

## Land

“You know, people want to buy this land. But I tell my children they must value this land. When I am gone, they must not sell it . . . There’s no better money than land,” explained Rajabu as we sat in the shade of a tree in the large enclosed landscaped garden in front of his recently completed, peach-colored two-storey house. He and his wife were among those urbanites who enclosed land in Salasala that was reallocated to farmers when the Kunduchi Sisal Estate was nationalized. He explained, “My wife came to buy land from the natives here—well, they weren’t natives, they had been given it for free by the government.” His wife Saada later told me, “A friend of mine told me that there was farmland to buy out in Salasala. At that time it was just bush, no one wanted to live here.” They purchased two large adjacent plots in Salasala in the mid-1970s, about one kilometer from the Bagamoyo Road, for TSh30,000. At the time, Rajabu and Saada lived in government accommodation in town. They were both employed, he as a civil servant and she as a secretary. They kept cattle on the land they bought in Salasala and sold milk in the city. The cattle had since been replaced by poultry, which was less labor-intensive as he and his wife got older. The current house was not the only construction on the land: the first, more modest house had been their home when Rajabu had retired from government service in the 1990s. It was now the residence of one of their children. Since his retirement from government Rajabu had worked in the private sector in town. He and Saada had constructed the current house while living in the first one. They had now been living in it for a couple of years. During that time, Rajabu had also built a string of “frames”—concrete block shops for rent—alongside the tarmac road that had been built by the World Bank as part of the Salasala resettlement scheme. The road now bifurcated his land. A daughter ran a bar out of one shop; others were

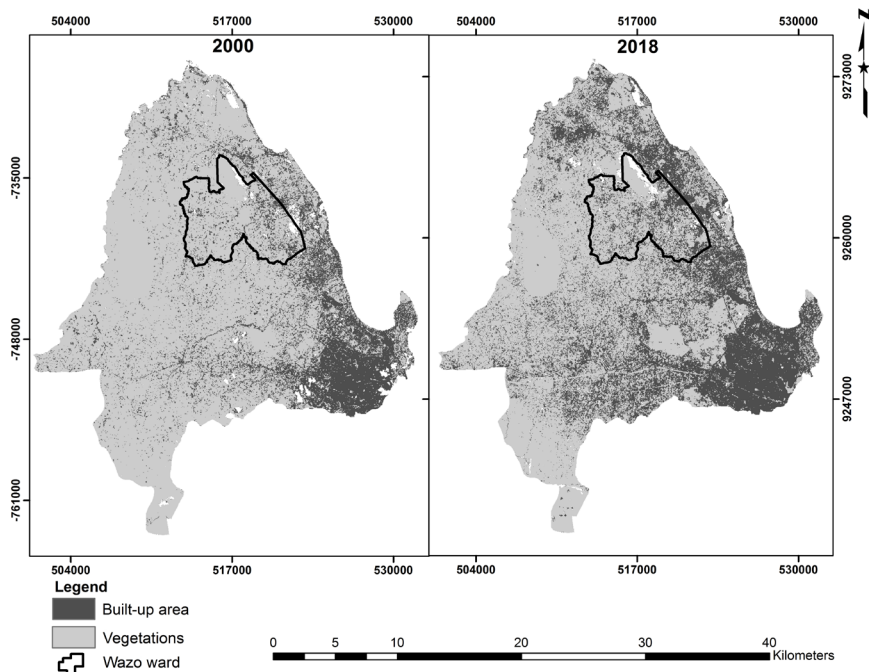
rented to businesses including a hair and nail salon, a bakery, and an animal feed shop. A few stood empty. In addition to these investments, Saada had recently been buying farmland in neighboring Bagamoyo Region, and Rajabu owned inherited land in his natal village in Kilimanjaro Region.

Rajabu and Saada's story illustrates a common characteristic of middle-class practice: over several decades they had acquired land at every opportunity. Land enabled them to invest earnings, secure future income streams, project social status, and ensure social reproduction. These strategies overlapped. Buying land with cash acted as a form of saving as well as providing a basis for house-building, social status, and inheritance. Incremental house-building, the main use of land purchased by the newcomers to Salasala after the late 1990s, was widely seen as the most prudent use of money that was not required for immediate household consumption in a context where mortgage financing was not widely used. House-building was itself understood as a form of saving, as owner-occupiers no longer paid rent to landlords, even though the cost of house-building was itself a huge burden over many years. Relative to other parts of the city where land and rental prices were more expensive, Salasala and its environs offered the possibility of building a modest and respectable lifestyle around one's own home.

