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Institutional hybrids through meso-level bricolage: The governance of formal property in urban Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on a case-study from Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, we explore who governs formal property in African cities, how they make formal property legitimate and functional, and the consequences of these processes. Through the analytic lenses of institutional hybridity and 'meso-level' bricolage, we study the implementation of the Residential Licence programme, which offered a relatively affordable interim property right to the urban poor. We illustrate that formal property is constructed and managed by a hybrid governance of actors within and at the interface of the state – municipalities and community leaders. Some eighteen years after the programme began, the mtaa chairperson – an unpaid political figure and community representative, typically associated with informal land institutions – is still central to the governance of formal property. Both municipalities and mtaa chairpersons engage in practices of bricolage, which transform the RL into a hybrid institution, anchored to both existing and newly proposed sources of authority and knowledge on property relations. On one side, these practices lend legitimacy and functionality to the 'new' property right system. On the other, they open up grey areas for discretion and power relations. Therefore, we argue that this hybrid governance be supported by the state through adequate resources and political support. By offering a rare analysis of institutional bricolage within and at the interface of the state, our findings are important to advance current understandings on land reform implementation, land governance and land institutions in African cities.

1. Introduction

Following a wave of land reforms in the 1990s, numerous sub-Saharan countries have promoted programmes to register land ownership with statutory property rights (Manji, 2006). Countries that were under British colonial rule generally maintained a dual system of land administration, recognizing traditional authorities and customary rights in rural areas, while establishing state administered private property rights in urban areas (McAuslan, 2013). In both cases, the registration of ownership rights prompts a shift in public authority over property recognition, from the social contract to formal law, and from local governance to central government. The construction of formal property is, therefore, deeply political and integral to political projects of state building (Boone, 2007; Lund, 2016; Honig, 2022; Scott, 1998).

The issuance of land titles typically proceeds in a piecemeal fashion, through the individual initiative of landholders or via government-led regularisation schemes (Manara, 2022; Manara and Regan, 2022; Honig, 2022). Through processes of town planning, surveying and registration, a piece of land is transformed into a plot and codified in the instruments of formal property: a map and database (e.g. cadastre). Thus, property relations defining who owns what, where, and for which uses, become legible to the state and other interested parties (Li, 2014; Scott, 1998). In urban areas, this extension of state authority comes with substantial promises to citizens, including tenure security and urban development (Manara and Regan, 2023). For example, the provision of land titles can raise tenure security by suggesting that the state is not planning to expropriate these areas. Furthermore, the instruments of formal property can help avoid or resolve land disputes, which are of increasing concern. Citizens, lawyers and loan officers can consult the official cadastre to verify plot ownership before they decide to transfer

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or collateralize a property. Ultimately, if things go wrong, they can resort to state courts, which will arbitrate land disputes through the instruments of formal property and the rule-of-law.

While states initiate land reforms as 'institutional fixes' from the top-down, the implementation of titling programmes depends on the local negotiation of multiple actors within and outside the state apparatus, including local leaders and ordinary people (Abubakari et al. 2020; Boone, 2018; Ho, 2016; Manji, 2001; Pedersen, 2016; Manara, 2022). In many urban and *peri*-urban contexts, local leaders (including street-level bureaucrats, community leaders, and traditional chiefs) have substantial authority and knowledge on land matters. The instigation of a new tenure regime will inevitably affect existing land governance arrangements (Earle, 2014), and in turn, the latter will affect the implementation of land reforms. However, most research on this topic has focused on rural areas. For example, unpacking the implementation of land reform in rural Tanzania, Pedersen (2012) concludes that this is slow and uneven because of 'incoherence' and 'under-resourcing' in its decentralised governance, consisting of multiple administrative layers and potential actors. Honig (2022) shows that traditional authorities in Zambia and Senegal have either enabled or resisted land titling, thereby negotiating the expansion of state control over land. The relationship of states and traditional chiefs has taken a multiplicity of forms including collusion, tension and subjugation (e.g. Takeuchi, 2021).

In contrast, we know relatively little about the interaction of state and local leaders during and after processes of tenure formalisation in urban areas. This paper helps address this gap asking the following questions: (i) which actors govern urban formal property in a context of institutional transition? (ii) How do they make formal property viable, by ensuring both legitimacy and functionality? (iii) What are the outcomes of this governance, for instance relative to transparency and equality in property recognition? To respond to these questions, we focus on the implementation of the Residential Licence (RL) programme of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. This titling programme embeds the principles of a pro-poor and incremental land recordation system (Hendriks et al. 2019; UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2019; Zevenbergen et al., 2013) offering administrative recognition via affordable interim titles since 2004. Based on extensive qualitative research, we illuminate the hybrid governance of formal property, involving actors within and at the interface of the state: municipalities and mtaa (neighbourhood) chairpersons. While the former are local government authorities and part of Tanzania's urban government machinery, the latter are unpaid political figures, community representatives and 'street-level bureaucrats' (Lipsky, 1980; Olivier de Sardan, 2008) working 'at the interface' (Lund, 2006) of state and society. Although they typically manage informal land institutions, we find that they are also central in validating formal property relations. Both municipalities and mtaa chairpersons engage in 'meso-level' practices of bricolage that anchor the legitimacy and functionality of the RL in both existing and newly proposed sources of authority and knowledge. Thus, in the process of implementing 'formal' property, they transform the RL into a hybrid institution.

This hybrid governance of formal property presents both benefits and shortcomings. Per se, it could be seen as a successful example of the mutual integration of 'multi-scalar' (Cirolia and Scheba, 2019) formal and informal land authorities and institutions to make the newly proposed property right legitimate and functional on the ground. However, we find an uneven distribution of responsibilities and resources, which is particularly unfavourable to the mtaa chairperson and opens up grey areas wherein actors with discretion and power can utilise formal property to reproduce or even reinforce existing urban inequalities. As such, we conclude that the Tanzanian government must properly acknowledge the centrality of *meso*-level actors in its land reform agenda, by providing adequate resources and political support to increase rigour and transparency in their roles.

