

Sponsored or Autogestive Materialisation of Space: Urban Informality in Harare, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Urban spaces have been centres of social struggles and transformation the world over. With reference to selected urban informal settlements in Zimbabwe, the present article draws inspiration from Henry Lefebvre's (1991) "autogestion" thesis and examines the extent to which urban spaces have been appropriated and materialised in order to cope with the emerging urban poly-crises, particularly a shortage of land for residential purposes in Harare. The study on which this article is based sought to establish the extent to which both the genesis and the persistence of informal settlements exemplified either a sponsored or the agential appropriation and materialisation of urban spaces. The article observes that what seemed to be "anarchistic" tendencies of informality and irregularity were actually the product of a systematic appropriation and materialisation by various actors for both economic and political expedience.

Keywords: autogestion or self-management informal settlements informal urbanisation settlement informality urban space