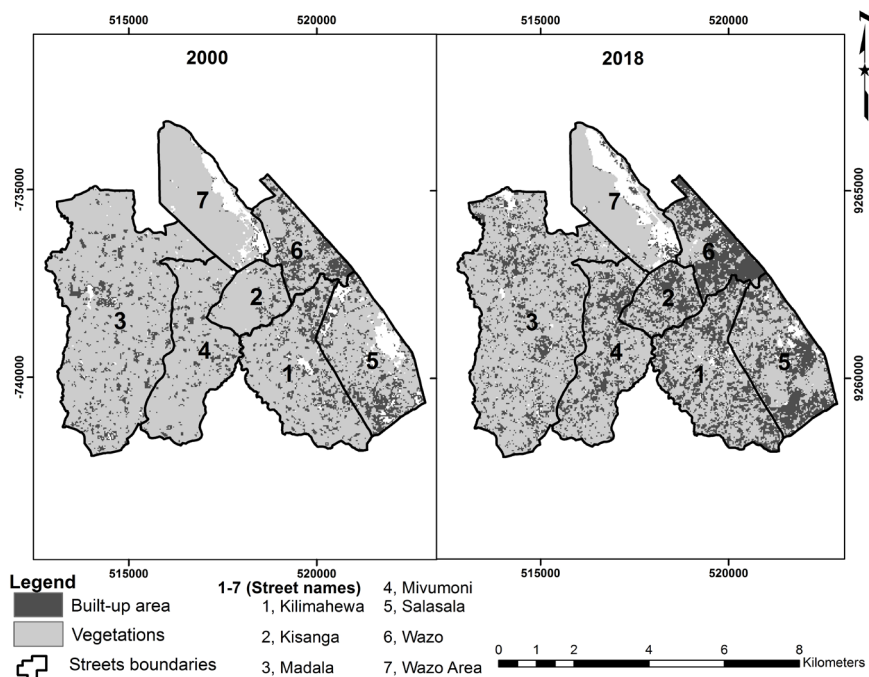
In addition to owning land on which to build a residential house, over the years Rajabu and Saada had invested what they could in acquiring land and making it productive. In Salasala they had invested in agricultural projects, rental shops, and a bar; others built small rental rooms on their property. Those with the necessary connections complemented their land in Salasala, most of which was owned under quasi-customary tenure,<sup>1</sup> by purchasing a formally planned plot with granted right of occupancy in one of Kinondoni's planned residential areas (for example at Boko, Mbweni, Mivumoni, or Kigamboni) where they intended to build another property for either residential or rental purposes at some point in the future. Such land was considered the most secure and valuable land it was possible to acquire in the city. In addition, many suburban residents had bought farmland in neighboring Bagamoyo Region or around Kibaha (a town located thirty kilometers to the west of Dar es Salaam, in Coast Region). One of Rajabu and Saada's neighbors, Renata, had a small farm in neighboring Bagamoyo District on which she cultivated vegetables and fruits. She was seeking buyers in town willing to place irregular orders. In addition to her city-based full-time job with a multinational company, during the cultivating season she would drive to her farmland on weekends to supervise the work. Maintaining a claim to inherited family land in a rural home region was also common. Others acquired land in other towns and cities outside of Dar es Salaam where they had worked or gone to school. Such land could become the basis for investment projects such as building a house or other rental property. Land was also acquired in and outside of Dar es Salaam for children's inheritance.

Land was the most valuable material asset for middle-class suburban residents, and a considerable amount of effort went into scoping, acquiring, enclosing, securing, and exclusively using it. Land was also the most valuable asset of land-poor residents, many of whom suffered the consequences of the layered enclosures that took place from the mid-1970s. As noted in chapter 2, many Zaramo farmers who cultivated in Dar es Salaam's rural hinterland were removed from their land during the villagization campaigns. They were subsequently dispossessed when their former farmland was then enclosed by city dwellers and other settlers who claimed or were reallocated the land by government, or who bought land from the Zaramo themselves. As demand for land rose in the 1990s and 2000s, remaining Zaramo parceled their land and sold it to newcomers who built houses enclosed within perimeter walls (maps 7 and 8). Those who sold all of their land moved away to find farmland elsewhere or for waged labor in the inner city or the satellite towns around Dar es Salaam.<sup>2</sup> Others remained on much smaller parcels of their own land or entered into caretaking agreements with the new settlers. Over time the hinterland's former farmers' most valuable asset shrank, becoming too small to support established livelihood activities or to invest in new ones.<sup>3</sup>

By the mid-2010s there were almost no farmers left in Salasala who had inhabited the land since before the 1970s. Some had managed to hang on to a small amount of a larger piece of land they had acquired at that time. These early settlers were recognized by subsequent arrivals as local leaders, partly because later arrivals purchased land from them, but also because they often took on local leadership roles in the party-state bureaucracy, such as *mjumbe* or CCM branch secretary. One early settler who gradually sold most of his land but managed nevertheless to stay in Salasala was Ahmed, an elderly man who had migrated in his youth from Lindi in southern Tanzania, residing first in Chanika, an outer settlement in Ilala, then in Kawe in Kinondoni. He explained that he came to Salasala in 1973 and bought a large piece of land from Zaramo farmers, "who sold to get money and then left the area. The land was just farmland and it did not have much value."<sup>4</sup> As if to underscore the point, Ahmed, who lived in a small house built with local materials on what was left of the land he had bought, added, "When we came Hassan was living there," as he gestured towards a distant hill. "There were no other residents. . . . You could meet lions," he recalled. As he gradually sold off small pieces of the Zaramo farmland he had purchased, Ahmed precipitated a further round of enclosure. As an early settler he became the *mjumbe* for the area, consolidating his position as landowner, land seller, and local leader connected to the ruling party structure. Ahmed's small unwallied plot and mud-brick house suggested that he was not a member of the middle class, but he nevertheless held a position of authority in relation to his neighbors. One neighbor—whose plot was even smaller and less well-positioned than Ahmed's—explained that he had bought his plot from Ahmed in the 1980s and



MAP 7. Kindondoni District and Wazo Ward land use change, 2000–18. Drawn by Kelvin Kamnde, Department of Geography, University of Dar es Salaam, 2018.



MAP 8. Land use change in subwards of Wazo Ward, 2000–18. Drawn by Kelvin Kamnde, Department of Geography, University of Dar es Salaam, 2018.

that the surrounding area had attracted more residents from 2001, such that “by 2006 it was getting full.” He explained that Ahmed often adjudicated in land boundary disputes between neighbors since he was the one who had parceled the land and sold the plots to newcomers. Another *mzee* (elder), George, who had also enclosed Zaramo farmland in the 1970s, participated in the further enclosure of land where he had settled in Kilimahewa. When George retired from the army in 1979 he was living in Manzese, a large informal settlement close to the center of town. The land he had acquired in Kilimahewa was formerly part of the Greek-owned Kunduchi Sisal Estate, which was nationalized in 1971. Makonde farmers had been resettled on the former estate but, George noted, “they were selling this land . . . they didn’t want to stay . . . they moved to Karege in Bagamoyo.”<sup>5</sup> He bought thirty acres of farmland from the Makonde but found it difficult to maintain such a large farm while still living in town. As more people seeking land came to the area in the 1980s, he was drawn into a further round of enclosure through subdivision. He explained, “I was alone, and they could invade easily, so I had to give them land.” By the time I met him in 2017, he was living in a house in need of repair on a small plot, surrounded by neighbors to whom he had sold small parcels of the farmland he had earlier acquired from Makonde farmers.