In developing its analysis, the paper contributes to three bodies of literature. First, regarding literature on land tenure reform, we provide new evidence that the central state is not a 'master designer' implementing land reform top-down (Boone, 2018; Ho, 2016). In accordance with the Land Act (1999), the central state has passed responsibility for the RL to the municipalities, but these cannot adequately replace local leaders and informal practices of property recognition. Therefore, they integrate the latter into a hybrid governance system, where *meso*-level actors become central in steering the implementation of national land reforms locally. Second, advancing the literature on institutional hybridisation, we provide a rare analysis of *meso*-level bricolage occurring within and at the interface of the state to make formal property legitimate and functional on the ground. However, rather than understanding the complex processes and practices of *meso*-level bricolage as simply 'messy' (Cleaver and De Koning, 2015; Marrengane et al. 2021; Peters et al. 2012), we acknowledge, *also*, the structuring effects of higher level policies and actors on the local level. For instance, in failing to adequately support local leaders, both materially and politically, we see higher-level government actors engaging in acts of 'political informality' (Goodfellow, 2020) that potentially destabilise the existing distribution of power and governance arrangements (See Khan, 2018, on 'political settlement'). Finally, our findings add to current understandings of hybrid land governance and institutions in African cities by showing how some understudied actors of urban governance – the mtaa chairpersons – interact with municipal authorities in the management of formal property.

The paper proceeds as follows: first we introduce notions of hybrid governance and hybrid institutions. Following the methodology, we provide details on land tenure reform in Tanzania, presenting the RL programme of Dar es Salaam and urban governance of the city. In the empirical section, we then demonstrate how multiple actors engage in the hybridisation of formal property. Finally, we discuss the implications of this process and articulate our conclusions.

2. Hybrid governance, hybrid institutions and 'meso-level' bricolage

2.1. Hybrid governance

There is growing academic scholarship on the complex governance of African cities (Collord et al. 2021; Goodfellow, 2020; Stacey and Lund, 2016). Despite several waves of decentralisation policies in African countries, central governments have been reluctant to relinquish their power (Collord et al. 2021), and processes to devolve administrative, fiscal and political responsibilities have proceeded unevenly across the continent (Resnick, 2021). In practice, municipal governments continue to have limited financial and planning capacities (OECD, UN ECA, AfDB, 2022; Resnick, 2021). Below the municipal government, various local leaders have substantial authority in land matters. Their relationship to the state can range from cooperation to antagonism and conflict for authoritative and material resources (Marrengane et al. 2021). In many contexts, the state has a long history of building on existing authorities to acquire or maintain essential legitimacy and capacity of land management, evolving from pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial times (Boone, 2014). While local leaders might even be recognised and incorporated into legislative frameworks, their actual integration into the hybrid governance of African cities is often considered 'messy' (Marrengane et al. 2021). Marrengane et al. (2021) report cases where such leaders are both integrated within essential state functions, but do not receive adequate state resources. Furthermore, Goodfellow and Lindemann (2013) note that the 'incorporation' or 'synthesis' of state and non-state institutions must be achieved through both state policies and the agency of actors. Otherwise, it might not be appropriate to talk about hybridity.

Local leaders encompass a variety of figures including street-level bureaucrats, neighbourhood secretaries, community leaders and traditional authorities (Bénit-Gbaffou and Katsaura, 2014; Drivdal, 2016; Marrengane et al. 2021; Olivier de Sardan, 2008) who construct their legitimacy through relationships with higher-level government and

local communities. For example, in urban Mozambique neighbourhood secretaries are formally part of the state and work in collaboration with higher-level district administrators and lower-level local leaders, who are outside the state apparatus (Andersen et al., 2015a,b; Earle, 2014; Kihato et al., 2013; Bowen and Helling, 2011). On the one hand, it is argued that by validating informal sales, issuing 'informal' titles, and arbitrating land disputes, these local leaders fulfil important functions of land management, which grant substantial tenure security in the absence of higher-level government (see Earle, 2014; Tieleman and Uitermark, 2019). On the other, such roles also establish substantial authority, which can be abused and manipulated (Marrengane et al. 2021). Studies from Tamale, Ghana (Akaateba et al. 2018; Fuseini, 2021; Yakubu et al. 2021) and Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso (Korbéogo, 2021) suggest that local leaders cooperate with municipal actors in processes of land development to pursue personal gains at the expense of the collective benefit. Van Overbeek and Tamás (2020) reflect that the hybrid land governance of Bakavu in the DRC requires a continuous negotiation "across a shifting diversity of competing actors and institutions" (p. 154), compromising access to tenure security for the poor.

2.2. Hybrid institutions

In the context of critical institutionalism and the governance of the commons, some scholars have adopted and advanced the concept of institutional bricolage to understand institutional hybridization at the local level (Cleaver, 2002, 2012; De Koning, 2011; Cleaver and De Koning, 2015). Drawing on Levi-Strauss (2004), Douglas (1987), Bourdieu (1989) and Giddens (1984), Frances Cleaver (2012) proposes that, "the concept of institutional bricolage offers a way of analysing and understanding just how institutions are socially formed and practised" (p. 35). Bricolage consists of "adaptive processes" (p. 34) that re-interpret and re-configure institutions in response to "changing circumstances", building upon taken-for-granted ways of doing things, practices, organisations and arrangements. The blending of existing and newly proposed arrangements imbues configurations of rules, norms and relationships "with meaning and authority" (p. 34), such that "innovations are always linked authoritatively to acceptable ways of doing things" (p. 34). Processes of bricolage can be conscious and strategic or unintentional and more gradual (De Koning, 2011). But, in all cases, bricolage is vital to legitimising and operationalising 'new' institutions, making them socially acceptable and workable in given local contexts. Indeed, people are more prone to accept and adapt to changing situations if these integrate taken-for-granted 'social formulae' (Douglas, 1987). Therefore, the products of bricolage are neither completely 'old' nor 'new'. They are 'dynamic institutional hybrids' combining elements of 'existing' and 'designed', 'formal' and 'informal' processes, which are socially acceptable (legitimate) and get the job done (functional) (see Cleaver, 2012, p. 45).

The concept of bricolage is well suited to examining the construction of formal property in contexts of hybrid land authorities and institutions. First, deploying bricolage to study the implementation of land reform in the DRC, Huggins and Mastaki (2020) note that it is useful for understanding institutional hybridisation as a dynamic process involving multiple scales, as well as avoiding simple binaries such as formal and informal. Second, bricolage emphasises the creative agency of individuals – the bricoleurs – who "shape institutions and in turn are shaped by them" (Cleaver and De Koning, 2015, p. 8). It is therefore helpful in explaining how actors legitimise and operationalise formal property on the ground. Finally, bricolage can help illuminate how processes of institutional change reproduce and even reinforce existing power relations and inequalities. Indeed, for Cleaver, bricolage is "an authoritative process, shaped by relations of power" (2012, p. 49).

