Main regional centrality

1 Lagos Island: centre of the 'hustle'; historic core, very high density of housing and markets
2 Ikeja: centre of Lagos State Government; cluster of central functions
3 Victoria Island: upmarket commercial centre
4 Admiralty Way: emerging centrality in the bypass axis

Nodal centrality — Markets, transport interchanges

Planned large-scale project

1 Eko Atlantic: new luxury island
2 Lekki Free Trade Zone: planned industrial zone with new port and airport

Plotting urbanism — Systematic piecemeal development and redevelopment of residential neighbourhoods

Central — Densely plotted well-located neighbourhoods with some redevelopment, e.g. Itire

Far — More recent densely plotted neighbourhoods that require a three-to-five-hour commute to the centres, e.g. Ikotun

Peripheral expansion — New plotted developments in the periphery

Popular urbanisation — Highly insecure housing on topographical peripheries

Bypass urbanism — Rapid development of new urban axis consisting of privately managed residential estates and excised traditional land; served by new transport infrastructure funded through public-private partnerships

Formally planned area — Settlements with planned layouts and higher levels of centrally provided infrastructure; includes neighbourhoods with colonial layout, privatised public housing and wealthy residential estates

Lagos elite — Concentration of wealth and privilege in low-density residential areas

Industrial zone

Airport

Urban footprint

Administrative boundary

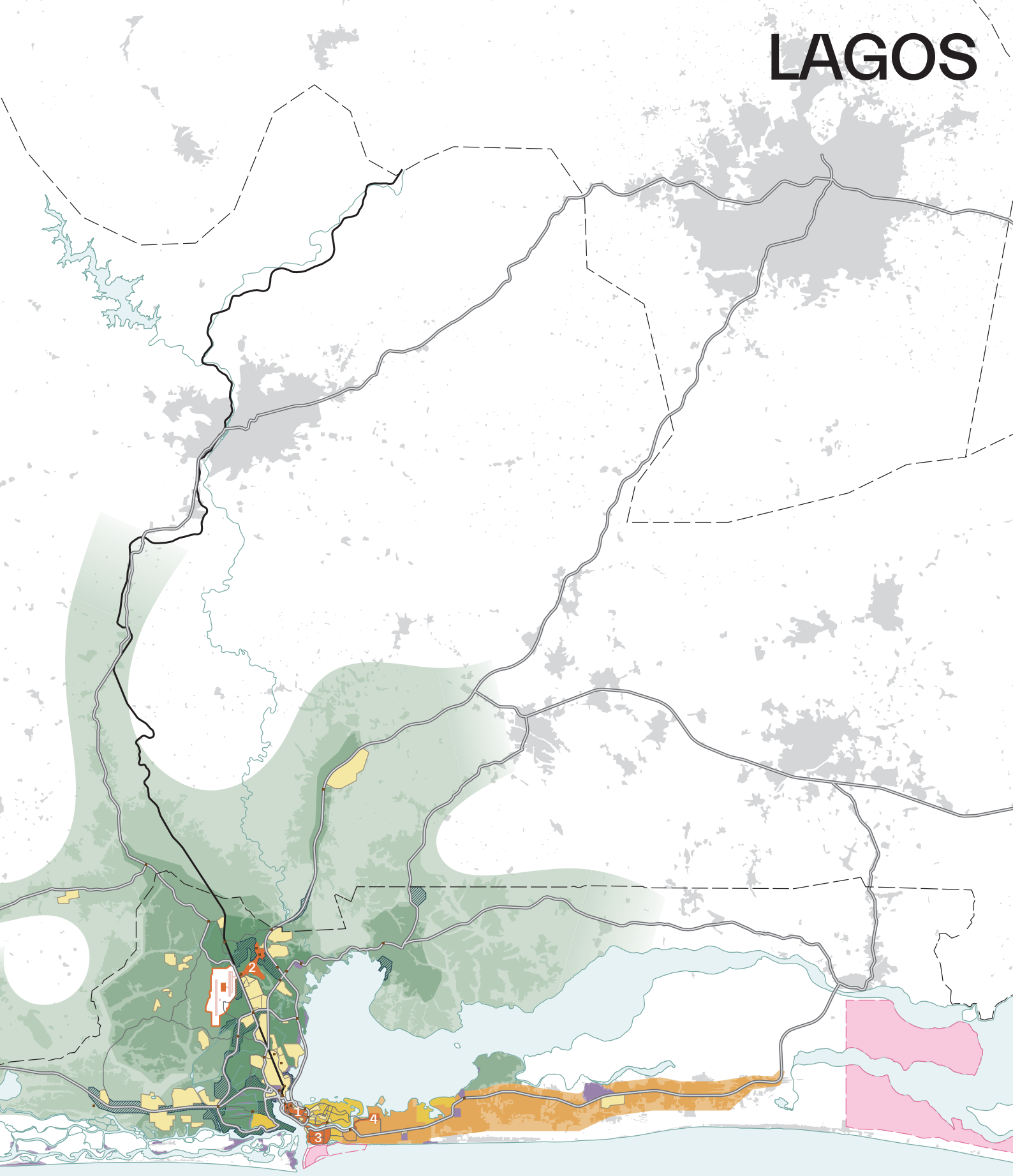
Highway

Road

Railway

0 5 10 20 km

LAGOS



They have patterns I can't see, but they keep perfect rhythm and time … speaking not your language, *arranged not like you have been taught to know.*
Binyavanga Wainaina, *One Day I Will Write about This Place,* 2012

A SOUTHERN PARADIGM OF URBANISATION

Lagos is a magnetic centrality with regional, national and transnational reach. It is the nexus of several important urban centres in south-west Nigeria including Ibadan and Abeokuta, drawing people and trade from the country as a whole and from along the West African corridor that stretches from Lagos to Abidjan (see Choplin and Hertzog 2021). Lagos has the largest population in Nigeria and quite possibly the whole continent. Fuelled both by migration and natural growth, its population falls somewhere between 15 and 23 million people. Lagos State is the smallest Nigerian state by area yet makes the largest contribution to Nigeria's GDP as a hub for economic activity. Lagos has a vibrant cultural scene and is a cultural powerhouse, producing globally relevant music, art, movies and fashion.

