

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Industrialisation, Access to Land Transition and Conflict in Obajana, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

In the erstwhile rural community of Obajana, Kogi State, Nigeria, the emergence of industries and urban expansion exerted impacts on the dominant communal land-use system. These changes or transition manifested as diminished access to land for locals, farmland loss, reduced farm holding and loss of livelihoods, leading to the evolution of multidimensional conflicts of various intensity levels. Given this context, this study examined the nature of land use prior to industrial establishment, assessing the link between industrial expansion and access to farmland, the various levels of manifestations of conflict propelled by the loss of access to land, and the mechanisms for the resolution of land conflicts. The study was non-experimental and adopted a qualitative approach involving a combination of focus group discussions (FGD), key informant interviews (KII) and life story interviews (LSI) across sections of the society. The respondents were drawn from community leaders, the general population, the youth, and ethnic associations. The findings indicated that industrial expansion affected access to farmland, pulled in-migration and stimulated conflicts at three levels: intra-community, intercommunity and inter-group. The mode of conflict resolution encompassed traditional/informal and formal mechanisms, depending on the level of conflict. Given the erosion of access to communally managed land, it is argued that a land policy/law needs to evolve for managing and distributing land in the emerging land economy and land market in the new urban system.

Keywords: Communal, Conflict, Land, Migrants, Urbanisation

1.0 Introduction

Africa, especially south of the Sahara, is plagued by unprecedented levels of conflicts, which are attributed majorly to ineffective city governance, high levels of rural-urban migration flows and population pressure in cities across the continent (Henderson, 2002; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2016; Ostby, 2016). In particular, Ostby (2016:505) argued that the large presence of migrants amidst infrastructural deficit, inequality and lack of access to resources, employment opportunities and

“systematic deprivation of rural-urban migrants (relative to non-migrants) is positively associated with lethal urban disorder.” Other studies, e.g., Spilker et al. (2020), identify the attitudes of urban residents towards migrants as a veritable source of conflict in cities, noting the possibility of urban population pressure crystalizing into political violence through the radicalization of a huge population of desperate people.

While the argument linking “systematic deprivation of rural-urban migrants” (Ostby, 2016:505) to conflicts in cities may hold true for everyday

conflicts in primate or first-tier cities, conflict researchers may need to look elsewhere for the root causes of conflicts in second- and third-tier cities, given that the drivers of conflict at different city levels are likely to differ. For instance, most first-tier or primate cities are long established industrial and commercial centres and often serve as the hub of economic activities; in many cases, such cities are usually the countries' political capitals, where migrants tend to constitute important actors in everyday conflicts as they struggle to survive and compete for access to opportunities provided by urban cosmopolitanism. As the study by Ostby (2016:497) shows, this is the case with cities such as Lagos, Kampala, Addis Ababa, Yaoude, Nairobi, Johannesburg, Niamey, and Dakar, etc., in sub-Saharan Africa, and Karachi, Islamabad, New Delhi, Bangkok, Jakarta, and Manila, etc., in Asia, all of which either commercial or political capitals. For other categories of cities that are changing from rural to urban due to recent exposure to the forces of industrialization and urbanization, here intra- and inter-community conflicts are predominant, conflict researchers must look outside conflict dynamics in primate cities for clues on the root causes of conflicts.

Understanding how the dynamics of conflicts vary across different categories of cities is essential for conceptual formulation as well as for generating context-specific peace building and conflict management mechanisms. Even within a particular type of city, all conflicts are not necessarily explained by the same set of factors (Buhaug & Urdal, 2013; Urdal & Hoelscher, 2009). The implication of this is that most debates on urban peace building and conflict management policies arising from evidence from studies in first-tier cities, as well as the analysis of the impacts of in-migrants on urban violence and conflict, often cast policy on migrants' integration as important strategies. However, such strategies will be of only little effect in contexts where conflicts are the result of weakening intra- and inter-communal relations induced by diminishing access to agricultural/farmland occasioned by industrial penetration.