Bricolage entails an inevitable reproduction or even reinforcement of pre-existent power relations and inequalities for at least two reasons (Cleaver, 2012; Khan, 2018; Mahoney and Thelèn, 2010). First, bricolage operates to achieve some stability in the institutional environment by nesting newly proposed (e.g. state-designed) institutions within the taken-for-granted social relations of existing arrangements. Processes of negotiation and contestation are at the core of bricolage, but so too are continuity and stability, which can end up perpetuating the taken-for-granted inequalities of pre-existing institutions (Mahoney and Thelèn, 2010, p. 8). Second, the distribution of resources (cognitive, material and relational) across a network determines a 'political settlement' (Khan, 2018, p. 637) wherein actors have relative powers and diverse capacities to deal with institutional formation and change (see also, Mahoney and Thelèn, 2010). Thus, while everyone is potentially a bricoleur, in practice, social position, authority, reputation, status and access to resources enable and/or constrain the agency of various actors as bricoleurs (Cleaver, 2012, p. 42-45). Hence, as Khan (2018) asserts, the distribution of power across actors is possibly "the most important determinant of the path of institutional change, and the effectiveness of particular institutions" (p. 639).

2.3. Bricolage at the 'meso-level'

By understanding how local actors engage in processes of 'institutional do-it-yourself' that blend pre-existing and newly proposed arrangements (Cleaver, 2012, p. 44), the concept of bricolage has been deployed to challenge the idea that institutions can be engineered and implemented by some 'master designer', such as the state (although see Graf et al. 2021). Thus, most empirical studies situate the actors and strategies of bricolage within the community level (Cleaver and De Koning, 2015; Peters et al. 2012). For example, bricolage has been seen as a bottom-up means to bend, negotiate or neutralise government regulation, through local actors engaging in the aggregation, alteration and articulation of bureaucratic and social institutions (De Koning, 2011, 2014). Others have seen bricolage as a bottom-up response to institutional voids, whereby local actors create arrangements that fill the gaps of state governance to address local needs (Funder and Marani, 2015; Ingram et al., 2015). However, this predominant focus has been criticised for obfuscating the 'meso-level' of actors working at the interface between state and communities: actors that include local leaders, local authorities and a variety of other organisations whose access to the resources outlined above lends them power and authority, as least to some degree (Cleaver, 2012; Peters et al. 2012).

For Peters et al (2012), examining *meso*-level actors and their intersections with higher- and lower-level political processes is crucial to understanding how policies and reformist agendas get translated into practice. Most centrally, this is due to the positions they hold within the established 'political settlement' (Khan, 2018), and their capacities (or not) to negotiate particular courses of action amidst a complex range of often competing goals, policies and conditions (Peters et al, 2012, p. 23). In effect, they act as crucial "gatekeepers" (p. 28) who can both "promote and obstruct change" as they regulate how decisions are taken and implemented, most particularly concerning "new rules", such as national land policies, "that address the local level" (p. 24).

Certainly, inroads have been forged in illuminating the importance of *meso*-level processes and practices. For example, Funder and Marani (2015) and Kairu et al. (2018) examine how, in Kenya, environment and forest officers implement national policies by blending formal and informal governance arrangements at the local level. Such accounts shed light on the "implementation gap" between the "ambitious intent" embodied in policy (Kairu et al, 2018, p. 74) and the more 'messy' and unpredictable political processes that seek to "take control of implementation on the ground" (Peters et al, 2012: p.28).

Yet, as Goodfellow argues, it is crucial not to perceive interactions between diverse levels of governance as merely 'messy', for to do so risks "obscuring some of the patterns underlying social and political relations" (2020, p. 279). For instance, in his own work specifying four powerful modes of 'political informality', Goodfellow (2020, p.283) notes the ways in which higher-level governors may utilise their power (both officially and unofficially) to deliberately challenge or weaken the

authority of meso- and lower-level actors. Similarly, in seeking to correct a trend in scholarship that over-emphasises the agency of local actors, Cirolina and Sheba (2019) take a 'multi-scalar' approach to underscore the structuring effects of higher-level policies and actors on the local level.

Taking such critiques seriously, in the following sections we explore practices of bricolage by *meso*-level actors within and at the interface of the state, highlighting their interactions with higher- and lower-level political processes in light of the property rights reforms and shifting land governance agenda. First, we demonstrate how urban municipal authorities and mtaa chairpersons in Dar es Salaam borrow on one another's authority and devices to implement national land reforms, making formal property legitimate and functional on the ground. Further, we demonstrate how other non-state actors such as private individuals, lawyers and bank officers support this hybrid governance by referring to the authority and knowledge of both municipalities and mtaa chairpersons in their use of formal property – thereby contributing to embed state-designed property rights within community relations. Finally we discuss the ways in which higher-level governors both intentionally undermine the authority of *meso*-level actors and fail to support them with adequate resourcing, opening up grey areas for unequal discretion and power relations.

3. Methodology statement

The empirical material discussed below was collected through six months of fieldwork between August 2018 and August 2019. Our primary data comes from semi-structured interviews with mtaa chairpersons (forty-five), municipal officers (six), employees of banks (eighteen) and lawyers (four), and numerous conversations with central government employees. Furthermore, we observed the interactions of local leaders with landholders when the former helped us conduct two large-scale surveys on residents' perceptions and choices regarding formal property (discussed in other papers: Manara, 2022; Manara and Pani, 2023a). We recorded relevant interactions through extensive field-notes. In the empirical sections that follow, we draw upon data triangulated between sources using verbatim quotations, thereby ensuring the credibility, dependability and confirmability of the research (Baxter and Eyles, 1997).

4. Background

4.1. Land tenure and property rights formalisation in Dar es Salaam

Similar to many Sub-Saharan African countries, unplanned settlements have been an increasing feature of urban Tanzania since the colonial era, largely fuelled by rural–urban migration (Kironde, 2006; Kombe, 1994). Under colonial rule and during the early decades of post-independence, government regulation attempted to keep such areas in check, mostly through slum clearance and resettlement schemes (Kironde, 2006a). However, as Kombe (1994) notes, Tanzania's statist approach to land management (all powers over land ownership being vested in the President) coupled with a lack of bureaucratic will, capacity and resources to provide formally serviced land to incoming migrants, has led to the development of an informal land management system that has sought to overcome the structural deficits of the state (Kombe and Kreibich, 2000, 2001).

