

Urban Informality: Sponsored or Agentive Materialization?

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Abstract

Globally urban spaces have historically been centres of struggles and transformation. With particular reference to selected urban informal settlements in the capital, Harare, the chapter draws inspiration from Henry Lefebvre's (The production of space. Trans. D. Nicholson-Smith. Blackwell, Oxford, 1991) "autogestion" thesis to examine the extent to which urban spaces have been appropriated to cope with the emerging urban poly-crises particularly shortage of land for residential purposes. The study that informs this chapter considered the extent to which both the genesis and persistence of informal settlements exemplified either a sponsored or an agentive materialization of urban spaces. It concludes that what seemed to be "anarchistic" tendencies of urban informality and irregularity were actually a product of systematic appropriation and materialization by different actors for both economic and political expedience.

Keywords: Agential, Agentive, Anarchistic, Appropriation, Autogestion, Barons, Citizens, Clientelism, Democratic deficit, Discourses, Entrepreneurs, Grassroots, Hegemonic, Informal, Informality, Irregular, Irregularity, Institutionalised corruption, Land, Materialization, Neoliberal, Peri-urban, Place-making, Post-colonial, Riverbank, Space, Simulacrum, Settlements, Squatter, Stratagems, State fragility, Urban, Veterans