2.0 Dynamics of Farmland Holding in Rural Sub-Saharan Africa: Some Theoretical Insights

While land governance and tenure systems may vary across societies in rural Africa (Boone, 2015),

access to land tends to be largely a matter within the realm of local customary practices (Chipato et al., 2020; Makanyisa et al., 2012). Ownership of land is largely communal, with land management and allocation being customarily situated in the custody of traditional leaders and local chiefs. Although autochthonous traces traditionally grant direct access to land, access to land for non-natives and migrants is free of encumbrances as long as local procedures are respected and followed. To a large extent, the precolonial African land economy could be described as surplus, although in some areas certain taboos that had evolved over the years may exist to conserve some cultural heritage in relation to the people's history and physical environment (Boone, 2015). For instance, among the precolonial Igbo of present-day eastern Nigeria, a certain day (the Eke market day) in their four-day week system, is set aside to honour the land deity (*Nmo ala*); thus, it is a taboo for any farmer to go to farm on such a day.

As to the factors determining the landholding size to which rural community members can have access, the literature on rural differentiation and the agrarian economy reveals two strands of theories from earlier debates on rural differentiation and the dynamics of landholding size. These are the Marxists and the Neo-Populist perspectives, generally referring to the ideas of Vladimir Lenin and Alexander Chayanov on rural differentiation and the agrarian economy (Bernstein, 2009; Moreda, 2023). The Marxists, relying on the idea of Lenin (1967), argued that peasants can be differentiated on the basis of income, ownership of means of production (in this case, land) and whether they rely on agricultural wage labour. The Neo-Populist, represented by the idea of Chayanov (1966), conceptualized rural social differentiation on the basis of demographic life cycle (i.e., demographic differentiation). Chayanov argued that rural households' farmland holding size depends on the demographics of households defined or measured in terms of the number of household members who provide the labour for farm production, on the one hand, and those members who are dependent consumers (e.g., the sick, children and elderly) of the household, on the other hand. Accordingly, the decision on the size of farmland holding due to any household is based on labour versus consumer balance. This is measured

by the ratio of household members who are working to all members (working and non-working). Consequently, a family's or household's farmland holding can change over time in response to the household's demographic changes (i.e., the size of the family and the number of available family members in the categories of producers and consumers).

On the whole, the idea advanced by Lenin (1967) provided important insights into rural differentiation akin to social stratification or class categories in rural areas, drawn from the experiences of rural Russian in his time. However, there might be a challenge with the idea in relation to many parts of rural areas in Africa where income is not a decisive factor in access to land, land use and landholding size. In most parts of sub-Saharan Africa, land is communally owned. Where industrial penetration, demographic pressure and intergenerational processes have not intensified competition over available agricultural land, access to land and landholding size are determined more by the question of indigenes versus settlers'/migrants' identities and household size.

In sum, the establishment of an industrial layout in a hitherto rural setting comes with far-reaching consequences within the community (Magsi et al., 2017; Mugizi & Matsumoto, 2021). Beyond the negative impacts of industrial activities, such as air/environmental pollution and urbanization (Andersen, 2017), the ensuing pressure on land from industrial expansion, as well as the change in the use of land from subsistence agriculture to industrial/commercial use, eroded peoples' access to land. Furthermore, the consequent retrieval of farmlands from locals, alongside the dramatic disappearance of previously existing access to communal land under the communal land-tenure system, can arouse history, land-ownership consciousness and claims and counterclaims over land rights at the expense communal peace. With land-use rights moving in favour of privatization and increasing individualization, competition with implications for conflicts is likely to ensue (Andre & Platteau, 1998). This veritable pathway to conflict in emerging urban areas is often blurred and less remembered in the industrialization-urbanization-conflict nexus debates.

3.0 Research Methods

The Research Area

The study was conducted within the Obajana-Lokoja axis of Kogi State, Nigeria. One of Nigeria's 36 states, Kogi is located in the country's north central geopolitical configuration. Situated at the confluence of River Benue and River Niger, Kogi is bordered by ten other states in the Nigerian federation. Its capital, Lokoja, was a former slave port and the location of The Iron of Liberty, where former captured slaves in Nigeria and other neighbouring countries were brought to pass through The Iron of Liberty before being proclaimed free circa 1860. The state is also the location of the first educational institution in the country's north – an institution established in 1865. These historical monuments in the location constituted important pull factors for earlier generations of migrants who were transported to the state for either the symbolic freedom that came through their encounter with The Iron of Liberty or school attendance. This gives the location a form of mixed migration profile consisting of local and international long-term migrants.