In these frontier stories we see contrasting dispositions in relation to land: better-off residents think of land as an asset that is always better kept than sold, while poorer residents see land as an asset that can also be a drain. If one lacked the money or inputs necessary to make land productive, it could be sold or subdivided to free up cash for other more pressing matters, such as when a family calamity required cash, or when a deceased relative bequeathed land that the family could not afford to keep up. One Kilimahewa resident recounted a WhatsApp discussion with her neighbors about a piece of land being offered for sale to neighbors by grandchildren following the death of their grandmother. The group members advised the grandchildren that they should keep the land, perhaps to cultivate vegetables or to raise poultry; but the grandchildren felt they had to sell the plot because they couldn’t afford to fence, build, or pay taxes on the land, and they needed the cash that the sale would generate.

The control and use of land was therefore central to class reproduction in Salasala. Four decades after the Zaramo were forced to leave their land during the villagization campaigns of the mid-1970s, this was no longer a rural hinterland that supported shifting cultivation and scattered farming. Rather, through the incremental and interlinked processes of dispossession, commodification, and enclosure, Salasala’s landscape had been transformed into a plotted residential neighborhood in which the small, modest homes of the land-poor nestled in between the walled, aspirational houses of the middle classes. Yet the apparent achievement of enclosure in so many concrete block homes and walls belied the ongoing work necessary to secure them.



FIGURE 3. An empty plot secured with a wall and a caretaker building, Salasala. Photo by author, July 2015.

### RISKY TRANSACTIONS

Acquiring and holding on to land on Dar es Salaam's suburban frontier was a risky undertaking. Buyers were routinely duped by brokers, neighbors encroached on boundaries, strangers invaded unenclosed land, family members feuded over plots, and government agencies could demolish unauthorized constructions to accommodate public services or changes in land use. Risk was literally written on the landscape: spray-painted signs on doors and walls vividly proclaimed the intentions of plot owners, brokers, and neighbors ("*nyumba hii haiuzwi*," this house is not for sale; "*ogopa matapeli*," beware conmen), or the edicts of underresourced municipal land enforcement officers condemning structures that violated planning regulations ("*simama*," stop; "*bomoa*," demolish; "*ondoa*," remove; or simply a large red X). In such an unpredictable environment the middle classes were better placed than others to secure their land by drawing on connections to strategically useful individuals and their experience of and confidence in dealing with government bureaucracy, not least because many members of the middle classes were part of the bureaucracy. As Wilbard Kombe notes, when it came to controlling land in Dar es Salaam, "one has to know who and how."<sup>6</sup>





FIGURE 4. A warning to prospective brokers and buyers painted onto a wall around an empty plot in Salasala: *Hapa hapauzwi, ogopa matapeli* (this place is not for sale, beware conmen). Photo by author, April 2018.

Land transactions could be hazardous. It was rare to hear someone describe their own experience of this because to do so would reveal their lack of skill in relation to land acquisition. But most people could recount stories of people they knew who had fallen afoul of unscrupulous brokers, vendors, surveyors, or local government officials. In Kilimahewa Juu one *balози* told of a pastor who bought land adjacent to him for TSh5 million, started to build a house on it, but was then removed from the plot by the real owner when it was revealed that he had been scammed by *matapeli* (conmen) who had posed as the seller and a neighbor. In a rare admission of his own vulnerability when navigating the land market, the *balози* went on to recount his own experience of getting his plot surveyed. In exchange for his TSh400,000 the surveyors placed beacons on his plot and gave him a document, but when he discovered these to be fake, “they had disappeared. They were conmen surveyors.”<sup>7</sup>

Transacting unplanned land on the suburban frontier provided ample opportunity for such *matapeli*. A transaction usually involved the seller and buyer, perhaps mediated by a broker, and witnessed by the local *mjumba* who verified, in consultation with neighbors, that the seller owned the land in question and that the boundaries were correct. The plot should not contravene planning regulations such as

being located on hazardous land (river valleys, floodplains, gulleys) or within sixty meters of a trunk road, nor prevent any anticipated developments in relevant town planning drawings that showed the location of land zoned for residential use and public goods such as markets, police posts, schools, and health centers. A written record was then endorsed by the *mjumbe* and marked with the *serikali ya mtaa* (subward government) official stamp, and copies kept by the seller, buyer, and the *serikali ya mtaa* office. A fee was usually paid to the *mjumbe* and any other witnesses, and an additional fee of 10–15 percent of the value of the transaction was sometimes paid to the *serikali ya mtaa*. These procedures were developed across the city from the 1980s as local leaders in unplanned areas attempted to keep up with the land market. In fact, lower local government had no legally mandated role in land delivery and management, and in practice oversight of such transactions was often improvised. This was partly a function of necessity, since subward offices and *wajumbe* did not have copies of the town planning layouts that were drawn up for their neighborhoods following the declaration of Dar es Salaam's outer wards as planning areas in the early 1990s. The only map I encountered in a subward office was in Kilimahewa, where a copy of a map of the Salasala resettlement scheme was taped to the wall. This covered perhaps a third of the subward. In one corner of the map, the words "forged document" had been painted over with correction fluid. None of the subward offices in Salasala (Salasala, Kilimahewa, or Kilimahewa Juu) were able or willing to provide records of land transactions in their areas. The Subward Executive Officer in Kilimahewa reported that the majority of land transactions in the area were not registered at the *serikali ya mtaa*.<sup>8</sup> No local land cadastre existed. In practice transactions could be witnessed for a personal fee or a plot sale could be endorsed on land not meant for residential use. *Madalali* could fraudulently sell an empty plot by working together with real or fake *wajumbe* or neighbors. Vendors might themselves be fake: One young man recounted his experience of going to inspect a plot for potential purchase in the periurban area of Mabwepande, where two men purported to be selling a twenty-five meter by twenty-five meter plot for TSh500,000. The young man's suspicions were aroused when the sellers insisted the transaction be completed in cash on the spot without going to the *serikali ya mtaa*, since they had all the paperwork and an official stamp with them. My interlocutor did not buy the plot.

In this frontier environment the artifacts of plots and buildings were not to be trusted: survey beacons,<sup>9</sup> maps, and even the measurement unit of plots were all subject to physical shifts as well as to shifting meanings and interpretations. One neighbor might move another's beacon to increase the size of their plot, or they may place fake beacons on their boundaries to materialize their claim to land. A plot might not really be for sale, nor belong to the person apparently selling it. The absence of maps and a land cadastre meant that any claim to land relied on the testimony of neighbors who might be real or fake. Documents, signatures, and certificates were routinely fabricated. In Kilimahewa a copy of the official stamp of



the *serikali ya mtaa* was available for use at the photocopy shop opposite the office. One surveyor described the widespread practice of *kupika data* (“cooking data”), in which “you have a title and the survey but when you check the beacons and the GPS you find that the plot should be somewhere else.” Land in Salasala was difficult to pin down.