Lagos became a regional centrality during the 19th century as long-established regional trade routes gained in importance (Mann 2007). It was colonised by the British between 1851 and 1861 and became the capital of newly formed Nigeria in 1914. The British were never able to establish overall control of Lagos. They pursued racialised spatial segregation, limiting their administrative focus to the central and European areas of Lagos Island and Lagos Municipality (Peil 1991). They relied, covertly, on traditional authorities to govern the rest of Lagos, where urban development went unchecked (Barnes 1986). This uneven colonial planning and policy inscribed lasting patterns of spatial, social and economic disparities and dualities onto Lagos that are still visible in its urban configurations. Formally planned areas are tightly bound exceptions to the vast, unplanned fabric of plotting urbanism.

Further, land law in Lagos has never been able to overcome the coexistence of customary and statutory tenure systems that weak colonial control allowed (Akinleye 2009; Sawyer 2016). Following Independence in 1960 and throughout the second half of the 20th century, the urbanisation of Lagos was characterised by spectacular growth within the context of overwhelming political and economic disruption (Othman 1984). Frequent regime changes between 1966 and 1999 inhibited any effort at coordinated planning, exacerbating existing spatial disparities and allowing plotting to take hold as the dominant process of urbanisation. Further, public trust in institutions was eroded or was never able to develop (Ekeh 1975). Nigeria rapidly shifted to an oil-based economy and suffered deeply in the global oil crisis of 1979, which triggered two decades of crisis. Lagos's urban environment deteriorated as the population continued to increase. The return of democratic rule to Nigeria in 1999 began a period of unprecedented stability and urban reform, as the Lagos State Government has prioritised an urban agenda and investors and the diaspora have been drawn back to Lagos (Cheeseman and de Gramont 2017). The process of bypass urbanism has emerged in the past decade as a forceful new process that is currently restructuring the entire urban territory.

The dense centrality of Isale Eko. Lagos Island, 2012
Nodal centrality. Pen Cinema, 2013

PATHWAYS OF URBANISATION

LAGOS ESTABLISHED AS REGIONAL CENTRALITY: 1807–1899

Lagos Island once constituted the entire city of Lagos. Although it was for a long time merely a stop on regional trade routes (Mann 2007: 25, 139), it gained in regional importance after the British outlawed slave trading in 1807, as its sandy creeks were ideal for accommodating the continuing covert trade in enslaved people. Over the next decades Lagos grew in size and importance as the British sought to replace the slave trade with more legitimate trade with a view to extracting resources to support its burgeoning industrial revolution (see Chapin Metz 1991; Mann 2007). To this end, the British bombarded Lagos in 1851 and established Lagos Colony (roughly the current Lagos State boundary) in 1861 (see Smith 1974). Their gradual and messy takeover of the colonised area and extensive hinterland culminated in 1899 by starting construction on the Lagos railway terminus and Iddo wharf. This established Lagos as the administrative and trading centre for the nascent 700 km-deep hinterland of what was soon to become Nigeria (Mabogunje 1968: 249; Abiodun 1974: 343).

UNEVEN COLONIAL INVESTMENT: 1897–1939

During the period between the turn of the 19th century and the Second World War, the colonial urban strategy employed in Lagos graduated from being a minimalist approach—developing just enough infrastructure to support resource extraction from the interior—to more ambitious goals of racialised public investment (Mabogunje 1968: 112–114). This investment was implemented unevenly both within the central areas (where racial segregation was strong) and across the wider territory of Lagos, which received almost no investment, initiating deep-seated disparities between the two areas and shaping the urbanisation patterns of Lagos throughout the entire 20th century. Lagos Municipality was created in 1899 and extended in 1911 to include Lagos Island, Ikoyi, Victoria Island and Apapa, Surulere, Yaba and Ebute Meta. In the following decades it became the main focus of state investment, development and governance.

Settlements quickly began to mushroom in the territory outside Lagos Municipality—which was renamed Lagos District from 1927—but were largely left to urbanise in an unregulated way without investment and control. Until 1983, when the capital was moved to Abuja, Lagos's central areas were under various different overlapping jurisdictions (state, federal and local government) that created confusion, competition over prime land and fraught intergovernmental relations (see Williams 1975). The hulking skeleton of the Federal secretariat building in Ikoyi is testament to this confusion, having been abandoned by the Federal government when the capital moved to Abuja. Since then, the State government has been blocked from developing this prime site. Lagos is littered with such sites.

The planning of Lagos Municipality during this period was informed by a hygienist discourse to justify racialised spatial segregation, hugely stigmatising the indigenous population (Gandy 2006: 375). The scientific link between the *Anopheles* mosquito and malaria had been made in 1897, leading to a planning focus in colonial times on filling in swamps and using spatial segregation to separate the European populations from mosquito breeding areas. The British used garden city principles to establish European Reserve Areas, the first being Ikoyi in 1918 (Bigon 2013; Tijani 2004: 255; Towry-Coker 2011: 135). The areas where the indigenous population lived in the core of Lagos Island, which had become increasingly densely populated, were mainly neglected by planning measures at this time (Immerwahr 2007). After outbreaks of bubonic plague on Lagos Island, the Lagos Executive Development Board (LEDB) was set up in 1927 to improve housing and sanitation (Peil 1991).

TRANSITION TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE: 1939–1960

The war and post-war years saw great political shifts as well as changing attitudes to urbanisation in Lagos. Anticolonial and independence movements in Nigeria and in colonised nations in general forced Britain to grant self-rule to Nigeria in 1951, beginning a transition period towards Independence, which was finally attained in 1960 (Peil 1991). Many factors contributed to a dramatic increase in migration to Lagos, including a general shift away from agricultural occupations in Nigeria, the policy of employing ex-servicemen in the public sector after the war and the promotion of manufacturing (Mabogunje 1968: 255). Formal industrial estates in Apapa and Yaba and unplanned industrial estates outside the municipality in Mushin and Iganmu started to be constructed in 1948, attracting large numbers of workers to Lagos. The improvements to sanitation and the environment achieved in the previous period, including over 1000 acres of swamp that had been reclaimed since 1900 also contributed to the increase in natural population growth (Mabogunje 1968: 259). The LEDB was very active throughout the 1930s and 1950s, building more European Reserve Areas at Apapa, Ikeja and Ilupeju and undertaking slum clearance, including

in the centre of Lagos Island, as well as building a planned neighbourhood at Surulere to rehouse residents of inner Lagos Island (Marris 1962: 10; Mabogunje 1968: 259; Abiodun 1974; Peil 1991: 167; Towry-Coker 2011: 135).