Research Design

The study was essentially qualitative and adopted a combination of data collection methods in qualitative studies, such as focus group discussions (FGD), key informant interviews (KII) and life story interviews (LSI), to understand people's perceptions of their lives. Two interview guides were designed. One was for the FGD sessions and the other was for the KII and life story interviews. The major theme that guided the interview questions was the role of land on conflicts in Obajana. Participants were prompted to talk about land management and access to land in Obajana before and after the establishment of Dangote Cement Company. They were asked to narrate the changes that were experienced on land access/rights and to explain how the changes were related to conflicts. On the whole, four FGDs, 10 KIIs and 26 LSIs were conducted across four areas within the study location.

Being a qualitative study, the participants were selected through the purposive and snowballing sampling techniques, which helped to identify and include stakeholders with relevant experience and people in the community who have knowledge of

the history of the community. Community entry was facilitated through a community leader and a youth leader. Five research assistants (RAs) were recruited for data collection. The RAs, comprising two females and three males who were indigenes of the community and understood the language and culture of the area, were graduates of social sciences and the humanities. They were trained for three days before the commencement of the actual fieldwork, which was supervised by three researchers who are among the authors of this article.

All interviews were audio-recorded following permission by the research participants. Verbal consent was obtained in some cases, while in other cases the participants signed a consent form that was clear and unambiguous. Throughout the data collection process, ethical principles such as voluntary participation and non-deception were upheld. After the data collection exercises, the recorded data was transcribed and analysed with the aid of version 12 of the NVivo software. Furthermore, a one-day data validation workshop was held to facilitate co-creation of knowledge after data analysis. The workshop involved some selected individuals who participated in the research and key stakeholders such as the representative of NGOs working in the area of peace and government representatives.

4.0 Results

The nature of land use prior to industrial establishment in Obajana

Before the emergence of cement production in Obajana, the location was a quiet rural settlement and agriculture was the predominant occupation of the inhabitants. Land was a communal asset and community members had rights to farmland according to their needs. Whether peoples' relationship and place in the community was through descent or migration into the area, access to land was not disputed. This fact was echoed by a male participant during an FGD session with community leaders. According to them, "About land, we give to families and also those who are ready to build, we give. We don't sell land, and you can confirm that the people of Obajana do not sell land." None of the participants in the FGD session contradicted the revelation by the participant, who looked round the group and asked if there were any

contrary opinions after asserting, "We don't sell land." Almost all the participants were in agreement with his position, with some declaring their support verbally and others through nodding of the head. The participant then urged the researchers to confirm from other people if they wanted. Thus, the idea that land was communally managed and distributed to any person in need of it was not in doubt. It was noted that the Kabiyesi, i.e., the village head, was at the top of the decision-making hierarchy.

Industrialization, urbanization and reduced access to farmland and conflict

The most significant impact of the coming of industry on the livelihoods of the people of Obajana was reduced access to farmland for the inhabitants. This had a telling impact because across societies in sub-Saharan Africa, with specific reference to Nigeria, the majority of rural households depend on agriculture as their main source of livelihood; as such, most people are involved in the productive use of land whether as farmers or as farm wage labourers (Morenda, 2023; Mugizi & Matsumoto, 2020; Mugizi & Matsumoto, 2021). Land-use access is vital to the survival of rural households, with farmland holdings influencing many aspects of social life. For instance, social status and other forms of social prestige are largely dependent upon access to land and farmland size holding for their relevance. Despite the significance of land in the livelihoods of the people of Obajana/Lokoja, as in many SSA communities, many were displaced from their farmland as a result of the establishment of Dangote Cement Company in Obajana. This process affected access to land and farmland size holding, giving impetus to new faces of conflicts at the micro, meso (intra- and inter-community) and macro (societal/group) levels.