Established in the second half of the 19th century as an administrative and commercial centre under German rule, Dar es Salaam typifies Tanzania's urban settlements issues (Kironde, 1994; Lupala, 2002). Colonial and post-independence governments adopted explicitly anti-urban policies, systematically under-supplying housing and infrastructure, which spurred the city's uncontrolled growth. However, strong resistance to slum clearance during the 1960s and '70s prompted the government to implement upgrading schemes rather than demolition, and to incorporate upgraded areas into the city's Masterplan (1979). The scale of such schemes was insufficient to keep pace with demand. Thus, informal settlements continued to shape the city's development.

Although Pederson (2016) notes a definitive shift towards private property rights in Tanzania's agricultural policy of 1982–83,[2] it was not until the mid-1990s that a 'new wave' of land ownership and governance reforms was introduced under the National Land Policy (1995) and Land Acts (1999) to address both urban and rural land tenure. For sure, the reforms were strongly influenced by international development policy, including 'market friendly' goals to promote land and credit markets through a comprehensive system of legible property rights (Green, 2014; Manji, 2006; McAuslan, 2013). However, the Acts also aimed to enhance tenure security by providing legal recognition to existing customary and informal users' rights (URT 1995; URT 1999). Today, while the government's land reform agenda remains firm (Stanley, 2020), land tenure involves a complex mix of statutory, semi-formal and informal arrangements, the boundary between which is often 'tenuous' and arbitrary (Kironde, 2006a: 13).

For clarity, there are three types of ownership documents that landholders typically hold in the urban unplanned settlements. The sale agreement (SA) is an unregistered document signed by the buyer, the seller and some witnesses, either the mtaa chairperson or a lawyer. Despite its informal status (being unregistered by the state), it can be implemented to help resolve land disputes or to access loans with mainstream banks (Manara and Pani, 2023b), thereby offering some degree of tenure security and other potential benefits (Manara and Pani, 2023a). Conversely, the Certificate of Right of Occupancy (CRO) and the Residential Licence (RL) are registered documents providing statutory property rights. The CRO is a long-term lease (33, 66 or 99 years) issued on planned, surveyed land. As formal plots are rarely supplied de-novo by the planning authorities, in most cases the CRO is acquired retroactively during regularisation projects, which, still, are inaccessible and unaffordable to many landholders (Manara and Regan, 2022). The RL is an interim property right, available only in the unplanned urban and *peri*-urban areas designated for formalisation. Although valid for just five years, the RL is renewable, and in principle, offers similar benefits to the CRO: compensation in case of eviction, protection against boundary and inheritance disputes, and collateralisation with mainstream banks[3].

Introduced under the Land Act (1999), the RL programme embeds an incremental and 'pro-poor' (Hendriks et al., 2019; Zevenbergen et al., 2013; UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2019) approach to land tenure formalisation, aiming to increase tenure security for the city's lower-income populations via relatively accessible and affordable documents. Unlike the CRO, the RL does not require conformance to planning standards and costs around 10% the price of a CRO. Furthermore, a primary aim of the programme was to raise essential revenues from a RL fee and annual land rent, with a view to invest in settlement upgrading. In the early 2000s, it was estimated that unplanned areas in Dar es Salaam hosted around 80% of the city's buildings (400,0000 housing units) and over 80% of residents (Kironde, 2006a: 15, 83). Under the auspices of the Ministry of Land, Housing and Human Settlements Development (MLHHSD) and the municipal authorities, the RL program began in earnest in 2004, covering around 220,000 plots in settlements with the highest densities and poorest quality infrastructure (Fig. 1, left). After the initial step of plot identification (see below), about half the eligible landholders acquired their RL. However, the uptake rate has drastically dropped and the renewal rate has decreased over time: less than 20% of eligible plots currently have an active RL (Manara, 2022). Despite its apparent shortcomings, in 2019 the government reignited the RL programme as part of its land reform agenda, targeting an additional 150,

[2] The agricultural policy (1982–83) sought to increase economic growth and reduce food shortages by encouraging commercial investment in agricultural production.

[3] In a companion paper, we discuss residents' perceived benefits from these documents, underscoring a rising demand for CRO (Manara and Pani, 2023a).

Fig. 1. Residential Licence Programme Phase I (2004–2006) and Phase II (2019-present), Notes: Grey areas are *mitaa* (sub-wards) under the RL programme, in phases I (left) and II (right). Sometimes boundaries of mitaa have changed over time. The programme may or may not include all plots in the mtaa.

000 plots in Dar es Salaam (Fig. 1, right), and a further 1 million plots overall, including beyond the city (Stanley, 2020).

4.2. Decentralisation in urban Tanzania: municipalities and mitaa

Since the country gained independence in 1961, its various attempts at decentralisation have sought to create diverse local administrative units aimed at extending key authorities and functions of government from the centre to the grass-roots level, thereby enabling community participation in decision-making, at least, in principle (e.g. Decentralisation Policy, 1972; Local Government Authorities Acts, 1982; see Babeiya, 2016, for a critique). Contemporary Dar es Salaam is divided into five administrative units – Ilala, Kigamboni, Kinondoni, Temeke, Ubungo – each with their own district and municipal council.[4] According to the Urban Planning Act (2007), local authorities (city, municipal and town councils) are responsible for town planning and land regularisation. However, until recently, the MLHHSD has initiated and carried out most large-scale planning and regularisation schemes in the city: partly because they were pilot programmes for the whole country, and partly because municipalities are provided limited administrative and financial capacity (authors' interview; Babeiya, 2016). Below the municipal authority level, local governance occurs at both the ward and the sub-ward level. Otherwise known as 'streets', the mitaa[5] are the smallest geographical units of urban governance. Each mtaa has an executive officer, a chairperson or 'mtaa leader' (mwenyekiti wa mtaa), and several 'ten-cell leaders' (wajumbe[6]) who, alongside their assistants, keep watch over their washina or 'braches' (usually comprised of 50–200 households). The executive officer (EO),[7] mwenyekiti and five wajumbe form the mtaa committee, which provides grass roots linkages to the ward and municipality while mobilising community participation. Although the EO is a paid employee, answerable to the municipal council, the mwenyekiti and wajumbe are un-salaried political actors, supported by parties and elected by residents (see below; Babeiya, 2016).

