Author(s): Stark, Laura; Teppo, Annika

Title: Examining Power and Inequality through Informality in Urban Africa

Year: 2022

Version: Accepted version (Final draft)

Please cite the original version:

Stark, L., & Teppo, A. (2022). Examining Power and Inequality through Informality in Urban Africa. In L. Stark, & A. B. Teppo (Eds.), Power and Informality in Urban Africa Ethnographic Perspectives (pp. 1-20). Zed Books. https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350237599.ch-1

Chapter One:

Examining Power and Inequality through Informality in Urban Africa

Laura Stark & Annika Teppo

As increasing numbers of Africans live in cities, their strategies for living and surviving challenge prevailing theories and models of urban development. Scholars of poverty and development have given more attention to rural areas than to urban ones, yet urban lifeways need more study because people's material lives in the city differ significantly from those in rural areas. Urban residents are exposed to more ethnic, religious, and socio-economic diversity than are rural residents (Jha et. al. 2005). Urban areas are also highly monetized, and the lives of especially the poorest residents are determined almost entirely by market forces. Money thus becomes the focus of city dwellers' attention: the means by which relationships are negotiated, the measure of success, and a necessary condition for well-being. This volume defines 'urban' as residential aggregations in which the majority of residents work in non-agricultural activities, which generally means they are also settled more densely. Not all urban spaces are large cities, they can be small shantytowns appearing in otherwise rural areas. What is important in our definition of 'urban' is not its size or infrastructure but the resource base (predominantly non-agricultural) and dynamics of human interaction based on the range of interlocking occupations and levels of activity.

In the context of today's geopolitical environment, societies and economies in Sub-Saharan Africa continue to be positioned peripherally in international affairs and have apparently little bargaining power. Regardless of the measures used, the continent has by far the fewest number of cities that could be called 'global cities' or 'world cities' (Beaverstock, Taylor and Smith 2002; van der Merwe 2004). Economic restructuring, beginning with the Structural Adjustment Programs[1] in the 1980s, has weakened the economic role of cities. It has continued as foreign-based resource extraction industries contribute to the 'hollowing out' of

many African states – institutions that resemble states in structure and form, but that have turned away from the work of governance. Instead, these neoliberal states engage in profit-seeking ventures, reinforcing the hegemonic ambitions of more powerful groups (Ferguson 2006; Bayart 2009). In the meantime, the informal economy has grown so pervasive that it now constitutes most of the economy in the global South (Hart 2006; Meagher 2010; Schoofs 2015).

With urbanization outpacing formal planning and regulation, it is increasingly acknowledged that informality defines both economic frameworks and norms for interaction among the majority of urban residents. Or, as Iida Lindell and Mats Utas (2012: 409) explain, 'what appears to outsiders as chaotic informal activity is usually structured by webs of relationships that lend life in highly uncertain settings a degree of predictability'. Informality runs through all aspects of African urban life: housing, markets, income-earning, relationships to technology, infrastructure, and governance. Since the state has the prerogative to define what is 'formal' through institutional rules, laws, and protection, we define informality as those activities that fall outside government regulation, control, support, and taxation.

It is important to note that informality is produced by the exclusivity of the formal sector. The notion of a formal sector, and indeed the process of division into more and less privileged sectors, functions to delimit boundaries and preserve power and privilege within elite circles. In return for access to basic services and comforts, the formal sector requires connections and/or education that are costly for the poor (Portes & Haller 2005:404; Hart 2006; Feige 1990:990; Andreas 2004:642, in Schoofs). This means that a globally Northern vantage point in which informality appears 'deficient', or African cities as dystopic, is a problematic approach to analysis (Robinson 2010). With the informal economy as the *real* economy in Sub-Saharan Africa, the role or function of the smaller 'formal' economy is no longer self-evident as the normative or the ideal but raises genuine questions about governance, privilege and exclusion.