Intra-Community Level: Reduction in access to land/farmland holding and conflict

The establishment of a cement industry and the commencement of mining activities in Obajana circa 2013 brought fundamental changes in the socioeconomic and demographic makeup of Obajana community. These changes were more pronounced in the peoples' relation to land. As is the case in many rural areas across sub-Saharan Africa, land was a defining criterion of rural

existence in Obajana. Access to land not only determined peoples' access to livelihoods, as well as its quality, but also defined their place in society (Morenda, 2023; Mugizi & Matsumoto, 2021). The impact of industrial expansion obstructed the existing communal usufruct and weakened existing social bonds across different levels of community life. These changes have presented new grounds and pathways to conflicts across different levels of societal life, the first of which is at the intra-community level.

At the intra-community level, the appropriation of massive land for cement production in Obajana shattered the idea of a "land-surplus economy" for all in the community, with disputes over land ownership starting to erupt among people who were related through the kinship and clan system. The literature confirms that when pressure on land increases for whatever reason (e.g., population growth, urbanization, industrial appropriation of land or commercialization of agriculture), the tendency is for indigenous land systems to move towards increasing commodification and individualized patterns of land tenure (Andre & Platteau, 1998). The massive industrial expansion led to a dramatic change in the value of land and eroded the previously existing access to farmland. As land assumed some form of commodification, access to it became, on the one hand, strongly intertwined with the history of inheritance and genealogy, and on the other hand, it became largely a function of economic ability. This meant that those affected had to move outside Obajana or turn towards alternative means of livelihood. This resulted in farmland fragmentation, despite the evidence in the literature that the practice is detrimental to effective and productive farming (Gatterer et al., 2024).

However, the association of reduced access to land with conflict at the intra-community level relates to exclusion in the payment and management of compensation to landowners. In the Nigerian legal system, the existing legislation on land governance since 1978 is the Land Use Act, which vests all land in each state of the federation on the state government, while the mineral deposits and other natural resources on any land across the federation are deemed to belong to the federation and managed

by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) on behalf of the federation (FGN, 1978; Otubu, 2018).

Consequently, the fees for the land acquired were paid to the State Government, with the Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) issued to the acquiring company. Compensations were paid to displaced farmers but only for the crops on the land at the time of the acquisition, excluding the labour costs that had been invested in the farmland. The method of compensation led to two problems. First, many who received compensation complained that what they received was grossly inadequate. Thus, a major aftermath of the industrialization process in Obajana was the transformation of the value of land. Land became a commodity that only those with the economic wherewithal could afford in communities not affected by the emergent industrial expansion, thus closing the prospect of accessing land through community allocation.

Thus, many who had depended on farmlands for their livelihoods over the years had to look for alternative sources of livelihood in the rural non-farm economy and engaged in farm-based wage labour. In addition, the fear and rumour of further industrial expansion, as well as the associated appropriation, created panic that led to a sudden rise in land speculators, land grabbers and unregulated sale of available lands to any willing buyer. Some of the lands were later resold to migrants and developers as the process of urbanization intensified and consolidated. Thus, the rise of land grabbers and the unregulated sale of family-related lands provoked conflict at the intra-communal level. Relating how the problem of land started in their family line, a participant explained thus:

Actually, we were not having any problem before Dangote brought his company. They took most of the lands and we heard that they were going to expand the company. So many people started to sell any part of their land that had not been taken. In fact, people were selling lands that were not tied to their family at any prices because was better to sell it and get something no matter how small than for the company to collect it. We were told that they would pay compensation, but not everybody was paid.