Despite its emphasis on decentralization, Tanzania is noted as a statist land tenure regime with scant commitment to actual local empowerment (Babeiya, 2016; Ewald and Mhamba, 2019). Indeed, in practice, the mtaa office has no executive or legislative powers (Babeiya, 2016). Instead, the EO is a civil servant who represents the municipal director and heads the executive functions of the mtaa. All rules arising from the municipality concerning tenure formalisation, regularisation and other land development matters (amongst many other things), must pass through the EO whose job it is to either oversee their direct implementation or to report back on citizens' opposition and preferences (authors' interview).

Furthermore, the wajumbe and mwenyekiti are not the traditional authorities or ethnic chiefs described in other rural and *peri*-urban contexts (Honig, 2022; Marrengane et al. 2021). The wajumbe have a long history of community-state-party representation dating back to the single party system (1964–92) during which they were considered the local 'eyes and ears' of central government (Cross, 2013: 45). However, their role in contemporary urban centres like Dar es Salaam is more complex. There are two types of wajumbe: first, 'wajumbe wa serikali ya mtaa' (leaders of mtaa commitee) are appointed by local political parties to stand in the local government elections alongside their candidate for mwenyekiti. Once elected, these five wajumbe will join the mtaa committee to assist with general administrative issues. Instead, 'wajumbe wa shina' (leaders of branches) are not part of the official local government machinery. Similar to the 'balozi wa nyumba kumi kumi' (ten-house leaders) of the single party era, these are local residents affiliated to the ruling party (in this case Chama Cha Mapinduzi, CCM), who are elected at the community level to help keep the peace[8]: for example, resolve marriage disputes or help with land disputes. While the return of Tanzania to multi-party politics in 1992 apparently confined the wajumbe role to the political side-lines, similarly to Sambaiga (2018),

[4] In 2021, the President dissolved Dar es Salaam city council converting Ilala council from a district into a city.

[5] Mitaa is plural of mtaa.

[6] Wajumbe is plural of mjumbe (ten-cell leader).

[7] The EO position was introduced through the 2006 amendment to the Local Government (Urban Authorities) Act 1982. The EO acts as Secretary to the committee.

[8] In fact, the ruling party always has its own wajumbe wa shina working alongside the elected mtaa chairperson and mtaa committee. When a different party wins the mtaa elections, the mtaa government may also appoint branch leaders from the same political party to work alongside branch leaders of the ruling party. See Sambaiga (2018) for an excellent account of the contemporary wajumbe.

our research shows that they still hold varying degrees of relevance and legitimacy at the community level, certainly regarding local security and many land matters.

Regarding the mtaa chairperson, which is the focus of this paper, the current mtaa system was set up just before the multi-party elections of 1995, but their functions were not defined until the 2000 revision of the Local Government Act (1982). Their contemporary role is vital in bridging central-local relations: for example, they keep the local order and act as the senior political administrator of "just about everything at the mtaa level" (interviewee, 2018). Just like the neighbourhood secretaries in Maputo (e.g. Earle, 2014), the mtaa chairperson helps prevent and arbitrate land disputes, supervises informal land transactions and witnesses the unregistered sale agreement. While in the early 2000s, prominent Tanzanian scholars already acknowledged these informal practices and argued for 'reconciling' formal and informal institutions, actors and processes to help overcome state deficits (Kironde, 2000, 2006b; Kombe and Kreibich, 2000; Kombe, 2022), recent studies confirm that informal institutions continue to protect informal ownership and transfer rights (Panman, 2021; see also Andreasen et al., 2020; Parsa et al. 2011), even though many residents aspire to hold a CRO (Wolff et al., 2018; Manara and Regan, 2023; Manara and Pani, 2023b). Importantly, since the mtaa chairpersons are not paid by the state[9], residents understand that their services should be rewarded with small payments or gifts. As we will see below, this under-resourcing opens up grey areas for corruption, and potentially perpetuates existing urban inequalities through the construction and management of formal property.

Given their knowledge and authority on local land matters, the MLHHSD naturally involved mtaa personnel in the roll out of the RL programme. First, the mwenyekiti and wajumbe were asked to provide essential information to communities regarding the RL, including its benefits and how to acquire it. Second, to help the Ministry build the RL database, the wajumbe played a key role in the process of plot identification. An enumerator would visit a plot to collect relevant information on the landholders and trace the plot boundaries on an aerial picture in the presence of the landowner, their adjacent neighbours, and one mjumbe. To assure the accuracy and legitimacy of the records (such that a landholder could then apply for a RL) the mtaa chairpersons were asked to countersign a Boundary Agreement Form for every plot, certifying that the information was correct, and the plot had no active disputes. A companion paper details how the initial involvement of the mwenyekiti and wajumbe was central to building social expectations that the government was committed to enforce interim property rights (Manara, 2022). Indeed, their current *dis*engagement is one of the factors causing a drop in the uptake and renewal of the RL (ibid).

In fulfilling their roles, the mtaa chairperson is a 'street-level bureaucrat' (Lipsky, 1980; Olivier de Sardan, 2008) working at the interface of state and society, as the 'twilight institutions' described by Lund (2006). For example, as part of their official government mandate, the mwenyekiti is tasked to issue identification letters to schools, banks and public offices, witnessing that some individual is a resident of their mtaa (tasks that may also be undertaken by the EO). However, whilst they are mandated to help spur local development (including land tenure regularization), they *are not* supposed to validate the ownership of land. Rather, it is on the basis of their *social legitimacy* that they typically witness informal sales, sign the unregistered SA, and arbitrate land disputes. As we show in the following sections, this 'twilight character' provides multiple benefits to the state in terms of increasing the legitimacy and functionality of statutory property rights, such as the RL. Yet it also elicits considerable chagrin from high-level state actors, whose official and unofficial assaults on the resources, authority and legitimacy of the mtaa chairpersons potentially undermine the existing 'political settlement' (Khan, 2018).

[9] Respondents variously report receiving a small allowance of around 35,000–100,000Tsh/month (£12-£30) for maintaining the mtaa office.

5. Legitimising and operationalising formal property

As explained above, the process to set up a RL database was initiated and coordinated by the central government (MLHHSD), which involved mtaa personnel in plot identification. Mtaa chairpersons had to countersign a Boundary Agreement Form (with wajumbe as witnesses) validating essential information on the informal ownership of plots. When the data collection was complete, the responsibility for the project was transferred from the MLHHSD to the relevant municipality. Nowadays, each municipality maintains their own database. Packed into small rooms, behind a couple PCs, big piles of grey folders house the relevant paperwork of each RL issued. However, municipalities lack the essential financial and technical resources that would enable them to manage the RL alone. For example, they have never undertaken campaigns to sensitise residents, except for a few locations in the city centre; and certainly they do not carry out enforcement in the field, for instance by following up on unpaid renewal fees and land rents. While a digital database is set up to keep records of the RL (issuances, renewals, transfers and mortgages), only one municipality implements it. In the others, land officers register the information manually in ledgers that are sometimes illegible or get mislaid.