Outside the municipality urbanisation continued to spread without much control, and plotting urbanism started to emerge as a dominant process in the 1950s. As an indication, the population of Mushin increased from around 36,500 in 1955 to 260,500 in 1963 (Barnes 1986). Between 1954 and 1967 the administrative split between Lagos Municipality and Lagos District further entrenched socioeconomic and spatial disparities. In the political wrangling of the independence era, some ethno-religious political groups feared that too much power would be centralised in Lagos (see Vaughan 2000). As a compromise, Lagos Municipality became Federal Territory and the rest of the state was subsumed under the government of the neighbouring Western Region where Ibadan was the capital (see Williams 1975). Lagos State was reunified by the first military government in 1967.

INDEPENDENCE, POPULATION AND OIL ECONOMY BOOM: 1960–1981

Shortly after Independence in 1960, there was a period of chaotic regime changes starting in 1966, with frequent military-led coups occurring until 1999 at an average of one regime change every four years. After the Nigerian Civil War from 1967 to 1970 Nigeria shifted to an oil-extractive economy and as global oil prices increased in 1973, the country experienced dramatic increases in revenue. This period also witnessed a huge increase in the population of Lagos. Although estimates vary, the trends are clear: 230,000–354,000 in 1950; 900,000–1,454,000 in 1963 and 2,572,000–4,390,000 in 1980 (Mabogunje 1968; Barnes 1986; Peil 1991). This exponential growth in the population occurred mostly on the mainland. Clear statistics are particularly hard to come by for areas outside Lagos Municipality, but again the trends are clear: from around 12 per cent of the population living on the mainland in 1950 to somewhere between 39–66 per cent by the early 1960s to about 68 per cent by 1975 (Olukoju 2013; Mabogunje 1968; Peil 1991). At this point, there was no longer a visible physical boundary between Lagos Municipality and mushrooming suburbs such as Mushin (Barnes 1986: 49)

The boom period was a time of intense, if sporadic, urban development and investment of public funds, with contradictory effects. The network of expressways built by the military governments, for instance, enabled rapid travel between the airport, military bases and Lagos Island but it was inadequate for the needs of the fast-growing population at the time (Fapohunda 1976; Olukoju 2004). There was a crucial lack of east-west connections on the mainland, causing crippling congestion and imposing the now infamous bottlenecks at its cloverleaf junctions (see diagrams in Koolhaas et al. 2000: 675). Further, only 66,000 planned houses are estimated to have been built between 1955 and 1979, at a time when the population increased fivefold (Towry-Coker 2011: 115).

The shape and character of Lagos Island changed dramatically during this period through extensive land reclamation to accommodate various government-led development projects, particularly the spectacular Marina skyline and the elevated ring road. FESTAC 77, the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, was hosted by Lagos in 1977 and was used by the government of the time as an opportunity to showcase independent Nigeria with an ambitious agenda of public works that included the FESTAC housing estate, the National Theatre and the development of the Nigerian part of the West African Coastal Highway towards Abidjan (see Chimurenga 2019), which involved the displacement of existing communities, with effects that are still felt today (Morka 2011; Sawyer 2019).

OIL CRISIS AND BUST PERIOD: 1981–1999

The boom period was followed by a devastating period of bust between 1981 and 1999, brought on by the global oil crisis of 1979. By this time Nigeria had become wholly reliant on oil: by 1980 oil provided 84 per cent of its annual government revenue. During the boom period this revenue had not been invested into building institutions or developing industry or agriculture, so Nigeria's economy was deeply vulnerable to changes in the oil sector. Both periods witnessed shocking extents of high-level corruption and graft (Othman 1984; Ekpo and Umoh 2012). Rural–urban migration continued to be strong during the bust period and was further amplified by a devastating famine in 1984. Nigeria adopted a structural adjustment programme from 1986 to 1993 and a period of guided deregulation from 1994 to 1998, both of which proved disastrous, severely worsening living conditions and increasing rates of poverty (Anyanwu 1992; Owusu 2003; Seibel 1994; Njoku 2001). Nigeria gained notoriety during the cruel regime of Sani Abacha (1993–1998) and Lagos became infamous as a dangerous city (Davis 2006). The severe crises of the 1980s and 1990s saw both infrastructure and the urban environment rapidly deteriorate, and any planning efforts that existed stalled or were abandoned. At the same time, the population of Lagos continued to explode from 2.5 million in 1980 to 7.3 million in 2000 (UN 2018),

which worsened the situation considerably. Population densities increased dramatically on the urbanising mainland (see Barnes, 1984; Peil 1991) and also on Lagos Island. As the prime business area, the Marina also suffered and central business functions became displaced to Victoria Island, which was rapidly transformed from being an elite residential area into a commercial centrality through the illegal conversion of residential property.

URBAN REFORM AGENDA: 1999 TO THE PRESENT

1999 began a period of unprecedented political stability for Lagos State, governed by a series of city governors committed to financial and urban reforms and the peaceful transition of power at the federal level. The first governor of the period, Bola Tinubu, radically increased the internally generated revenue of Lagos and won the political support of Lagos elites for urban development projects towards urban development (Gatt 2012; Kuris 2014; Cheeseman and de Gramont 2017). This stability also made it possible to attract international investments and loans, and to establish public-private partnerships to undertake infrastructural projects, creating the conditions for bypass urbanism to emerge. Tinubu's successor, Governor Babatunde Fashola, was then able to implement or initiate a wide variety of projects under the banner of the Lagos Megacity Project.