Only those who had crops on their land were paid. They said they could only pay for the crops and not the land because land belonged to the

government. Even what was paid for the crops was too small. So, our family head sold our remaining land. The agreement was that all the family members would share the money but he refused to bring out the money, claiming that he was not paid. That was what led to our problem. (Male/LSI)

The second dimension to conflict at the intra-community level involved the mode of organization and distribution of compensations and access to employment opportunities in the emerging industrial occupation. The common assumption was that whatever was to be paid as compensation for the lost crops on the farmlands, in the aftermath of the industrial land acquisition, would be paid directly to individuals who had lost their crops. Similarly, many were promised employment in the new industrial organization at every stage of its operations. Interestingly, there were contrasting claims about the payment of compensation, with a small section of the participants maintaining that compensations were never paid while others (a significant number of them) countered that compensation was paid through their representatives, only that in most cases the representatives failed to release the compensation to them. In general, there was a convergence of data across the various interview sessions indicating that compensations were paid, although reports suggest that the compensations were inadequate. The angle on the mode of compensation that produced conflicts at the intra-community level, as our survey data showed, was the politicization of the process and its hijack by family and clan heads/representatives posing as intermediaries. This point was emphasized by participants during an FGD session:

We were not given compensation as promised. The money collected by our different leaders, some did not bring [it] out and claimed there that they did not receive any money. But the company said they paid through our various representatives, but they refused to bring it out. (Male/FGD)

Similar experiences were recorded on the question of employment. It was reported that the representatives of the different communities were presenting the names of their own immediate family members and friends. Consequently some people with no immediate familial tie to the representatives

had little or no chance of being considered for employment.

Inter-Community Level: The Status of Communities in the Industrial Processes and Conflict

Whereas some forms of traditional and legislative regulations existed to guide the dispensation of compensation to those who had been dispossessed and displaced from their lands, there was no framework for determining which community (or communities) should receive more compensation on the basis of their community's role in the cement production processes. Before the coming of Dangote Industry to Obajana, the Oyor and Obajana were neighbouring communities living harmoniously. But the emergence of the cement industry and the associated appropriation of land and compensation brought to the fore the question of which community that should be deemed more important in the industrial production process as a basis to determine the compensation it should receive. Is it where the factory is located or where the natural resources are located? The Oyor community is where the mines are found, whereas the cement factory is located in Obajana. The compensational arrangement adopted by the company favoured the factory's location rather than the location of the mines. The differential arising from this (i.e., the valuation of the manufacturing site over the site of the mineral deposit) has been at the centre of constant inter-community schisms and tensions between the Oyor and Obajana communities since the coming of Dangote Cement Company to Obajana.

Furthermore, there is the lingering question of the role that the local chieftaincy hierarchy should play in the scheme of things. Does the status of the chief at the apex of each constituent community influence what a community should receive as compensation? This factor was revealed in one of the FGD sessions. According to a male respondent:

The chief of Obajana is a second-class chief, [while] the chief of Oyor is a third-class chief. They [the two chiefs] are not equal and they cannot be treated equally. But the Oyor believe that the resources are gotten from their land. Sometimes, this leads to problems between the two communities (Male/FGD/Zariagi community).

Although the Oyor constantly challenge the unequal compensation and continue to argue for a change in the status quo because of the strategic importance of the mines deposit in the production process, Obajana has continued to rely on the hierarchy of their chief to justify their level of compensation and the MOU between the community and the company. Revelation from an FGD session with Dangote Cement Company's staff suggests that the company compensates only the communities captured in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and the SIA (Social Impact Assessment) report, which is in favour of Obajana.

Inter-Ethnic Level: Conflict between migrants and host communities

Beyond the conflict dynamics among the indigenous communities in and around Obajana, access to land and its resources is also a source of conflict between migrant communities and the host community. There are two levels to this scenario: (i) contentions over access to land between migrants and host community members and (ii) sentiments of exclusion over access to employment in the emergent modern industrial and factory system, as opposed to the preexisting agricultural labour and farm work.

With respect to contention between migrants and their host communities, the industrialization of Obajana following the establishment of Dangote Cement Company attracted the influx of migrants, notably from the north of Nigeria. The literature shows that many migrants tend to be unable to find unemployment and lack the means to afford accommodation at first, a situation that forces them to move to the urban fringes (Brennan, 1999; Ostby, 2016). This was the case in Obajana. Many migrants from northern Nigeria, rather than move to the peripheries for lack of money to get accommodations, decided to build shanties on people's land without permission. Attempts by such landowners to access their land sometimes resulted in conflict as the migrants pushed back and asserted themselves. According to a female participant:

The Hausa people came and built huts on a person's land and say, "Ai Dangote ya siya ko ina" (meaning "Dangote has bought Obajana"). They built their own mosque and appointed their own leader and behaved as if they were the owners of Obajana (FGD/Female/Leader).