#### NAVIGATING THE WARD TRIBUNAL

The challenges of buying and securing land on the frontier were nowhere more evident than in the local court system. Across the country, the number of land cases filed with District Land and Housing Tribunals (DLHTs) has been rising steadily.<sup>10</sup> A significant proportion of all land cases in the country were filed in Kinondoni District,<sup>11</sup> where the relative density of people with both the will and the financial means to dispute land through the legal system reflected the specific nature of frontier suburbanism in Dar es Salaam’s northern suburbs. Below the DLHT, a lower tier of land conflict resolution was provided by the ward tribunals that provide a cheaper, nonprofessionalized system for dealing with land disputes in urban areas. Ward tribunals were established in 1985 as part of a broader reorganization of local government and were officially purposed with maintaining peace and stability in neighborhoods by hearing and mediating local conflicts related to land, marriage, and debt. They were designed to deal with land or property to the value of TSh3 million. In practice in Salasala the ward tribunal heard cases regarding higher-value property because very few parcels of land in the area were worth less than that sum. Ward tribunals were closely supervised by Ward Executive Officers and made up of *wazee* (elders), many of whom had previously held party or lower local government positions. Professional lawyers were not involved in ward tribunal cases.<sup>12</sup> There was a fee (TSh10,000; US\$4.6 in 2016) to lodge a case at the ward tribunal, and land cases attracted an additional fee (TSh100,000) if a site visit was required.

In recent years, land cases have taken up an increasing amount of ward tribunals’ time. This was the case at the Wazo Ward tribunal located in Salasala. Many of the cases concerned minor infringements on small pieces of land.<sup>13</sup> For example, in one case a transaction was being disputed in which a vendor and buyer were arguing about the size and price of a plot postsale. The buyer claimed that when the sale was agreed the vendor had stated the size of the plot in meters, and that she only discovered afterwards that the plot measurements were in *miguu* (steps),<sup>14</sup> meaning the plot was smaller than she had been led to believe. Conversely the vendor was accusing the woman of attempting to increase the plot size by changing the unit of measurement on the sale agreement from “m” for *miguu* to “meters.” In addition, she had been causing trouble with her new neighbor over the location of their latrine, which she claimed was located on her (enlarged) plot. The tribunal had looked at the informal sale agreement and agreed with the vendor that the

woman had changed the unit of the plot size on the sale agreement from *miguu* to meters. They directed her to change the unit of measurement back to *miguu*. The woman announced that she did not accept the judgment and that she would take the case to the DLHT.

In other cases more valuable assets were at stake, such as in the case brought by a young man who had sold his plot for TShs10 million (approximately US\$4,593 in 2016). He and the buyer agreed that the payment would be made in installments, with a first payment of TSh7 million to be followed by the remaining TSh3 million at a later date. They also agreed that on completion of the payment the buyer could demolish the existing building on the plot and reuse the materials. The buyer did not complete the payment, yet proceeded to remove the doors from the existing structure. Despite his summons to attend the tribunal, the buyer was absent when the case was heard. Instead, a letter was read out from the Kinondoni DLHT stating that the defendant wanted the case heard at the district tribunal and not at the ward tribunal. Circumventing the ward tribunal was a common tactic in disputes over higher-value property. Another case had been brought by a man (Buyer Two) who had bought a plot through a bank auction. The plot in question had previously belonged to Buyer One, who had taken out a bank mortgage to finance the purchase, but who had subsequently defaulted on the loan. The bank had repossessed the plot and put it up for auction, whereupon it was bought by Buyer Two. However, thereafter Buyer One proceeded to start building a house on the plot. Buyer One also did not attend the ward tribunal, instead sending a letter stating that he did not trust the ward tribunal and that he wanted the case referred to the Kinondoni DLHT.

Land risks on the suburban frontier were not confined to land transactions alone, but could become long-standing disputes over boundaries. This was the case in a conflict over the boundary between two adjacent plots belonging to Dora and Leila, two middle-class women who both lived in the planned area of Mbezi Beach. They had invested in adjacent plots in an unplanned part of Salasala, where an *mzee* had been slowly selling off parcels of the land he had enclosed in the 1970s. Leila had bought her plot (115 × 90 *miguu*) from the *mzee* in 1998 and had gifted it to her sister on her wedding day. When the sister later died, her husband returned the plot to Leila, who gave the plot to another relative. An *mlinzi* who had previously cultivated the *mzee*'s land continued to guard Leila's plot, which remained undeveloped with just a small temporary structure in one corner—a common strategy to mark ownership of a piece of land before building on it. In 2010 the *mzee* sold an adjacent smaller plot (27 × 27 *miguu*) to Dora. Leila's complaint was that Dora had encroached on her plot by demolishing the concrete boundary pillars that separated the two plots and replacing them with a line of ashoka trees inside her plot. Leila also alleged that Dora had further encroached on Leila's plot by building a wall close to Leila's temporary structure. Leila had brought the case to the ward tribunal, having failed to resolve the matter with Dora directly. At a

ward tribunal hearing in April 2016 (one of a series of hearings for this case) Leila called four witnesses to support her case: the *mjumbe*, who corroborated Leila's story; a smartly dressed neighbor in Salasala who verified the plots and the structures on them, but didn't know much about the boundaries; a third man, who also had an investment plot in the vicinity and confirmed that the pillars had demarcated the boundary between the two plots, but who couldn't enlighten the tribunal as to who had put up the pillars, trees, or concrete block wall; and finally a relative of Leila's who described how, on visiting the site in 2014, she had been surprised at how close Dora's concrete block wall was to the small building on Leila's plot. Thereafter Dora called her first witness, a woman who had witnessed the transaction when Dora bought the plot, who was asked questions about the proximity of Dora's wall to Leila's existing building. When Dora's second witness was called and it transpired that she was absent from the tribunal because she had been unable to leave work, the hearing was adjourned. Dora asked for a summons to be sent to the witness so that she could get time off work, and Leila asked if it was possible to talk to the witness by telephone, both of which were denied by the tribunal.<sup>15</sup> This particular hearing, which was neither the first nor the last in the case, had lasted almost three hours and had required the synchronous presence of the two disputants and six witnesses, the absence of one of which brought the proceedings to a halt. The episode made evident that the work of securing land in the absence of a granted right of occupancy required the maintenance of good social networks, and a substantial amount of time and energy.