These projects first targeted Lagos's deteriorating urban environment and transportation. Waste management was overhauled, a beautification programme was implemented for road verges and small public spaces and a taskforce, Kick Against Indiscipline, was set up to control public behaviour. These measures produced relatively quick and very visible changes and began to generate new expectations and nascent public trust in the effectiveness of the State government, constituting a radical break from previous periods (Cheeseman and de Gramont 2017). Traditional markets on the mainland, such as Oshodi and Tejuoso, have also been a focus, with frequent and often contentious waves of clearances and remodelling (Komolafe 2016). The ban of *okada* and *molue* (motorcycle taxis and large buses) from all main roads, beginning in 2012, has had perhaps one of the biggest impacts on the character of Lagos's streets. The bans were, like many aspects of the Lagos Megacity Project, typical in terms of their punitive effect on the poor and financially struggling majority who used or made a living from them.

The implementation of a bus rapid transit (BRT) network was one of the centrepieces of Fashola's reforms. To implement it, he had to negotiate with the National Union of Transportation Workers about the semi-informal *danfo* (Lagos's ubiquitous yellow buses), run by the notorious *agberos* (transport fee collectors), and both forms of transport now coexist. However, danfos are still dominant (Agbiboa 2018, 2019). These developments have largely taken place in the same old central areas: Lagos and Victoria Islands, Ikoyi and the mainland up to Ikeja and a new avenue of rapid urbanisation along the Lekki-Epe peninsula. However, the neighbourhoods beyond these areas have remained relatively untouched. They have been able to access waste management and schemes such as street naming and numbering, but plotting still dominates, okada still ply the unpaved and flood-prone roads and it can still take hours to reach the BRT or main motor parks (transport exchanges). Ordinary neighbourhoods experience other forms of transformation: once ubiquitous face-me-I-face-you (multi-occupancy housing with lines of rooms facing one another across a corridor) housing is now only being built in the periphery and older units are being upgraded or replaced by self-contained flats (Sawyer 2016). The peripheries are still rapidly expanding in a pattern of 'road meets development', a common phrase used to describe how plots are developed before roads are laid, which is clearly visible in satellite imagery. Bypass urbanism, too, reinscribes the same old spatial and socioeconomic disparities and inequalities, though on an unprecedented scale. For instance, although the Lekki–Epe Expressway and Lekki–Ikoyi Bridge have been the first pieces of public infrastructure to be built in Lagos for decades, they have tolls and the bridge does not allow public transport to cross it.

The high-rises of Marina seen from the street markets of Isale Eko. Tinubu Square, 2012

PATTERNS OF URBANISATION

CENTRALITIES

To many, Isale Eko, or Lagos Island, *is* Lagos. To claim to be a (near-mythical) true Lagosian is to claim to come from the heart of Isale Eko. Originally an island, it is now separated from Ikoyi only by a canal that was built by Governor Macgregor in 1904 and the ring road built in the 1970s. Its congested urban fabric has retained its pull and power as the prime centrality of Lagos, and embodies the hustle mentality of Lagos. Lagos Island is a core centrality for trade and contains buildings with some of the highest property values in Lagos.

The core of Lagos Island is the dense tangle of streets where the city originated around the Oba's Palace, the seat of the traditional ruler of Lagos. Despite continual transformation, Lagos Island retains its commercial bustle, with goods mounted up outside the concrete facades and spilling onto the streets, as well as its special character as the cultural and historical heart of Lagos. Recently, traditional markets like Jankara, Oluwole and Sandgrouse are being razed to the ground by the state government in favour of modern markets (Komolafe 2016). Similarly, Agbole (family compounds) are being replaced by their owners by vertiginous multistorey blocks, producing ever-increasing densities and rents. Owners often involve developers for this, giving them fixed-term leases on some of the resulting flats in return (Jeliliet al. 2021). Land ownership is rarely, if ever, sold on Lagos Island, although there are many conflicts about it within family descendant groups (Marris 1962 is still relevant here).

Broad Street and Marina Street run along the south coast of Lagos Island and were developed as the colonial centre throughout the period from 1899 to 1939 (Baker 1974). Some of the old colonial institutional and civic buildings retain their functions to this day, such as the cathedral, the governor's mansion, the hospital, morgue and cricket ground. Others have been repurposed into arts and cultural spaces, such as the former prison that became Freedom Park. Neighbouring Onikan has also become a focus of cultural development. Lagos Island has some outstanding examples of tropical modernism (Immerwahr 2007), reflecting the brief optimism of the independence years. The formerly genteel promenade of Marina Street has been extended into the skyline of Marina's somewhat shabby high-rise towers and out into an enormous car and motor park that also houses the huge generators for the high rises.

Victoria Island, across Cowry Creek from Lagos Island, emerged as a commercial centrality when Marina became neglected in the 1980s. Originally planned as an elite residential area, it now features a curious mix of luxury housing, office buildings, hotels, restaurants, nightlife venues, luxury shops and embassies, all mainly located along roads with huge potholes. The new city quarter of Eko Atlantic, originally planned as a sea wall to protect Victoria Island from coastal erosion, will offer a massive extension to, or perhaps a replacement of, this elite centrality.

A new centrality has emerged as part of the bypass urbanism process along Admiralty Way next to Lekki Phase I. Like Victoria Island it was initially residential, but now has a competitive mix of restaurants, nightlife and shops that attract a fashionable young crowd. The EndSARS protests of October 2020 took place around the Lekki tollgate nearby and were motivated by the violent harassment of Nigeria's upwardly mobile youth by the police.

Ikeja, 20 km from Lagos Island, is the main centrality on the mainland and has a cluster of functions: it is the seat of Lagos State government, a locality for the prestigious if disreputable nightlife of Allen Avenue, the informal trade hub Computer Village, Palms shopping mall, expensive estates, event centres, industries, markets and transport hubs. Ikeja was put forward as an alternative capital to Lagos in the 1910s but emerged as a centrality from 1954 to 1967, when it was developed by the then Western Region government during the separation of Lagos into different administrations (Williams 1975). The construction of the airport from 1975 consolidated its prime location. Among these centralities, Lagos has an idiosyncratic

pattern of centrality that we call nodal centralities. These are the main motor parks and markets, often located on the key junctions around which Lagos pivots. These are the names you will hear shouted from passing danfo: CMS, Oshodi, Ojuelegba, Ajah. The main markets have a long precolonial history and are often known for their specialties (Mabogunje 1964).