5.1. Hybrid governance: The municipality as bricoleur

This section demonstrates how, some eighteen years after the RL programme started, municipalities act as bricoleurs, continuing to involve the mtaa office to legitimise and operationalise formal property. Indeed, municipalities engage in *meso*-level bricolage by designing processes and forms that engage mtaa chairpersons and EOs in validating property relations for the purposes of issuing, renewing and transferring the RL. In so doing, these practices of bricolage establish a hybrid governance of formal property. Furthermore, they transform the RL into a hybrid institution by anchoring its legitimacy and functionality within both formal and informal sources of authority and knowledge.

First, practices of *meso*-level bricolage are involved in the issuance of a RL to a newcomer who buys a plot held informally in an area under the RL programme. Most typically, the prior landholder has been identified in the municipality database, but has never purchased the RL. Instead, the new owner wants to acquire one. One might imagine that a signed and witnessed SA between the two parties would suffice to prove the sale and rightful ownership. However, for the municipalities both personal identity and plot location are hard to verify. As such, they designed Form 73, which must be signed by both the mwenyekiti and EO to verify plot ownership and enable a RL to be issued. Surprisingly, the same process of bricolage is adopted even when both parties have completed their sale's contract through a lawyer. We witnessed this first hand when one of our interviews with a lawyer was interrupted by a client returning from the mtaa office with his completed Form 73. From the back of the form, the lawyer read out loud the endorsement in support of her client's application for the RL, signed by the mwenyekiti and EO. The landholder was visibly relieved that the municipality would finally issue his RL:

"The businessman is also a godly man who cares about the world around him. We welcome him to the mtaa as it will increase and act as a catalyst for sustainable land development.".

The process to renew a RL also involves practices of bricolage whereby the municipality engages with the mwenyekiti to validate property relations. Regulation states that the registered landholder must renew the RL every 5 years, in person, at the municipality. In this instance, the person is already identified in the database and holds a RL that is formally registered by the municipality. Therefore, one might expect the municipality to simply allow the applicant to pay their renewal fees and extend the RL, based on the information registered in the database. Instead, they require the landholder to go through the

local mtaa office, where the chairperson must re-validate their plot ownership before the formal document is renewed. In addition, one municipality in the city centre now requires that landholders submit, together with their expired RL, an introduction letter and a renewal form, including a declaration that the land is not under dispute. These documents must be signed by the mtaa chairperson, EO and at least one neighbour. The chief land officer explained that this practice was introduced in response to many complaints over boundary and ownership disputes on formally registered land, while their municipalities were also considering adopting the same process at the time of our research.

Finally, municipality bricolage is also apparent in cases where a landholder with an active RL sells their plot and wants to transfer the ownership of this land formally. This entails transferring the RL from the prior owner to the new one. For a transfer to be formally registered, the municipality requires four documents: sale agreement and transfer deed, both prepared by lawyers, official valuation report, and one form from the mtaa chairperson:

> *"As a first step, we receive a form from the mwenyekiti called Form of Change of Ownership, which shows the past owner and the new one. This is the starting point because the mwenyekiti knows the people at his mtaa so he informs us that a change has happened there. Because the mwenyekiti is the one who initialises anything in the mtaa, everything has to start from them" (RL Officer1).*

Having assumed that the sale agreement signed by a lawyer would satisfy the municipality on the identity of the buyer and the seller of a plot, we asked what extra verification this form could offer:

> *"With properties that are not planned, the ownership and boundaries of plots are recognised by the mwenyekiti and the executive officer. They help us to know who the real owner of the plot is, therefore, there is no way that we can exclude them… people can cheat in front of the lawyers. Local leaders are the ones who know the plots because they live with the people" (RL Officer2).*

In sum, municipalities engage in *meso*-level bricolage by preparing forms that require the signatures of both the mwenyekiti (in both their formal and informal capacities) and the EO (the municipalities' own representative) for the purposes of issuing, renewing and transferring the RL. The chairpersons are continuously called upon to recognise property relations, including those that are formally codified in the database and registered via RL. Thus, municipalities nest the RL within a hybrid governance structure. The legitimacy and functionality of the system depend on a combination of existing and newly proposed, formal and informal land authorities and knowledges, which configure the RL as a hybrid institution.

5.2. Hybrid governance: The mtaa chairperson as bricoleur

The formalisation of property sanctions the municipal authority on land matters and defines a formal process of land dispute resolution including municipal land officers, technical instruments and ultimately the court. For land registered with the RL, statutory law and formal processes should substitute the informal arbitration of boundary disputes by local leaders. However, in this section we explore how the mtaa chairpersons attempt to arbitrate land disputes locally both by bypassing the formal system entirely, and by initiating practices of *meso*-level bricolage that hybridize the RL: first by deploying the RL map informally in conjunction with existing and taken-for-granted practices of dispute resolution, and second by integrating also novel practices borrowed from the formal system but implemented informally.

In fact, some chairpersons do not recognise the map as a legitimate or functional instrument to arbitrate land disputes. Rather, they prefer informal dispute arbitration based on their own experience, local witnesses, and oral history:

> *"Maybe I should repeat this: these are informal settlements and there is no formal measurement,"* stressed one chairman explaining how he normally approaches boundary disputes in his mtaa. *"I personally use my own experience of the area and involve neighbours who know the history of the land. We listen to the plot owners: they are the ones who know the objects of their boundaries. So if it's a tree or tyre we ask them to show and the neighbours to confirm… Using the map we could go off track because it does not have clear measurements and we would not be fair" (ML32).*
>
> *"It doesn't show dimensions and it is short lived,"* emphasised another respondent. *"It is only valid for five years. Something might have happened to the plot area, like a sub-division, and the map on the RL wouldn't update that" (ML16).*

Conversely, other chairpersons effectively resolved disputes at the mtaa level by deploying the RL map informally, without recourse to the municipal authority, land experts and technical tools. Instead, to translate the RL map from the abstract to the real-world space, they used other means of dispute arbitration including oral history. In a highly typical case, one mwenyekiti described how they involved neighbours, wajumbe and their assistants to arbitrate land disputes, combining their testimonies with the information codified in the RL map.