This small sample of cases from the Wazo Ward tribunal in April 2016 demonstrates the range of conflicts and challenges that frequently arose during the course of acquiring and securing land on the suburban frontier. While the cases reveal the audacity and skill required to navigate the various characters and institutions involved in the sale of unplanned land, they also underscore the risk that one might not be successful. Achieving some semblance of land security was an arduous and lengthy process. The bundle of competencies, social networks, and experience that enabled land to be acquired in the market and secured via bureaucratic means, as well as the possibility of failure, was a defining feature of middle-classness. It distinguished the middle classes from the elite, who could rely on greater economic and political power to secure their assets and who were therefore far less likely to experience the challenges faced by the middle classes in acquiring and securing land; it also distinguished them from the poor, whose relative lack of economic and social resources limited them to smaller, less valuable parcels of land that they struggled to secure. Some middle-class residents were well-placed civil servants who were able to use connections to acquire a formal plot in one of the few planned residential development schemes in the city.<sup>16</sup> Some used their networks and paid cash to push the paperwork for a planned plot through the Ministry of Lands more quickly, or to lean on officials to grant a residential title

for a plot located in an area designated for public services. The elite did this too, but on a grander scale.<sup>17</sup>

Middle-classness also entailed competence in acquiring relatively high-value unplanned land. Knowing how to navigate the bureaucracy around land was less daunting for those with more formal education and experience with valuable assets. This meant knowing that when buying a plot via a broker the site should be revisited without the broker in order to verify ownership and boundaries from unmediated neighbors; that town planning layouts at the municipal planning offices should be consulted to check that a plot was not on the site of an anticipated public service or road; and that land in a valley or floodplain or within a road reserve should be avoided. One broker in Kilimahewa noted a hierarchy of class-based practices among his clients based on the extent to which they exercised caution when buying land. "People who buy cheap land don't go to the *serikali ya mtaa*, just to the *balazi*. The middle classes go to the *serikali ya mtaa* to check who really owns the place before buying it. . . . Some come with their lawyers."<sup>18</sup> Others considered the *serikali ya mtaa* to be below them, engaging very little with what they considered to be unprofessional and unreliable local officials. Zacharia, who worked for a mobile telecommunications company, had bought a plot of land in an unplanned part of Salasala and was in the process of obtaining formal title to his land. Discussing the process, he claimed, "I don't even know where the *serikali ya mtaa* office is. I never go there, I have nothing to do with them. I just go straight to the ministry." A similar tactic emerged in the above accounts in which the ward tribunal was dismissed in preference for the DLHT, where the dispute would be handled by legal professionals with reference to statutory land law rather than customary or just principles. This was an expensive option. While disputing a land case even in the ward tribunal required time and money, fighting over plots of land in the DLHT was a strategy available only to the upper-middle classes and the elite. Even if such a strategy was employed simply to hold on to land by calling an opponent's bluff, it revealed a certain level of knowledge and experience with land transactions and an unwillingness to subject one's property to the judgments of nonprofessionalized, local institutions.

#### SECURING PROPERTY

The accumulation of land was a precarious enterprise, and not always a successful one. As well as the risks associated with transactions and securing boundaries described above, unplanned land was also at risk of reclamation by the state. Dar es Salaam's residents were periodically reminded of this when the demolition of houses was beamed into living rooms and bars courtesy of local television news crews. Demolitions were usually small-scale, targeting clusters of buildings in contravention of planning regulations, though they seemed arbitrary given the scale of

planning violations in the city. They could be highly controversial, as in the case of the demolition of over one thousand homes built in the road reserve along the Morogoro Road in Kimara in August 2017.<sup>19</sup> It was clear from discussions about these events with residents in Salasala that many people thought that those whose properties were demolished should have known better than to build within the road reserve.<sup>20</sup> This was in spite of the fact that what made this episode controversial was not just the scale of the demolition of the housing of a range of social classes—including the Bongo Flava star-turned Chadema MP Professor Jay—but that the usual road reserve width (60 meters) did not apply to the Morogoro Road, where it was 121.5 meters.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, Salasala residents felt that it was not bad luck or arbitrary state power: it was poor judgment on the part of those who had built close to a major road. Similar sentiments were expressed about the removal and resettlement of former residents from the flood-prone Msimbazi Valley near the city center to Mabwepande on the city's northern periphery:<sup>22</sup> those who were resettled by the state should not complain, because they should not have built in the flood plain in the first place.

Less dramatic, but no less devastating for those affected, was the smaller-scale demolition of properties constructed in unplanned settlements in order to make improvements to public goods. One such demolition of high-quality houses and other structures took place along a roadside in Salasala in November 2015. Salasala sits above the main water pipe that supplies the city from the Ruvu River to the north. Although the placement of water beacons along the road above the pipeline made residents aware of the pipe's location, when the pipe was to be replaced and expanded in 2015 they nevertheless fell afoul of seemingly arbitrary government planning rules. As one woman complained, "One day DAWASCO came and put an X on the side of our building."<sup>23</sup> I wasn't given any information, they just came, they didn't tell me anything, there was no explanation. When we arrived here we could see a beacon on the other side of the path, but not on this side [where her property was located]. Then they just came one day with the Field Force Unit and destroyed the buildings.<sup>24</sup> We saw the caterpillar coming, so at least we were able to dismantle some of the materials before it got to us."<sup>25</sup>