LAGOS ELITE

The colonial logics of spatial segregation and garden city design are still very visible in the contrasting urban fabric of Lagos Island, neighbouring Ikoyi and the green buffer zone around Obalende and Awolowo Road, which still feature a polo ground, golf course, cemetery and the grounds of a private school. Ikoyi was the first European Reserve Area in Lagos and still bears signs of a quiet leafy grandeur with dusty, tree-lined streets, old colonial villas and enormous new mansions. It remains the prime elite residential area of Lagos and has been expanded through land reclamation with the additions of Park View, Osbourne and Banana Island estates. Even Lekki benefits from its prestige, being directly linked through the Lekki–Ikoyi Bridge. Ikoyi is now the scene of rapid transformation, which has been sparked off by new planning regulations that allow and encourage the construction of multistorey buildings. High-rise condominiums are now commonplace and a slew of shiny new office towers above the main Alfred Rewane Road are completely transforming the area. Only a few other estates that are not directly connected to Ikoyi can claim to be of the Lagos elite configuration: Apapa, built as a European Reserve Area near the port; Victoria Garden City as the first estate on the Lekki axis and Chevron, a company estate built for oil workers on the mainland.

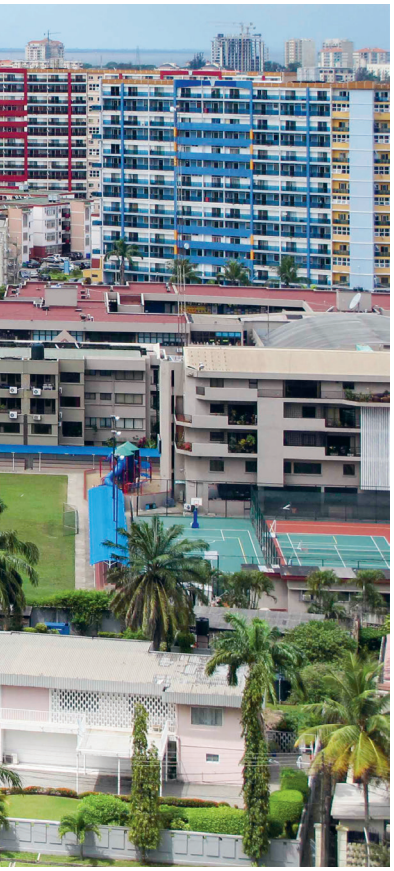
FORMALLY PLANNED AREAS

The urban configuration of Lagos's formally planned areas has an unusual pattern. It appears as sharply delimited spatial exceptions to the general urban form that constitutes vast areas of plotting urbanism. These two configurations are closely related and can be seen as representing the dual outcomes of uneven urban development, unequal investment and the socioeconomic and spatial inequalities that this has brought about. Formally planned areas are spaces that have had planned layouts and often relatively high levels of centralised infrastructure. They include colonial-era layout plans such as those of Yaba and Ebute Metta, institutional layouts such as the National Theatre or the University of Lagos, industrial areas, federal and state public housing estates and wealthy residential estates. Formally planned areas are often gated and guarded, indicating socioeconomic inequalities and the fears this brings about (Uduku 2010). They increase an area's desirability and have often acted as catalysts for plotting urbanism; the former providing employment, the latter cheap housing. For instance, when the planned development Surulere was constructed to rehouse residents from a Lagos Island slum clearance in the 1950s, neighbouring Itire began to be rapidly plotted (see Barnes 1986). A similar relationship exists between the European estate of Apapa and neighbouring plotted area Ajegunle (Peil 1991).

Many formally planned areas are residential estates. Some of these are government layouts, which means that the government prepares levels and parcellises the land, and then allocates plots—supposedly by lottery or on application. Lekki Phase 1 is an example of this. Private developers carry out much the same function for the private residential estates. The residents are then responsible for building their homes and for putting in place much of the infrastructure, as is the norm across Lagos (Sawyer 2014). In 2014, Governor Fashola introduced the heavily promoted Lagos HOMS (homeownership) scheme that set out to provide affordable housing estates. However this has provided only a few thousand homes that are affordable only to those who are already wealthy (Lagos Development Envision Lab; LAGDEL 2017). It is extremely hard to build new formally

planned areas on the mainland as the contradictions and confusions of plotting inhibit the consolidation of large plots. Even the government has struggled to find locations for Lagos HOMS developments, which have often involved the forced eviction of areas where popular urbanisation exists (e.g. Ijora Badia; see Sawyer 2019), or expensive land reclamation (e.g. Ilubirin estate). In order to build large-scale planned developments, developers and the government have turned to the Lekki-Epe peninsula, spurring the process of bypass urbanism.

Lagos elites playing on Cowry Creek. Seen from Victoria Island, 2013



Privatised former public housing estate and high end, low density fabric. Victoria Island, 2012

PLOTTING AND THE URBAN MAJORITY

Yet though each square inch was distinctive,
the city remained as general as an insult
shouted on a crowded street.
Abani 2004

Away from the main axes of development, the ordinary urban fabric of Lagos stretches as far as the eye can see—or an *okada* (motorcycle taxi) can carry you. It consists of what we have called plotting urbanism; referring to areas that are not planned but show a consistent pattern of rapid urbanisation, developing plot by plot and quickly transforming peripheries into dense residential areas (see Chapter 13). Plotted areas are overwhelmingly residential but there is a fine-grained heterogeneity that reflects the broad spectrum of people who live there: a majority that is neither rich nor poor. It stretches from once peripheral and now central areas like Mushin, Ajegunle, Agege and Bariga to recently and rapidly urbanised areas far from the main centralities like Ikotun and Ikorodu and then to currently peripheral expansion zones well beyond the Lagos State boundary and extending into neighbouring Ogun State. Plotting is constantly pushing the urban frontier to the north and west, generating new movements of people and investment as they navigate a rapacious land, property and rental market (Sawyer 2014).