> *"I think the oral history of the plot works well because some people insist that there is no use of the square meters and they know their plots well. Anyways… if there is also a legal document, the case doesn't take that long and it generally goes much smoother. If you have a RL, it is easier to have people understand… nine out of ten disputes are settled this way and one will go to the ward" (ML29).*

In another typical case, the mwenyekiti utilised the map in conjunction with physical markers, such as trees, tyres or poles. One vital question that affected their practices was that, in the absence of linear dimensions shown in feet on the RL map, "*which can be paced on the plot*" (ML5), how could this "government backed" instrument be understood by dwellers of the unplanned settlements, many of whom lacked a formal education? Thus, many chairpersons preferred to "keep the peace" by combining the RL map with more familiar and well-understood instruments that bore the legitimacy of pre-existing social practices and local "wisdom" (ML26):

> *"There was one case",* recounted the mwenyekiti, *"where the plot owner was complaining that the neighbour had extended up to his plot, which he knew because his boundary ended at a tree. So we used the RL map to explain to the people that one should leave space for a footpath. And the tree was still there, so it was easy to reference where the footpath should be" (ML40).*

Adding a further layer of hybridisation, another chairperson described how they interpreted the map by informally borrowing a practice they had seen utilised by municipal land officers:

> *"When we go to the site we take bricks, because between one plot and another you should leave four bricks, two from each plot… Since the people trust the masons, we ask them to measure the plot as the area shows on the RL map" (ML34).*

Taken together, the practices of *meso*-level bricolage initiated by the mwenyekiti hybridize the RL as a legitimate and functional tool of urban land governance by anchoring it in existing and novel practices of dispute resolution at the mtaa level.

5.3. How other actors support the bricolage of the Residential Licence

Certainly, the RL system is supported by a hybrid governance of *meso*-level state actors who engage in practices of bricolage described above. However, a multiplicity of *non-state* actors also acknowledge and reinforce the hybridity of formal property. These include private individuals, lawyers and bank officers, who are the key end-users of the

formal property system. For example, the municipal database records whether a plot registered with the RL has been transferred between parties or pledged as collateral with a credit organisation. Therefore, interested parties can conduct official searches at the municipality to collect this essential information before buying or mortgaging a plot. However, we found that buyers, lawyers and bank officers regularly refer to the mtaa chairperson to further verify and supplement the information obtained from official searches, because these, alone, cannot address their concerns or provide sufficient security.

By way of example, when dealing with a land transaction in a RL area, lawyers often execute a SA without consulting the RL database. For example, one lawyer estimated that only 10 percent of his clients undertook municipal searches before purchasing land. Yet the advocates *always* advise buyers to conduct local searches in the field:

> *"It's the buyer's due diligence to check with the neighbours and the mwenyekiti that the seller is the real owner of that plot, and the plot has no dispute. The mwenyekiti knows the area well, while I'll be sitting here in my office. You can try to bypass the mtaa temporarily, but you will need to go back eventually… how can you claim that you are the owner if the mwenyekiti does not stand for you?" (T.M.).*

When we asked lawyers if they have any duty to verify basic information about plots (such as the ownership, size or boundaries) by conducting official searches at the municipality, one referred to the principles of jurisprudence responding that, *"this is immaterial to a lawyer"*.

> *"What is material",* he continued*, "is that these people appeared before me and they agreed on the terms of the sale. The lawyer is just a witness of their contract. I execute the document… As to the correctness of the terms of the agreement, I cannot be involved. Some issues are material facts and others are legal facts… I am concerned with the latter" (S. P.).*

Similar considerations were expressed by the loan officers of nine mainstream credit organisations when lending against the RL (Manara and Pani, 2023b). All nine banks deem official searches very useful in reducing risks such as forged documents, encumbrances (other unpaid loans) and pending disputes, and have made municipal searches compulsory. However, loan officers complement these by going into the field themselves, involving the mtaa chairperson and neighbours of the loan-applicant in local searches. For example, banks worry that the owner registered in the RL database may have informally sold their plot, initiated a dispute, collateralised their land with an informal lender, or applied for a stronger title deed (CRO). This information would not display in the municipal database, but must be collected given its importance for the repossession of properties in case of default.

> *"Official searches can satisfy us that the document is genuine, that is, authentic and not expired, and land rents were paid for…but other things, at the municipality they do not know really" (Loan Officer, Commercial Bank).*

Some branches go as far as to ask the mtaa chairperson to witness the rightful ownership of the land through a "written commitment". For instance, they have initiated a protocol where the chairperson must sign the Collateral Verification Form, which is typically used to validate the ownership of informal plots (i.e. not registered with any statutory property right). In other cases, we saw individual loan officers taking their own initiative by asking the chairpersons to countersign the back page of other official paperwork. In practice, this "written commitment" helps verify plot ownership through the mtaa chairperson, lending further legitimacy to the RL, and thereby making it usable as a valid collateral for banks.

5.4. Discussion: The uneven consequences of institutional hybridisation

Per se, the hybrid governance of formal property and practices of bricolage described above could be seen as the successful integration of 'multi-scalar' (Cirolia and Scheba, 2019) land authorities and institutions that yields positive local outcomes. For example, municipalities achieve due-diligence when they ask the mtaa chairpersons to sign Form 73 before issuing a RL, even if the plot is already registered in the municipal database. Similarly, it is useful to involve the local leaders in checking essential information on the plot before a RL is renewed, transferred or mortgaged. Furthermore, some mtaa chairpersons creatively engage in bricolage to use the RL map for preserving roads or open spaces for public use. After all, the RL would not be hybridized if the bricoleurs did not expect some increases in legitimacy and functionality.

However, there are also significant downsides to the hybridisation of formal property, in particular, resulting from the structuring effects of higher-level policies and actors on the local level. First, the uneven distribution of financial resources across actors opens up grey areas wherein diverse actors with discretion and power can utilise formal property to reproduce or even reinforce existing urban inequalities. For example, as previously noted, the mtaa chairperson is an unsalaried political actor elected by residents of the mtaa in which he/she lives. As such, residents understand that their services should be rewarded with small payments or 'fees' as part of their 'social contract'. However, we witnessed how formal property provides further opportunities to extract rents, resulting in socially regressive outcomes for the urban poor. During one interview in an mtaa office, a resident came in accompanied by a bank officer. The latter was conducting a local search to verify and complement information codified in the landholder's RL by asking the mwenyekiti to witness the person's identity, mtaa residency, and rightful ownership of the plot intended as collateral for a loan. The mwenyekiti duly signed the bank officer's forms. However, when the bank officer left, the mwenyekiti asked the landholder for a payment stating that his verification had earned the landholder a tidy sum. Clearly disappointed, but without much resistance, the landholder offered 10,000TSh – the equivalent of renewing the RL for five years. Complaining that the payment was too low, the chairperson demanded another 10,000TSh, suggesting that the landholder should also compensate the EO who had quietly assisted the entire discussion, despite his formal status.