The fact that land was vested in the president on behalf of the people generated a background hum of insecurity in unplanned areas throughout the city. Even though building in informal areas was the norm, the potential demolition of one's house by a government agency could never be ruled out. Land and property constituted the bulk of most families' assets. For this reason, people were keen to have their plot surveyed in order to obtain a leasehold title (granted right of occupancy) from the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development. This was a relatively new development, driven by the scarcity of urban land and the possibility that one's plot, boundaries, or house might be subject to dispute or even destruction. One never knew when documents might be needed, and they held out the promise of defending a plot from endless negotiation. It marked a shift away



from previous modalities in which those who had built on periurban unplanned land were not exercised by their lack of title and derived their sense of security from their neighbors.<sup>26</sup> Customary or quasi-customary arrangements were no longer deemed sufficient. As a resident of Salasala explained, the impetus to have one's claim to land formally secured with a title arose because, "if you get a formal title deed it is signed by the representative of the president. If you get a customary title deed it is signed by local officials . . . so it is the same government but different levels. It is better to have the formal title because that is the highest level of legitimacy you can have."<sup>27</sup> According to planning law, since the outer suburbs of Dar es Salaam had been declared "planning areas" in the early 1990s, landowners were permitted to survey their plot and submit their planning application to the municipal planning department.<sup>28</sup> Obtaining a title would not stop a potential demolition, but it would guarantee the leaseholder the right to government compensation in the event of their removal by a government agency. The fact that people were entitled to compensation by law if they were displaced from permissible land after twelve years of occupation did not seem to allay fears, not least because compensation was never paid at market rates, if it was actually paid at all.<sup>29</sup>

The problem was that getting a title was expensive, tedious, and slow, involving multiple stages, payments, and authorizations at the municipal and ministerial levels. It began with the survey. Private surveyors routinely charged between TSh700,000 and TSh1 million (US\$309–US\$442 in 2018) for an average-sized plot survey at the time of research, and the few surveyors at the municipality were unlikely to entertain individual requests for plot surveys unless incentivized. The survey proceeded with a site visit to take the details of the plot, for which most surveyors used GPS technology. Boundaries with neighbors and paths were noted and agreed at this point, a base map prepared and then compared with the town planning drawings held at the municipality (for Salasala these dated from 2004, before most of the development of the area took place). The municipal land registry was also consulted, where hard copies of existing formal title deeds were kept. If all was in order and requisite fees had been paid, the beacons were installed on the ground to demarcate the plot boundary. The file was then submitted to the Commissioner for Lands in the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development, where further checks were completed and an "offer" of a granted right of occupancy was issued detailing the fees to be paid in order to obtain the final title deed. These included: a premium calculated relative to the size and location of the plot, one year's land rent, certificate fees, stamp duty on the certificate and duplicate, and fees for registration, survey, and deed plan. On payment of these fees the Commissioner for Lands signed the title, which was then passed to the Registrar of Titles, who also performed a series of checks before entering the details into the Land Registry.

This is a fairly schematic outline of the process, but the point to note is that files could be held up by all manner of irregularities or missing bits of information at

any stage, and they had to be moved through the system by the applicants themselves, necessitating numerous visits to the ministry building and waiting in corridors for civil servants who might or might not be at their desks. This is why those who could, paid others to shepherd their files through the system for them. Until 2022, I had not encountered a single Salasala resident who had successfully navigated this process to obtain a granted right of occupancy on unplanned land.<sup>30</sup> Some had gotten as far as receiving an “offer” from the Commissioner for Lands that they deemed sufficient for their immediate purposes, delaying the outlay of more money until the conversion of an offer to title was either financially possible or bureaucratically necessary. Others who wanted to convert their offer to a title had gotten stuck at some point in the process, either for lack of cash, a technical problem with their application that created a bureaucratic hurdle, or simply due to bureaucratic inertia. People complained of the multiple visits to surveyors and to municipal or ministry offices that were necessary to see a formal title application through to fruition. One such resident was Rajabu, who by 2018 had not managed to secure formal title deeds for the land that he and his wife had acquired in Salasala in the 1970s. After the land had been surveyed and approved by the municipality, the application had stalled at the Ministry of Lands when it emerged that, according to the ministry’s maps, Rajabu had constructed his second, larger house directly over the World Bank–built tarmac road that ran through Salasala to the resettlement scheme. He lamented, “The maps at the council and the Ministry of Lands show that my property is on the road, which as you can see is not the case . . . but they can’t give me a title for a place that is where the road is. So the maps are wrong. They need to redraw them.”

The attempt to legally secure land was one of a set of practices that sought to secure property and life at the home and *mtaa* scales. Those who had lived in Salasala since the early 2010s routinely told of the insecurity that had plagued the suburban frontier, especially at night. Security problems for these residents ranged from opportunistic break-ins to armed robberies of properties and vehicles.<sup>31</sup> While the relative wealth of Kinondoni’s residents inevitably drew attention, Salasala residents also pointed out that the area was vulnerable because it was a growing community populated by a constant stream of unknown newcomers attracted by the availability of land. The amount of ostensibly open space—mostly plots on which people had not yet constructed walls or buildings—though diminishing, was seen as a problem because it provided thieves with potential hiding places. Residents felt further discomfited by the fact that the nearest police station, six kilometers away at Tegeta, was underresourced. Getting a police post for Salasala was often mentioned by the middle classes as a priority local issue.

Those who could took security matters into their own hands. Houses were built with security in mind using heavy doors, window and door grilles, concrete block walls, and metal gates. Night watchmen were a regular feature. Zacharia, for example, had hired a watchman after his house was burglarized and his computer

equipment stolen while he and his wife were out at work and the domestic worker had gone out briefly to the local shops. Neighbors also cooperated with each other on security. It was common for the residents of a cluster of houses to erect a wooden barrier across a path leading to their homes and to contribute money to pay night watchmen who would stop anyone attempting to pass after dark and ask whom they were going to see. Others put pressure on errant neighbors to build on their undeveloped plots, to minimize cover for potential criminals.