Studies have also shown that the establishment of an industry in a rural area, although it diminishes access to land and reduces the size of farmland holding for a segment of rural landholders and peasant agriculturists (Al Siddiq et al., 2018; Moreda, 2023), opens new employment opportunities and absorbs the rural labour force (Elfverson et al., 2022). Consequently, it was envisaged by Obajana indigenes that a substantial segment of their working-age population would be absorbed by the company and recruited into the new occupational patterns, with the associated change in status from peasant farming to modern employment. On the contrary, there were widespread sentiments and feelings of exclusion from the employment opportunities being generated by the cement company. With regard to employment, there were local tales suggesting that Obajana indigenes were discriminated against in favour of northern migrants. This seeming lack of employment opportunity was justified by the company with the argument that many indigenes who presented themselves for employment lacked the requisite skills and qualifications needed by the company. This was captured as follows during an FGD session with a representative of the company:

The community sends us names to employ, but many of them don't have the skills. Those who have the skills are employed during recruitment. But many just want their children to be employed because they are indigenes, but Dangote is a business enterprise and would not employ people who would not increase the company's profitability (FGD/Dangote Cement staff/Obajana).

However, the above view appears to contradict the data collected on the question of indigene employment. During an FGD session with Obajana youths, many of the participants maintained that they faced discrimination on the issue of employment. In the words of one of them:

The company does not like to employ our people, even for jobs that we can do. Our people can work as drivers but they prefer to use people from the north. They use their trucks to pack people from the north to come and work in Dangote as drivers, factory workers and labourers, while our people are here and would not be employed. We can work as labourers, drivers and even cleaners, but they bring people from the north, including women, to do all these jobs. (FGD/Male/Obajana youth).

The report shows that the factory labour force comprised mainly by northerners, rather than the inhabitants or indigenes of the community where the company is located. This unmet expectation has been one of the sources of tension in Obajana. Similar responses were made by participants in some KIIs and life history sessions. The field findings confirmed the anecdotal claim that Obajana indigenes face discrimination regarding employment, compared to northern migrants. Thus, the factory labour force is largely composed of people from other areas.

Mechanisms of Land Conflict Resolution

As noted earlier, in the pre-cement industry era in Obajana, land was owned communally and allocated through traditional mechanisms, with traditional chiefs as custodians. The collective ownership and the abundance of land created little or no room for land conflicts. However, the diminished access to land and land rights, occasioned by the penetration of Dangote Cement and urban expansion, has led to inter-group tensions, claims and counterclaims over land ownership within and between communities. This development has led to unprecedented conflict levels that destabilized the community, hence the imperative of restoring order. Given the absence of pre-existing social structures for land conflict resolution that had popular and communal appeal, alongside the vacuum of formal governance, stakeholders resorted to certain local mechanisms of conflict resolution.

Thus, unlike other forms of conflicts reported in the study location (e.g., inter-ethnic conflicts), land conflicts were resolved through the mechanisms of traditional heads and elders' fora. This could be gleaned from the revelation of a KII participant in response to a question on the resolution of conflict between members of the same community or between two different settlements in the community. The participant noted thus:

There was a particular incident that came up over ownership of a place that was supposed to bring problem between the Oworos and the Ebiras; and the Ebiras, either from Okene or Adavi, I can't remember, claimed the land covering that place to a large extent is Ebiraland. And the Oworos said no, this can't be your land. The government at that level set up a panel; so, that was a kind of

intervention that the state government did. I know all this because I was following my dad to defend the Oworo side of the bargain, while other people came to also defend the Ebira side.

