple land transactions that would have made them aware of the regulations. Third, for the land agents, there are no formal interactions with the land agencies to educate them on the regulations. Musyoka (n.d) found 97 % ignorance of the regulations in Kenya which was attributed to the opacity of the land agencies. Ghebru, *et.al*, (2014) reported that awareness about the processes for accessing government land allocation was only 23.5% among households in some parts of Kano and Ondo States. In Ethiopia, Teklay (2018) found that in Abi Adi town, 62.7% of respondents were ignorant of the formal land rules operative in the country. Without being aware of the regulations, compliance with them is out of the question.

iii) Difficulty of Compliance with Formal Procedures

About 14% of the respondents are aware of the formal regulations but ignored them for what they described as difficulty of compliance due to hindrances associated with bureaucracy and cost. By official procedure, alienation of land rights requires the person surrendering his rights to apply for permission to do so to the Ministry of Lands and Survey. The application can only be granted after confirmation that the plot is free of all third-party considerations and the payment of a surrender fee and all outstanding ground rent due on the concerned plot. On the other hand, the person acquiring the plot will apply for the grant by filling out application forms that require the attachment of a tax clearance certificate and the payment of processing, certificate, and other statutory charges. In a similar vein, changes that involve geometric and land use alterations can only be affected through application to that effect by the allottee of the concerned plot to the Ministry. Such application is passed to the Planning Directorate for professional appraisal and

advice (planning recommendation) to ensure that the intended geometric alterations conform to minimum spatial standards and do not have adverse consequences. Intended land use changes are appraised so that incompatible land uses are not allowed. Recommended changes are approved for further processing which in the case of geometric changes, include survey and setting out. The original title document is then surrendered for replacement with a new one that reflects the changes effected which are accordingly entered into the land register.

Compliance with these formal procedures requires time, which in most cases, is further delayed by a slow bureaucracy and analogue operations. In addition, the challenges that have encumbered the functioning of land agencies in Nigeria, namely; inadequacy and corruption of personnel (Teklay, 2018), centralized operations (Kuma, 2016), and poor coordination (Agunbiade, 2012) are discernible in the operations of the land administration agencies in the town. The encumbrances in complying with formal land regulations for changing the cadastral attributes of formal plots of land have induced reluctance to comply with them, hence the resort to informal changes. According to a respondent, "The bureaucracy of processing the application made me spend extra money and several visits to the Ministry that made me lose valuable time. In the end, I lost interest and abandoned the attempt".

iv) Weak Development Control

Even though the State Development Board has the mandate of enforcing compliance (through development control) with formal land development regulations, the Board is far from achieving its mandate as evidenced by the widespread incidence of informal changes to government layouts. The operational weakness of the Board has emboldened people to fractionalize the layouts in all respects because they are almost certain that no penalty will follow their actions. Operations of the Board have been reduced to rare oversight visits to the layouts during which observed infractions are marked with `stop and report to SDB` or `remove immediately` notices that are not complied with by the developers.

It is noteworthy that 85% of the respondents did not obtain the required permits before the commencement of building construction as required by the policy. While most respondents attributed their actions to ignorance of the need for the permits, others complained of the time and monetary cost of the approvals as well as simply being negligent about it. In addition, even the approved building plans may not be adhered to while building (Ojigi, 2012; Bogoro & Nghalmi, 2014; Usman & Ibrahim, 2015). Inaction on the part of the Board is principally responsible for the gradual conversion of industrial plots to residential use. Yachori (2017) characterized the weakness of development control as symptomatic of reactive planning. The incidence of vacant plots in the sample layouts also points to the failure of development control and suggests two things. First, they violate the terms of allocation of the plots by the government as communicated in the certificates of occupancy, that is, they should be developed within two years of the allocation. Second, these plots have been frozen for development for such a long time; in the instance of the low-density layout, twenty-eight years. The possible reasons for the refrigeration of the plots are either to allow them to accumulate value so that they can be sold (wholly or subdivided) at maximum gain by their owners or the lack of capacity to develop and put them to use.

v) Involvement of Government Officials

The involvement of staff of the Ministry of Lands and Survey in informally changing the cadastral attributes of plots in government layouts was identified by 77% of the respondents as a reason for the changes. The respondents alluded to the direct sale of plots by staff of the Ministry or through land agents that front for them. All the land agents identified staff of the Ministry among the sources of land they vend. Bichi (2010) characterized such staff as constituting themselves as gatekeepers who employ touts to act on their behalf. Surveyors among the staff were also alluded to be involved in setting out informal subdivision plans on designed plots for a fee. This involvement of government officials in the breach of the land regulations has strengthened the perception by the respondents that the regulations were non-existent or could be breached without consequence. This perception was expressed by a land agent in these words: "If there are such regulations, I expect officials of the Ministry of Lands to observe them first, but they are the ones that give us some plots to subdivide and sell on their behalf without observing the rules". The complicity of government officials in informal land market operations was reported by UN-Habitat (2010 p21) thus: "Although this market is, according to the law, illegal, the State (or some of its agents) is often complicit in its functioning. For example, government land surveyors are sometimes involved in demarcating land for sale in the informal market". Additionally, the involvement of the staff has engendered some official tolerance towards these practices, hence their occurrence.