These strategies required financial and social resources, as well as property to protect. Undertaking them was a marker of middle-classness. The upper-middle classes who had colonized the planned plots in the Salasala resettlement scheme had gone a step further by providing their own security at night. In 2012 they founded a group to deal with the insecurity they were experiencing. The chairman of the group noted that at that time in Salasala “the problem was armed bandits. They came to steal . . . they even killed three or four people.”<sup>32</sup> As another member explained, these neighbors decided to set up a rota to patrol the streets around their houses using their own cars: “These *bodaboda* were bringing men with guns . . . so after six in the evening we stopped anyone on the street and asked them what they were doing, where they were going . . . we were using our cars. If we found someone and they couldn’t explain what they were doing, we would call each other and be there. And then you are faced with ten cars . . . now we are sleeping very well.”<sup>33</sup>

This group of men felt they had contributed to a fall in property crimes in their area, pointing out that they no longer needed to patrol at night, and that some residents who had fled their homes had been encouraged to come back. The chairman noted, “We made this a calm area . . . we are close to the police. We repaired their land rover.” The security initiative undertaken by these residents echoes a wider nationwide campaign to encourage *ulinzi shirikishi* (participatory policing) following a police reform program in 2006. *Ulinzi shirikishi* builds on a longer history of community policing in Tanzania known as *sungusungu* that goes back to the 1980s.<sup>34</sup> The Salasala group used the same term to refer to their own efforts. The aim of *ulinzi shirikishi* was to enroll citizens in the organization and remuneration of their own community security patrols, and to work with police when criminals were apprehended by handing them over and assisting with any subsequent investigation. These community patrols made up of youths were organized by the *serikali ya mtaa*, although in practice their reliance on community contributions strained their sustainability.<sup>35</sup> What distinguished the Salasala residents’ efforts was that their security group operated independently of the *mtaa* government. They patrolled their own streets at night and invested directly in their relationship with the police based at Tegeta station. The subward chairman explained that Kilimahewa also had an *mtaa* security group similar to *ulinzi shirikishi*, made up of twenty youths who patrolled the streets at night and were paid via a TSh5,000 (US\$2.3) levy on the bills issued by the water users’ association.<sup>36</sup> It was unclear

whether the *mtaa* security group was operational by 2016. The *sungusungu* group established by the upper-middle-class residents of the Salasala resettlement scheme may have been “close to the police,” but the extent to which their poorer neighbors benefited from this proximity was perhaps reflected in the often-repeated anxiety about security among poorer residents, many of whom did not think that matters had improved.

#### REGULARIZING LAND

When I next visited Rajabu in 2017, he was supervising laborers on the unwallled, empty plot adjacent to his home. They were cutting down and burning the trees that stood on the plot to make charcoal. Rajabu explained that his main goal was to clear the land so that his daughter could begin to construct a house on it. He did not want the plot to remain vacant. Since the then Minister of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development William Lukuvi had announced the previous year that the government would audit, claim, and reallocate “idle land,” owners of empty plots had become jittery. According to the minister, the move would reduce land conflicts, enable a more equitable distribution of land, and help investors.<sup>37</sup> Although the minister’s comments were mostly addressed to rural landholders, the large number of enclosed yet undeveloped plots in Salasala gave people cause for concern. There seemed to be a shift underway in how government intended to treat land and those suspected of hoarding it. The seizure of former prime minister Frederick Sumaye’s farmland near to Salasala, at Mabwepande, raised concern for many.<sup>38</sup>

The election of John Magufuli to the presidency in October 2015 reinvigorated the central government’s interest in land, and urban land in particular.<sup>39</sup> A new Master Plan for Dar es Salaam was finally published in 2016, seventeen years after the previous Master Plan for the city had expired.<sup>40</sup> A domestic tax drive was rolled out. Tax collection, including land and property taxes, was digitized and recentralized in the Tanzania Revenue Authority.<sup>41</sup> Deadlines were set for the payment of existing and outstanding taxes, with the threat of repossession used as a stick. There was also a renewed commitment to urban land formalization and regularization programs.<sup>42</sup> Land titling had been an active policy objective in rural areas, particularly agriculturally valuable ones, since the passing of the New Land Policy in 1995 and the subsequent Land Acts of 1999.<sup>43</sup> Urban land titling programs had been somewhat slower, despite former president Benjamin Mkapa’s commitment to surveying and titling land across the country.<sup>44</sup> Three government programs had focused on regularization of urban informal settlements: the Unplanned Settlements Regularization Program, the Property and Business Formalization Program (widely known by its Swahili acronym MKURABITA), and the National Program for Regularization and Prevention of Unplanned Settlements, which by 2018 had delivered a total of 103,065 surveyed and regularized plots

across urban areas nationwide.<sup>45</sup> Urban land titling remains a key objective of the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development.<sup>46</sup> In 2021 a fresh World Bank loan of USD150 million was agreed to register two million plots across forty districts, including in Dar es Salaam.<sup>47</sup>

The pursuit of formal land rights on the suburban frontier—obtaining a granted right of occupancy—had exercised many residents, as we have seen, but it had generally been an individual endeavor in which few had succeeded. Soon after President Magufuli came to power, however, the government began to make a series of announcements encouraging citizens to obtain land titles. Widespread land titling, argued Magufuli and Minister of Lands William Lukuvi, would solve land conflicts, give people security, and enable access to credit. The Ministry of Lands opened offices in all twenty-six regions of the country to serve land title applicants, and encouraged communities to work with an approved list of private companies to survey whole neighborhoods. In fact Magufuli and Lukuvi undermined lower levels of land administration at the municipal and district levels, claiming that their staff were not to be trusted. Land officers, they charged, were routinely duping title applicants and engaging in unscrupulous land practices.<sup>48</sup> Councils were banned from surveying and planning land in April 2016,<sup>49</sup> and in November 2018 the Lands Department of the Dar es Salaam City Council was closed down for the irregular issuing of land titles.<sup>50</sup>