Plotted areas are characterised by what are commonly called face-me-I-face-you buildings that are idiosyncratic to Lagos. These are rooming houses with shared services that accommodate very dense living, also known as face-me-I-slap-you because of all the drama they cause (Nairaland 2012). There is a mixture of housing types in plotted areas, but the face-me-I-face-you buildings are the backbone of the plotting process, absorbing the millions of people who have come to live in Lagos over the last few decades. Because most of these residents are tenants, the rooms available for rent suit a variety of budgets (Aluko 2012b). As these buildings can be built simply and cheaply and are often built in incremental stages, they offer an affordable route for plot owners to maximise returns on their plot. Plot owners and landlords are often established residents who have saved for around 10 years to buy a plot and build on it (Barnes 1986: 66–67; Ifesanya 2012; Sawyer 2016). Face-me-I-face-you buildings are now being phased out in central areas, as there is a growing preference among young couples for self-contained flats without shared services. This is fuelling peripheral urbanisation as those on the lowest incomes are squeezed out of the central areas and landlords use their profits to buy cheap plots further out and construct new buildings (Adedire 2018; Sawyer 2014).

Without enforced planning regulations there are few controls on development, and without state investment there is little central infrastructure beyond the provision of main roads and refuse collection. This often leads to a very degraded urban environment: there is little green or open space; flooding is common, streets are packed with parked cars and drains are blocked with refuse. As with the whole of Lagos, each plot has its own configuration of piecemeal infrastructure in terms of the provision of power, water, sanitation, drainage and security (Sawyer 2014). Landlords associations and community development associations tacitly organise this infrastructure on the level of the street and cluster of streets respectively, using the monthly dues collected from all residents. In this way, conditions can vary enormously from plot to plot, dependent on the wealth of the owners, landlord and tenants. While they are almost exclusively residential, plotting areas are full of life: each area has markets; there are spots for drinking, eating, watching football or films; face-me-I-face-you buildings often have stalls out front and hawkers are ubiquitous. Each plotted neighbourhood can be finely differentiated into gradients of low and high areas (Ifesanya 2012; Aluko 2012b). The high (higher quality) areas are generally indicated by their lower density, more gates and fewer face-me-I-face-you buildings, and are quieter and have less commercial activity than the low ones.

Plotting became the dominant process of urbanisation in Lagos as the result of a confluence of factors and a number of catalytic events. It emerged from the 1950s after the population in areas of Lagos State grew dramatically at a time of diminished state control over urban development and where customary land tenure is prevalent. Plotting became entrenched after three further catalysts which were the administrative split between Lagos Municipality and Lagos District between 1954 and 1967, political discontinuity between 1966 and 1999 and the economic and political crises of the 1980s and 1990s.

In colonial times development in Lagos focused almost entirely on Lagos Municipality (Baker 1974: 276) and there was weak government presence or control outside the municipality. Colonial authorities instead relied on customary authorities to govern this area, although never officially recognising this relationship and in fact attempting to curtail official customary powers using successive measures (see Akinleye 2009). Customary authorities have been consistently adaptive and responsive and have been able to maintain their political and social relevance (Vaughan 2000), thus establishing a kind of a territorial compromise leading to a dual land regime of customary and statutory systems (Akinleye 2009). While English land law introduced the commodification of land to Lagos it was never able to fully displace the existing customary system, which morphed and adapted in response (Smith 2008: 11). Notions of freehold and leasehold fit well with customary ideas of inalienable land ownership and the granting of usufructuary rights (Barnes 1986: 52; Marris 1962: 19), and landowners quickly exploited the notion of private title for their own personal gain (Baker 1974: 95). This had the immediate and irrevocable effect of creating confusion, ambiguity and contradiction over what rights titles actually conferred between the two tenure regimes. The Land Use Act introduced in Nigeria in 1978 attempted to resolve this confusion with a unified and simplified tenure system. However, it left room

Face-me-I-face-you housing and street stalls in plotted neighbourhood. Itire, 2014

for crucial ambiguities that continue to the present day to be navigated and exploited, allowing the operation of the dual land regime to persist (Smith 2008: 51, 52; Butler 2012: 2, 3; Aluko 2012a:120; City Plannetics 2005: 6, 8).

While you may be able to build without government consent, it is impossible to settle anywhere in Lagos without the explicit permission of the appropriate traditional landowning family and without secure it with a payment (Akinleye 2009). However, fraudulent activities and contestations are widespread. A Yoruba phrase for traditional landowners, *omo onile*, has come to be associated with fraud and illegal land grabbing (Akinleye 2009). It is estimated that 90 per cent of plots in plotted areas do not have a Certificate of Occupancy (CofO) or full formal tenure, (but all have a formalised agreement with the customary landowning family, even if it is often open to dispute. Unlike popular urbanisation, however, the government turns a blind eye to this most ordinary of transgressions. One probable reason for not tackling it is the sheer scale of plotting: if this form of housing were demolished or regularised, where would 70 per cent of Lagos's population go and who would rebuild it, and how?

POPULAR URBANISATION: THE INSECURE MARGINS

The popular settlement of Makoko, with its wooden structures built on stilts in Lagos Lagoon, has become one of the most iconic images of Lagos. Spectacular drone imagery and many references to it in journalistic pieces perpetuate misleading slum city myths about Lagos and the global South more generally. In reality, most people in Lagos live in heterogenous plotted areas under a wide variety of living conditions, and areas of popular urbanisation occupy only small pockets in the margins of the city. Makoko is not representative even of the popular urbanisation process as it has a unique size, form and history. It is by far the largest popular settlement, with several *baale* (local traditional leaders) of its own. Its roots lie in the culture of the Egun people, whose tradition of building houses on stilts is common along the West African coast (Adeyemi 2012) and whose language still can be heard in Makoko. Very few popular settlements are built on stilts outside Makoko, even though they are mostly located in marginal pockets in and around marshes and creeks.

