

## **Covid-19 and managing urban marginality in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe**

Precious Ngwenya and Talent Moyo

### **Abstract**

The paper contends that the covid-19 pandemic has reconfigured how cities manage urban marginality within Zimbabwe. The pandemic enabled cities to push everyday mundane practices away from the centre of the city to the margins of the cities through securitisation and criminalising informal activities within the centre. The paper's methodological underpinnings are hinged on a six month ethnography within Bulawayo (Zimbabwe's second largest city). The paper maintains the view that managing urban marginality in the context of covid-19 must be framed within the binary of two opposing forces – governing institutions (the government and municipality) and the low-income residents. Using covid-19 as a pretext of “curbing the pandemic” governing institutions have pushed informal economic activities from the centre through employing law and force; on the other hand low-income residents have found eclectic means to counteract the measures imposed to constrain their agency. Finally, the paper suggests that covid-19 has reconfigured how cities manage urban marginality through pushing everyday informal practices to the periphery and how the low-income residents deploy their agency to counteract confinement hence managing urban marginality can be understood as a two-way process involving governing institutions and the low-income residents.