

Governing Informal Settlements: The Role of Social Regulators

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The paper discusses the growth and governance processes in typical in most of the contemporary African cities. It focuses on the larger component of cities that comprise informal or unplanned areas. The latter are presently estimated to comprise between 30 and 75 per cent of built up areas in most African cities. Concepts of informality, governance and the role social regulators play in creating, administering, directing urban growth and providing basic services in most African cities are illustrated. Based on testimonies from Tanzania, capabilities of diverse social actors who are creating cities from below, and are striving to cope with the socio-economic realities and needs of the bulk of the urban poor are presented.

Mechanisms through which informal settlements are governed including conflicts resolution and basic infrastructure services delivery modalities are elaborated. Misconceptions about informal cities including distortions most of which have imprinted negatively on the recognition, adaptation of the emerging social regulators are also presented.

The paper offers discussions on the need to recognise and begin building on or tapping the potentialsof social regulators. This is seen as the key consideration for engendering an inclusive, more functional and sustainable cities in situations experiencing severe public capacity deficiencies such as Tanzania and the rest of the Sub-Sahara Africa in general.