Popular urbanisation shares many of the features of plotting: face-me-I-face-you housing is common, permission must be sought from local traditional authorities in order to settle, these plots have market prices and must be negotiated and paid for, buildings are constructed in incremental stages and constitute a significant investment to households; tenants are in the majority in this form of urbanisation. Moreover there is differentiation between and within areas and the infrastructure is piecemeal (see Chapter 12). However, two key differences between the two make it a distinct process in Lagos: material insecurity and tenure insecurity. Though on a sliding scale with cheaper and more expensive plotted areas, living conditions are much poorer in areas of popular organisation in general. Even though the plots are paid for, they are smaller than the standard plot sizes in plotted and formal areas, and are often not located on solid land but are situated on the margins of Lagos. People work to transform these undesirable pockets of marshes and creeks into habitable spaces by reclaiming the land themselves with sand and plastic waste infills. These materials are not free to the owner, but constitute a significant personal investment in their home (Sawyer 2019). These plot owners then build what they can afford, which is often face-me-I-face-you buildings or additional spare rooms, and provide the cheapest rents in Lagos (Aluko 2012b).

Popular urbanisation reveals the pernicious aspects of Lagos's dual land regime, showing how its power dynamics can be skewed against the poorest residents with very real human costs to them. The territorial compromise achieved through plotting is not found in popular urbanisation. The state does not give its tacit consent to this kind of urbanisation, but instead actively and often illegally (Amnesty International 2018) attempts to remove these dwellings. At the same time, customary authorities can choose to renege on tenure agreements, producing the fundamental insecurity of tenure that characterises popular urbanisation. Residents of these areas become vulnerable through their visibility to speculators or landowners wishing to capitalise on their newly reclaimed and often centrally located piece of land, and to a state offended by the untidy-looking buildings. Forced eviction and demolition are carried out both directly and indirectly by the state, with familiar hygienist and criminalising narratives (Agbola and Agunbiade 2009; Amnesty International 2013). Recent examples of forced eviction occurred in Otodo Gbame (in 2019), Tarkwa Bay (in 2020) and Monkey Island (in 2021). The threat and policy of eviction reinforces people's material insecurity, as they are unwilling to invest in what may be destroyed sooner or later. Ultimately, these skewed dynamics inhibit the consolidation that could transform these areas into liveable communities (see Chapter 12; see also Caldeira 2017).

A scar on the conscience of Lagos is the violent razing of the huge settlement of Maroko on the Lekki peninsula in 1990 (Soyinka 1999). This event clearly demonstrates the dynamics of the process of popular urbanisation. Maroko emerged in the 1950s when people were resettled from slum clearances on Lagos Island onto the customary land of the powerful Oniru family. Its population grew to 300,000. No area of popular urbanisation has since reached this scale. Once peripheral land,

Maroko came to occupy a prime location between the upmarket centrality of Victoria Island and the Lekki peninsula, which was identified as an avenue of development by both the government and the Oniru family in the 1980s, and who began agitating to demolish Maroko when the initial 25-year lease agreements between the resettled residents and the Oniru family came to an end. A coup against the Babangida military regime in 1990 provided the pretext for clearing these homes when Babangida falsely named Maroko as the source of the coup. A total of 63 people were accused of plotting the coup and executed and Maroko was brutally razed to the ground in July 1990. The residents received little to no compensation for their homes and few were rehoused (Agbola and Jinadu 1997). The destruction of Maroko cleared the way for the development of Lekki and the emergence of bypass urbanism as a new process of urbanisation in Lagos.

BYPASS URBANISM: NEW LAGOS?

The spatial structure of Lagos is currently being profoundly transformed by the formidable new process of bypass urbanism (see Chapter 14). Bypass urbanism is the accretion of different scales of development over a massive peripheral space, which is forcefully transforming the spatial structure of Lagos. This new process of rapid urbanisation hinges on the Lekki–Epe Expressway, stretching 50 km east from the first tollgate in Victoria Island through Lekki, Ajah, Ibeju Lekki and Epe to the mega-project of the Lekki free trade zone. This marshy and sandy peninsula is sandwiched between Lagos Lagoon and the Atlantic Ocean and is rapidly being filled with housing estates of all sizes and provenances (private, state and customary), excised communities resembling plotted areas, businesses, churches and mosques, markets and malls, private schools and private university campuses, factories and large-scale industries such as the new Dangote cement factory and the free trade zone. Eko Atlantic, the new city quarter for the elite being built on reclaimed land next to Victoria Island, is also a key part of this process.

The brutal clearance of Maroko in 1990 opened up the peninsula for development, but the conditions for bypass urbanism became established only after the return of democratic rule to Nigeria in 1999, bringing the long-term political stability needed to secure finance, investments and loans for infrastructural development and the establishment of an agenda of urban reform (see Cheeseman and de Gramont 2017; Sawyer et al. 2021). In the last 15 years the Lekki area has become a vibrant and prestigious place to live and socialise. Curving around Lekki Phase 1 estate, Admiralty Way has turned into a new upmarket centrality for Lagos. Lekki is a location for the very privileged, linked to the existing centrality of Victoria Island via the new expressway and to the elite area of Ikoyi via the new Lekkoyi bridge. However, apart from these toll roads there has been no further large-scale infrastructural development along the entire peninsula and, while several masterplans are in place, urbanisation has already outpaced planning (Lawanson and Agunbiade 2018). There is dense development up to Ajah and rapid infilling continues into Ibeju Lekki, particularly towards the Atlantic. Moreover, there is already heavy congestion along the expressway. There are currently few employment opportunities along the peninsula, creating a commuting funnel into the existing centres. Furthermore, the emerging communities and estates are accessible only from the expressway as no lateral road connections are being built, creating a disconnected and largely monofunctional residential fabric. With few planning controls, the new pattern has some features familiar to the rest of Lagos: the area suffers from flooding caused by land reclamation and from building over natural drainage lines (Adelekan 2010), together with congestion, ecological destruction, piecemeal infrastructural provision, inadequate public transport and poorly distributed employment centres.