But one good thing about what resolved it amicably was that my dad put to them, "This is a request from the Ohinoyi of Ebiraland asking for him to do some kind of mining activities in that area." Ohinoyi of Ebiraland is the head of Ebira people. Since that place belongs to the Ebira people, why will the Ohinoyi of Ebiraland now write to the Oworos to make such a request if truly they own that place. I think that point, to a large extent, was what settled the matter (KII/Male/Community Leader).

While these mechanisms have their limitations, they seem to be quite instrumental in mitigating conflicts at the community levels. There are indications that, when these mechanisms are unable to resolve land conflicts, formal mechanisms of the state, such as the state's judicial system, i.e., the law court, become the only resort.

5.0 Discussion of Findings

No doubt, access to land and land rights in Obajana have changed in response to the industrial development and urban expansion occasioned by the establishment of Dangote Cement Company and the consequent high level of land commodification. These changes have impacted greatly on the livelihoods of the surrounding local communities, since in much of sub-Saharan Africa, most rural dwellers rely on land cultivation and agriculture to survive (Morenda, 2023; Mugizi & Matsumoto, 2021). Part of the social consequences of these changes was the weakening of pre-existing social/communal bonds across the different levels of the society – the intra-community (micro) level, the inter-community (meso) level and the macro level. The rupturing of these bonds produced grounds and pathways that propagated conflicts provoked essentially by contentions and claims over access to land.

At the intra-community level, the industrial appropriation of commonly owned land pushed the land ownership system towards an individualized ownership system. Family and kin members who, until the advent of the cement industry, had

common claims to land began to experience conflicts resulting from claims and counterclaims to land ownership. As scarcity of land intensified, those with the economic ability resorted to obtaining land outside their community, while many turned to fragmentation of farmland, as it became difficult to access adequate farmland holdings concentrated in any one location. This is notwithstanding the evidence that farmland fragmentation negatively affects productivity (Gatterer et al., 2024).

Another area of concern at the intra-community level, in relation to conflict generation, is the crisis of compensation. Unfair distribution of compensation to former land users without adequate compensation was found to be conflict-producing. Legislation on land governance in Nigeria confers the ownership of all land within the state in the hands of the state's symbol of governance, that is, the state governor, while all mineral deposits across the country are owned by the central government. Of course, this is only part of the expressions of the power of domination, exploitation and oppression that modern states and government institutions tend to represent, wherein state governors, the federal government and political power wielders (and to a limited extent, traditional rulers) use their positions to appropriate public land in sub-Saharan Africa (Andre & Platteau, 1998; Moreda, 2023). In all events, compensations in form of fees were paid to displaced farmers in Obajana through agents who represented the groups of affected people.

However, the results of this study show that compensations covered only the crops on the land at the time of the acquisition/dispossession, as every other thing that went into farmland cultivation was excluded, such as cost of labour and equipment/agricultural implements, as well as other applications to land to boost farm produce, e.g., fertilizers. Consequently, it is clear that the compensations offered were inadequate. Moreover, many potential recipients of compensation were denied their due by their representatives. This factor was a major source of intra-community conflicts. Although the issue of inadequate compensation for the community was explained with reference to the contents of the existing MUO between community leaders and the cement company, earlier studies in Nigeria suggest that compensations have scarcely

been paid to those displaced by the government from their communities and farmlands (Lawanson & Agunbiade, 2018).

Change in access to land was also at the root of inter-community conflicts, but at a greater scale and with the issue relating to arguments over which location should take pre-eminence between the mines and the factory and what role should be played by chieftaincy hierarchies in the determination of royalty and compensations. For instance, there has been a disagreement between the Oyor and Obajana communities in this regard. Oyor is the host community for the mines, which hold the minerals used for cement production, while Obajana hosts the factory. As such, there is the question of which community should receive higher compensation between the mine location and the factory location. The study found this to be a major important source of conflict between the two communities.