vi) Temporal Increase in Cost of Land

Being centers of population concentration, the demand pressure for land in urban areas is high and increasing. For instance, the weekly need for land in the urban areas of developing countries between 2006 and 2036 is estimated at a quantity that will accommodate one million people (UN-Habitat, 2006a in Williamson, Enemark, Wallace, & Rajabifard, 2010). Another estimate put the global urban residential land need as that required to construct 96,150 housing units per day (UN-Habitat, 2005 in Molen, 2014). In Dhaka, Bangladesh, at least 100,000 housing units are required annually to house the added population (Morshed, 2014). The consequence of this demand pressure is the increasing value of land because of which economic advantages of profit accrue stimulating commercial transactions on statutory plots. Also, 62% of the respondents in this study identified this as a reason for informal changes on plots in government layouts and the emergence of individuals who buy and sell land as a business in the town. Such individuals take advantage of the temporal premium that accrues on land for financial gain (land speculators). Mabogunje, 1992 and Abubakar, 2014 reported that in some cases, the premium can be as much as one hundred times the cost incurred to process the allocation from the government. Depending on circumstances, the plots involved are either sold in their designed sizes or most often are subdivided to facilitate sale. In both situations, ownership and or size changes of plots result.

vii) Defects in Designed Layouts

Thirty-seven percent of the respondents attributed changes in land uses in government layouts to the inadequate provision for land use needs in typical residential neighborhoods. Of note was the omission to provide land for corner shops, worship centers, and schools. The need to provide for the omitted uses prompted their introduction in the layouts either in combination with other uses (residential/commercial) or as distinct subdivisions from some plots to build mosques and Islamiyya schools. A respondent opined that:

> "The design of the layouts did not provide for necessary use needs, especially shops for retailing common household needs, mosques, and religious schools. Some of the residents took advantage of this vacuum to provide this and other desired use needs".

viii) Normality of Informality

Almost all the respondents (98.63%) of this study reported that they patronized the informal channel to transact about land because they are used to informality in virtually all aspects of their lives. They cited the near absence of a formal channel (government) in the provision of basic services such as water, electricity, security, health care, and education, amongst others, and the self-provision of these services by the people to support their contention that they are accustomed to informality that has become normative. This view was aptly expressed by an informal land buyer in these words:

> "We are used to informality in all aspects of our lives hence, we attach more significance to the social than the official recognition of our ownership of land. This is why witnesses are engaged in all informal land transactions. Besides, what advantages have been derived by those who have formal land"?

This contention is reinforced by the fact that the people have not seen the formal advantages and repercussions of their informal spatial practices. Similar scenarios were reported by Kombe & Kreibich (2001), UN-Habitat (2017), and Agyehisi (2018).

In virtually all sectors in developing and transition countries, informality is the dominant way of living (Jenkins & Anderson, 2011). The capacities of the governments to provide the employment, education, infrastructures and other livelihood needs of the population are limited. As a result, the citizens of these countries access most of these needs informally so much so that it has become part of their lives. Transactions that change the domain of land from the formal to the informal are therefore viewed as normal practice and hence, are conducted with reasonable confidence. Molen (2012) posited that formal guidelines are avoided by the people in these countries because they conflict with the informal arrangements preferred by them. These arrangements have not only become normative but are also user-friendly and socially legitimate. In the words of Rakodi (2007):

> "the practical attributes of informal land delivery make the arrangements more suited to the needs of urban land rights holders and those seeking land for housing and that…..wide understanding and acceptance of the social rules that enable transactions to occur and govern relations between actors in the system serve to secure wider compliance than is common for formal land regulation".

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The land policy framework in Nigeria prohibits any changes to the cadastral attributes (ownership, size, use) of government-allocated plots of land without prior official approval. Yet, these changes have taken place in Bauchi town through socially sanctioned (informal) mechanisms, the result of which is a wide gap between policy requirements and what is practiced. Reasons for the informal practices revolve around the failure of the institutional framework of land administration to avail and superintend access, use, and development of land

in the town. Without remedial measures, the informal practices will continue unabated and the utility of official cadastral records in planning for Sustainable Development Limited will be compromised. Also, the spatial development objectives underlying the design of government layouts will be compromised.

Given the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested to deal with the informal changes that have already taken place and have attained certain levels of consolidation as well as minimize their incidence in the future.

i) A comprehensive update of all government layouts should be carried out by the Bauchi State government to identify the informal changes in the layouts. Remote Sensing and Geographic Information System technologies and the fit-for-purpose concept of land administration can help achieve this.

ii) Improving access to formal land by up-scaling the creation of layouts in a sustainable manner. To this end, required funds can be sourced by the government through increasing budgetary allocations, loans from formal financial institutions, and repaying the same by friendly cost recovery options from allottees of plots in the layouts.

iii) The creation of layouts can be planned for through research-driven initiatives that assess and project future land needs based on current land information and population growth trends so that innovative action plans for inclusive access to land can be made. This can be achieved by creating active research units in the land agencies or sponsorship of research by relevant experts.

iv) The government needs to make deliberate and consistent efforts at making people aware of the provisions required before changes can be made to its plots and the implications of not complying with them. This can be achieved through programmes in the local broadcast media (radio, television), billboards, mobile phone messages, the internet, and stakeholder interactions.

v) The efficiency of land administration agencies can be improved by decentralizing their operations by creating and equipping appropriately sized cadastral zones with powers to attend to basic land issues especially registration of land rights and their transfers, and monitoring land developments. Unethical practices by the staff of the agencies should be sanctioned immediately after they are established.

vi) It is recognized that the suggested recommendations require sustained political will to implement. Such a political will can be achieved through lobbying by relevant professional bodies to keep land issues on top of the government agenda and insulating the operations of land agencies from undue interference by political interests.

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