Customary landowners are still easy to find, but a crucial distinguishing dynamic of the process is the possibility of a relatively clear and unambiguous regime of land and property titling. The entire peninsula was subject to a global acquisition by

Land reclamation and luxury towers under construction. Eko Atlantic, 2018

the military government in 1993 and, unlike previous government land acquisitions on the mainland, it has been much more effective in asserting control over overall land ownership (though not over development). After government acquisition of the peninsula, the numerous landowning families there have been able to apply to take back portions of their land into their ownership and control; a process known as excision or village excision (Oshodi 2019; LAGDEL 2020). Powerful families, such as the Oniru and Elegushi, own prime land in this area. In other areas of excision such as Awoyaya or Langbasa, less powerful families have parcellised and leased land in a way similar to the plotting process. The government has introduced development guides to try and control the urbanisation of these excised villages, but as extensive development has already occurred this is difficult. To build private estates, developers can apply for Global CofO straight from the government without the need to negotiate with omo onile, and subsequently transfer titles that are relatively free from ambiguity and contestation to residents. With the sheer volume of available land and clarity of root titling, bypass urbanism offers unprecedented opportunities to private developers, entrepreneurial traditional families and people wishing to build or own their own house.

While many people and developers are taking advantage of this new clarity, the current peripheries of the peninsula offer different yet familiar possibilities. Numerous land-buying and home-ownership schemes have sprung up, offering plots and properties in return for small deposits. These are often on virgin land and the plots are sold before there is even a layout. Developers often negotiate directly with landowners and do not necessarily seek a global CofO. How tenable this is, and how tolerant the government will be once development begins, is not yet clear. Unsurprisingly, many cases of fraud are emerging, as bogus developers run off with deposits or fail to come through on promised infrastructure or titling documents. In large-scale developments such as the Lekki free trade zone, the government has been accused of taking unjust dispossession of customary lands, offering inadequate compensation to landowners and taking advantage of the latter's isolation and lack of knowledge of their rights and the legal procedures open to them (Tagliarino et al. 2018).

Several large-scale projects are currently being built and planned and form a key part of this process. The Lekki free trade zone is a model mega-industrial city built in conjunction with Chinese developers (Lawanson and Agunbiade 2018). It will include a new airport, new deep sea port, new industrial and manufacturing zones, and residential developments and tourist facilities. Aliko Dangote, known as one of the richest men in Africa, is also constructing a highly anticipated new cement factory together with workers' housing. Both these developments spur on land speculation in the far eastern peripheries of Lagos State. Products from these developments will be transported via new transportation links to the rest of Nigeria, including a planned fourth mainland bridge. Entirely bypassing the existing city will have deep effects on the structure and function of the mainland.

At the other end of the Lekki peninsula, Eko Atlantic is planned to be a new and exclusive city quarter. Its enormous footprint (25 km^2) lies on land that has been reclaimed from the Atlantic Ocean and the first skyscrapers have been erected. Eko is the Yoruba name for Lagos, but it is often (conveniently) assumed to mean eco by foreigners. Eko Atlantic is to be entirely self-sufficient in terms of planning, construction, operation and services. Lagos State Government has been involved only to grant permission and give its rhetorical support. Despite the expected volume of 250,000 daily commuters to Eko Atlantic, it is not integrated into the existing city and it is hard to imagine the extra congestion it will incur on Victoria Island. Ironically Eko Atlantic was sold as a barrier to defend Victoria Island against coastal erosion, when in fact its effect is to deepen and destabilise channels around the islands and increase coastal erosion all the way up the Ibeju Lekki coast (Lukacs 2014; Mendelsohn 2018). An environmental report that predicted the effects has been ignored (Heinrich Böll Stiftung Nigeria 2014) and there is little oversight of its social and environmental impacts. Nevertheless, the

shining, Dubai-style towers and cooled walkways of Eko Atlantic are eagerly anticipated by investors and residents alike (Côté-Roy and Moser 2018).

It is hard to imagine a Lagos where Lagos Island is not the prime centrality. However, the sheer scale of bypass urbanism and the large-scale projects currently under construction suggest the future will be different in many possible ways. The free trade zone and Dangote's factories, combined with the fourth mainland bridge, will reorientate Lagos's urban structure as it becomes the prime avenue for trade. There are still large tracts of undeveloped land north of the lagoon between Ikorodu and Epe and east of the free trade zone, presenting opportunities for speculation and new population movements. Epe itself is already booming and developing and is well located to become another new centrality. Moreover, Lagos State is extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including rising sea levels and regional migration caused by climate change, which will very likely further impact on the shape and structure of Lagos in the coming decades.

ARRANGED NOT LIKE WE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT TO KNOW

The paradigmatic pattern of urbanisation in Lagos subverts much of what we have been taught about urban development. The urbanisation of Lagos has never been under control as such. Instead, planned development has been limited to defined areas while endogenous modes of urbanisation and governance have evolved and remain dominant. Urbanisation has been fuelled by dramatic and continuous population growth throughout turbulent periods of political and economic disruption. People have continued to be drawn to its magnetic centralities, throwing themselves into the 'hustle', finding space to live and work in plotting and popular areas while hoping to graduate to the Lagos elite. The tenacity of customary authorities and customary tenure throughout the colonial and postcolonial regimes has forged an obdurately dual land regime; a territorial compromise that is partially acknowledged in Nigeria's land laws but that operates mostly through tacit knowledge. In this way, plotting urbanisation became the ordinary way of things and it has rapidly urbanised the peripheries of Lagos since the 1950s so that it now stretches from the dense old neighbourhoods like Mushin to newly dense areas like Ikotun and into the far reaches of Lagos. Unlike in Mexico City and Istanbul, popular urbanisation has not been able to take hold as a dominant process in Lagos and occurs only in spatial margins, again subverting the assumption that Lagos is a slum city.

Popular urbanisation in Lagos is an expression of what happens when the state withdraws its tacit consent from the territorial compromise: areas are targeted for forced eviction and consolidation into plotting or formalisation is not possible. The newly emerging process of bypass urbanism sees a different configuration of the paradigmatic pattern writ large over a huge tract of undeveloped land. With more explicit and formalised tenure made possible by the state's global acquisition of the land, formally planned areas have flourished and the plot-by-plot parcellisation of customary land has been confined to excised villages. Even so, urbanisation is still not under control, as it outpaces planning rules and infrastructural development and ordinary, non-state modes of urban governance remain dominant. As the paradigmatic pattern continues to be followed, the new large-scale planned developments such as the free trade zone and Eko Atlantic will very likely lead to an expansion of plotting in the far eastern and north-eastern peripheries. The entire urban region, as well as its vital centralities, will undergo a reconfiguration as Lagos urbanises on a new scale and with new structures.