The move against local government officers dealing with land and urban planning was part of a wider strategy of Magufuli's presidency to shift the charge of corruption that had been leveled at the government of his predecessor, Jakaya Kikwete, from government in general to the bureaucracy in particular—in other words, from politicians to bureaucrats and administrators. The slogan for the 2015 election campaign that brought him to power, *hapa kazi tu* (“only work here”), valorized the public display of hard work over laziness, negligence, corruption, and extravagance. Once in power Magufuli positioned himself as *kiongozi wa wanyonge* (“leader of the downtrodden”) in his attempt to apportion blame on the corrupt and exploitative bureaucratic classes rather than on those at the very top of government.<sup>51</sup> While his anticorruption drive targeted prominent businessmen and politicians connected to Kikwete and top-level bureaucrats (such as at the Tanzania Revenue Authority, Tanzania Ports Authority, and the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau),<sup>52</sup> he also launched an attack on the bureaucratic “middle stratum,” which he claimed was operating against the interests of the poor and by extension the nation.<sup>53</sup> He boasted of “bursting the boils” in the public service (*kutumbua majipu*), and he carried out drives to root out ghost workers and those with fake qualifications.<sup>54</sup> Public servants' allowances, perquisites, and travel were also cut, leading to frequent complaints about the lack of money in circulation among the middle classes, who had benefited the most from these practices under presidents Mkapa and Kikwete.<sup>55</sup> The legitimacy of wealth was now routinely questioned: had you acquired your assets gradually through



hard work, or had you made a quick profit from a scam? Public servants faced the additional burden of having to follow their jobs from Dar es Salaam to Dodoma after Magufuli pledged to complete the move to the new capital that had begun in 1974. They had to scramble for scarce rental accommodation and plots of land on which to build new houses far from the lives they had built in Dar es Salaam.

Within a few years of Magufuli's first term a general uneasiness had set in among the middle classes. They might be accused of shoddy work, lateness, or of not having proper documents; they might be sidelined or sacked; or they might be reported by an acquaintance for something critical uttered in public or posted on social media. The secret police (Tanzania Intelligence and Security Service) were said to be everywhere. Across the country, four newspapers were banned for criticizing the president; journalists, activists, and opposition leaders were harassed;<sup>56</sup> opposition parties' rallies were banned; and bloggers were required to register with the government for a hefty fee, failure to comply with which carried a fine or a jail term. Salasala residents complained in hushed tones that *hakuna demokrasia* ("there is no democracy"). By the 2020 election that delivered Magufuli's second term, the gains that the opposition had made in the 2015 election were more or less wiped out. Having won 45 percent of the legislative vote and the control of local governments in most urban areas in the 2015 election,<sup>57</sup> the 2020 parliamentary election reduced the number of directly elected opposition MPs in parliament from 68 (out of 263 seats) to just 8. CCM also won all of the urban *mitaa* positions in the 2019 local government elections after the main opposition party, Chadema, boycotted the election citing arbitrary deregistration of its candidates.<sup>58</sup>

For all the government's zeal for land titling, the implementation of the land regularization program did not proceed smoothly on the ground in Dar es Salaam. In the three adjacent neighborhoods of Salasala, Kilimahewa, and Kilimahewa Juu, private surveying companies had approached the subward governments and undertaken to conduct collective neighborhood surveys. Each subward agreed on an overall price with the surveying company, the cost to each resident varying among the three subwards from TSh200,000 (US\$92) to TSh350,000 (US\$161). The company would survey the subward and produce a town planning drawing containing the necessary cadastral details of all plots. The town planning drawing would then be agreed with the municipality before being sent to the Ministry of Lands, where the title deeds would be prepared (for which applicants would have to pay extra). These costs were high in relation to many residents' ability to pay, but far lower than the cost of an average survey for an average plot. Yet given the government's long-term ambivalence towards land rights in urban unplanned settlements in general and towards rapidly urbanizing former periurban and rural areas in particular, the regularization process was potentially radical. It offered the very real prospect of access to secure land rights for the urban majority. Whether or not this materializes has yet to be seen.

By August 2018, two years after the regularization drive was announced, the plot survey in Salasala had not yet begun. A large area of land that had been zoned for industrial use in the 1979 master plan had since been invaded and turned into residential plots. The subward chairperson had been liaising with officials at the Ministry of Lands who refused to regularize the plots for residential use because they considered the house-builders to be invaders who were squatting on government land zoned for industry. In Kilimahewa Juu a surveying company had been appointed and a local committee tasked with aiding the surveyors in their work, which they had begun in April 2018. But in 2019 the surveying ground to a halt as a result of a land dispute in which several well-built, walled-in houses had been built in a disused quarry that had been earmarked by the municipal government for a secondary school and a health center. There had been more progress in Kilimahewa, where the surveying had been completed and residents were being invited to community meetings to verify their plots on the town planning drawing; but the cost recovery was slow, with only around 400 of the 950 eligible households in the *mtaa* having paid the survey fee. In April 2019 the Minister for Lands announced a cap on the survey fee of TSh150,000 (US\$66) in an effort to speed up the regularization process; a further cut in the fee to TSh130,000 (US\$57) and access to “plot loans” was announced in August 2021.<sup>59</sup>

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It is too early to know the full impact of the government’s regularization drive on the suburban frontier.<sup>60</sup> But in early 2022, while some residents of Salasala were complaining about the cost and bureaucracy of the regularization project, Rajabu had finally managed to collect his title deed. The surveying project had produced an accurate map of the neighborhood, and his house no longer appeared on the road. The new map removed the final obstacle to obtaining his title. The deed for his three-quarter-acre plot cost Tsh1.2 million (US\$522). While the promise of secure land titles may appear to take the side of the urban poor, land titling and registration rarely protects the poor against dispossession by the market.<sup>61</sup> In addition, it strengthens state control over land, raises domestic tax revenue, and provides opportunities for land officials to collect additional fees.<sup>62</sup> It also shores up the enclosure of land by the middle classes that has slowly unfolded on the city’s edges since the 1970s. The acquisition of land, which sped up after the value of bare land was recognized in the new National Land Policy of 1995 and the Land Acts of 1999, has been central to middle-class formation on the suburban frontier. The regularization drive offers a new strategy for the middle classes, who have been investing in land and attempting to secure their claims by navigating transactions, the local and district land courts, and the bureaucracy. Middle-classness is formed through acquiring land as an asset, and protecting that land through a suite of learned practices. Those who could afford the title fees now had the option of securing their land with a granted right of occupancy. Despite the different

approaches to questions of land, accumulation, and inequality taken by presidents Mkapa, Kikwete, and Magufuli over twenty-five years, the colonization of the suburban frontier by the middle classes nevertheless continued. During the *kipindi cha Magufuli* (Magufuli era), building may have slowed down, hampered by the lack of cash circulating in the economy, but land transactions and house-building did not stop.