Second, a lack of formal tools and political support undermines the capacity of mtaa chairpersons to perform their tasks accurately and with legitimacy, potentially destabilising the existing distribution of power and governance arrangements. Indeed, drawing on Goodfellow (2020), we suggest that some higher-level authorities engage in '*anti-formal*' political acts, which are deliberately designed to challenge or weaken the (formal) power of the mtaa chairpersons, and thereby consolidate the government's primary authority over land. For example, even though the mwenyekiti have become central to making the RL legitimate and viable by signing forms and acting as witnesses for legally recognised settlers, higher-level government actors refuse to provide them with the formal material resources necessary to fulfil their roles. At the beginning of the programme, each mtaa office was issued printed copies of the RL database and map for their mtaa, which the mwenyekiti was mandated to update and utilise to check information before filling in their forms. However, eighteen years into the programme, these essential materials have never been replaced. We saw innumerable RL registers, manually updated by several generations of chairpersons, that were virtually illegible and falling apart. The situation was the same regarding the RL maps, now faded and disintegrating. Furthermore, some mitaa lacked these instruments completely following the division of an older mtaa into smaller units. According to our mwenyekiti, most had requested replacements from both the municipality and MLHHSD, protesting that the issue was rendering their formal role almost impossible. However, municipal officers suggested that the MLHHSD should provide them; and, of course, the latter said the opposite.

This denial of material support from higher-level actors already demonstrates a lack of commitment to the RL, which diminishes the legitimacy of this pro-poor property right (Manara, 2022; Manara and Pani, 2023a). Further still, it demonstrates a lack of political support for

the lower-level government itself. Indeed, the central government keeps reconfiguring the role and responsibilities of the elected local leaders. For example, the Minister of Lands has warned landholders against transacting land through the mwenyekiti and the sale agreement reminding residents that the chairpersons are not authorised to influence land tenure matters. [10]In sum, we see various attempts to diminish the relative power of the mtaa chairpersons, even though the government needs to involve them in crucial development projects (Kombe, 2022). While the knowledge and authority of local leaders is necessary in practice, withholding essential material and political resources from them destabilises the existing distribution of power, potentially shifting authority and legitimacy away from the local level to the higher-level government.

6. Conclusion

Drawing on research on Dar es Salaam, we set out to explore who governs formal property in African cities, how they make formal property legitimate and functional, and the consequences of these processes. In accordance with the Land Act (1999), the MLHHSD initiated the RL programme, offering interim titles to around 180,000 plots across the city. However, the MLHHSD soon made municipalities responsible for the management of this supposedly pro-poor property right. Through the analytic lenses of institutional hybridity and 'meso-level' bricolage we have illuminated how actors within the state (municipalities) and at the interface of the state (mtaa chairpersons) help construct the legitimacy and functionality of the RL by combining pre-existing and newly proposed sources of authority and knowledge. Additionally, we have shown that multiple actors, including lawyers and bank officers, contribute to this hybridisation in order to reap advantages, for example in strengthening the security of the RL.

Indeed, the hybrid governance arrangements and *meso*-level bricolage described herein could be seen as relatively successful, yielding several positive local outcomes. However, we have also highlighted significant downsides, in particular resulting from the structuring effects of higher-level policies and actors on the local level. The government's refusal to compensate mtaa chairpersons has led to the extraction of rents, thereby reproducing existing urban inequalities. Furthermore, a denial of material resources and political support can potentially undermine the capacity of mtaa chairpersons to perform their tasks accurately and legitimately.

As such, we suggest that the Tanzanian government should properly acknowledge the centrality of *meso*-level actors in its land reform agenda by implementing a range of policies that support them while increasing rigour and transparency in their roles. In particular, as the government maintains, and even expands, the RL programme, the mtaa chairpersons should receive sufficient resources – material and political – to perform their tasks reliably and accountably. For example, to embed the principles of a pro-poor land recordation system, municipalities (or the MLHHSD) should distribute updated versions of the registers and maps to all mitaa; the mwenyekiti should be compensated for their time spent in updating these records; and newly elected chairpersons should receive adequate training on how to use these tools. Moreover, the registers and maps should be made 'open access' to local landholders. Further still, the mwenyekiti should be enabled to provide information and services to those who want to uptake, renew or use this property right, while municipalities monitor these tasks (for example, making sure that mtaa leaders do not co-opt landholders into acquiring – or not acquiring – the RL). Finally, higher-level government actors should take a clear position on the role of elected local leaders in Tanzania's land reform agenda: either they are part of the country's pro-poor land administration, or they are not. Reaping the benefits from local leaders' work while withholding essential material and political support seems instrumental in destabilising the existing 'political settlement' (Khan, 2018) by shifting authority and legitimacy away from the mtaa level to higher-level government.

Our analysis has drawn upon and advanced several academic debates. First, we have provided further evidence that the central state is not a 'master designer' implementing land reform top-down. Second, we have contributed to the analysis of *meso*-level bricolage through the close examination of actors engaged in implementing formal property both within and at the interface of the state. Third, rather than seeing these processes as simply 'messy', we have illuminated the structuring effects of higher-level policies and actors on the *meso*-level. Finally, although the specific findings of our study may not be generalisable to other African countries, we note that higher-level governors often need to mobilise complex governance arrangements to pursue their development goals, including land reforms. Certainly, our study goes some way to furthering our understanding of hybrid land governance and institutions in urban Tanzania. However, more empirical research is needed to unravel how national land reforms affect the existing urban and land governance of other African cities, and in turn, how diverse meso- and local-level actors affect the implementation of formal property on the ground.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Martina Manara: Conceptualization, Methodology, Project administration, Investigation, Data curation, Funding acquisition. **Erica Pani:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Project administration, Investigation, Data curation, Funding acquisition.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

The authors do not have permission to share data.

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