Furthermore, exclusion from employment also surfaced as a veritable source of conflict with respect to inter-group issues. The connection of this source of conflicts to change in access to land or land rights transitions is to be understood from the expectation (and lack of fulfillment of that expectation) by those displaced from their sources of livelihood that the new industrial operation would offer them employment opportunities. As the literature shows, the entry of an industry into a rural area has been associated with provision of employment opportunities that would absorb the rural labour force and halt the trend of rural-urban migration (Elfvorsson et al., 2022), notwithstanding its association with diminishing access to land for a segment of rural landholders and peasant agriculturists (Al Siddiq et al., 2018; Moreda, 2023). However, this expectation was not realised because only few members of the host community with the "requisite" skills were employed by the company, compared to migrants who shared the same ethnic identity with the company's head and who secured employment in the company regardless of their skills level. This partial exclusion from employment by the company, along with the sentiment it aroused, was found to be a regular source of anger that sometimes erupted into violence directed by host community members

against the human and non-material symbols associated with the company.

It is equally important to address the question of conflict resolution mechanisms. For a community without a robust pre-existing mechanism for conflict resolution, there was a need to create a system to contend with the growing level of conflicts emanating from the ongoing socio-structural changes that are reshaping access to land in the locality. Thus, land conflicts were managed through the instrumentality of local mechanisms that involved traditional heads and elders' fora, as well as associations of youths, hunters and women, in addition to intergroup associations. These fora meet periodically to settle disagreements over land within and between groups. One of the limitations of these fora is that sometimes their decisions may not be binding. In such circumstances, the inevitable option is the state's institution of conflict resolution, i.e., the law court.

6.0 Conclusion and Policy Implications

The dynamics of land-related conflicts in many sub-Saharan African second-tier cities remains under-researched, hence often poorly understood. Most research providing insights on land-related conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa come from studies in either primate or third-tier cities. Also, they may not be related to land-rights transition. This study explored how the introduction of industries in a hitherto rural community affects communal processes and the structure of access to land, as well as the associated consequence of intra- and inter-group relations and conflicts in Obajana, Nigeria. Prior to the development of cement production in Obajana, the community was a rural settlement that practised communal ownership of land in a context where agriculture was the main means of livelihood. The dynamics changed, however, in response to industrial development of the area and the ensuing commodification of land. In particular, access to land and land rights were drastically affected, with the existing forms of property and land relations being altered in favour of private appropriation of land. These alterations, in turn, provoked the emergence of inter-group conflicts.

At the intra-community level, an important source of conflict was the denial of compensation to many

dispossessed or displaced indigenes. Regarding the level of compensation and royalty to be given, there was also the issue of how to determine which should take precedence between the location of natural resources (in this case, the mines) and the location of the factory. It is worth noting that this issue was a major source of conflict at the inter-community level.

Clearly, there are important policy implications for these findings. For instance, the governance of distribution of compensation to displaced people needs to be guided by rules that favour direct disbursement of benefits to affected individuals, rather than through intermediaries who often exclude some people based on their own personal interests. Such measures will help to check the practice of personalizing common benefits.

Furthermore, the disagreement between Oyor and Obajana – two communities that have been at loggerheads with each other over royalty on mineral deposits and factory location – could be minimized through the enactment of a law that specifies the compensation guidelines for such communities. What should determine which community should be paid higher? Is it the location of the factory or the location of the mine? Should both communities receive equal compensation? Addressing these questions will have implications for peace building between the local communities.

The manner in which access to land changed from a communal to an individualized and commodified system took land rights from the reach of the majority of Obajana residents. The implication of this is that land allocation and access will become problematic for many dispossessed residents. Therefore, it will be necessary to enact a law to provide alternative and new mechanisms for land distribution for residents in the transitioning community. It is worth restating that land is central to peoples' access to livelihoods and crucial to the process of achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal-1 (SDG-1), which aims to end poverty in all its forms everywhere. In many historically rural communities that experienced changes in communally managed land and access to land, it is the case that land brokers, land speculators and land grabbers tend to emerge as key actors in the dynamics of land distribution.

Although this study did not concentrate on that dimension of a transitioning community, land governance law should anticipate the emergence of these players in the new land economy in order to regulate their activities. Addressing the issue of access to land will go a long way in mitigating conflicts in a transitioning cities like Obajana.

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