Governments in sub-Saharan Africa seek to limit the informal sector's growth despite the fact that it offers livelihoods for those struggling with unemployment and poverty. Informality is routinely presented by governments as a state of exception in public discourse (regardless of its infinite duration) in order to delegitimize and stigmatize certain actors, systems and spaces. This continues even while state employees, elites and public figures benefit from the existence of informality or actively ignore it (Schoofs 2015: 7; Banks et. al. 2020). Approaching the question of the *state's* relationship to the informal sector thus requires bypassing reified accounts of the state as a 'thing' or actor and asking who and what the state actually is. To understand the motives behind state-sanctioned practices that enable and

promote the informal economy, *who* the 'state' consists of must be defined in terms of beneficiaries and the real sources of their revenue (Schoofs 2015). The political and economic interests of the powerful can be enhanced through rent-seeking, bribery, and patronage in spaces where formal rules and regulations are not enforced, or enforced arbitrarily (Banks et. al. 2020). Brokers and intermediaries with formal power in global value chains benefit by circumventing labour regulations and utilizing labour in ways that drain value from families and communities (Meagher et. al. 2016: 475; Barrientos, Gereffi, & Rossi, 2011; Lerche, 2011; Meagher & Lindell 2013). These vested interests may be an important reason why the state is unable or unwilling to extend its regulatory regimes to all parts of the informal economy, and instead engages in 'supportive neglect' (Banks et. al. 2020: 231).

Non-verbalized (or at least non-codified) protections, negotiations, legitimacies and penalties often differ from those written or publicly proclaimed by authorities (e.g. Bromley 2000). For this reason, the official stances taken in legal and policy documents may not reveal much about how actors in the city actually operate or how urban residents experience life. Multiple co-existing and interlocking levels of responses are needed by actors to meet demands from both 'above' and 'below': from international organizations, global capital, middle-class citizens, informal laborers and the jobless poor. Thus much of the 'real' socio-economic and political organization in the city occurs through power wielded invisibly and through informal strategies employed by urban residents, unwritten decisions and negotiations made by local leaders; and predatory practices such as bribes, extortion, fraud, or theft.

Our volume focuses on *practices* as mediating mechanisms in the 'organizing logic' of urban informality (Roy 2005: 148). Informality comprises systems of its own with actors strategizing for power, benefit, and accumulation. We approach urban informality on the African continent by seeing poverty and inequality as reproduced through particular economic structuring practices rather than as failures of markets or governance, or as a lack of 'development' to be corrected through education or micro-finance (Meagher 2005; Hickey & Du Toit 2007; Mosse 2007; Sanyal 2007). Our interdisciplinary collection of empirically grounded chapters focuses on the causes and consequences of power inequalities in urban transformation in the cities of Sub-Saharan Africa. It asks the question: *How do socially negotiated power relations produce informal and semi-formal dynamics of inequality?* The book's authors approach these questions from the fields of urban planning, architecture, geography, ethnology, and anthropology. They use in-depth ethnographic research from Angola, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Tanzania, and Uganda – 'research that

accentuates the voices and practices of urban residents' (Bjarnesen et al. 2018: 2). In addition, this volume draws extensively on African authors' own research and perspectives.

Studying the grassroots level of cities in Africa can help us understand how excluded and marginalized residents use informal, experimental tactics to create and recreate 'a new urban sociality, even under dire conditions' (Simone 2008:81). These tactics include negotiations with local officials in the absence of pragmatic public policy; constant (physical, mental and affective) work to maintain social ties and make claims on the resources of others such as relatives and patrons (Ferguson 2015); time invested in making 'friends' in the city who can help one obtain irregular work; and constant observation and listening in order to find unexploited niches of income generation that exist only in the city. What determines whether the tactics at each level of activity can be used by individuals for survival or accumulation depends in part on how public authorities classify them as legal versus illegal, and how these public authorities act (with what level of violence) in response to different kinds of 'illegality' (Banks et. al. 2020).

Current theory on cities and globalization emphasizes that it is difficult to understand cities in the Global South from the perspective of dominant Northern urban theory, and that precisely this makes cities in the South sources of alternate urban visions or 'key sites for theory making' (Ernstson et. al. 2014). The African city does not merely foreshadow an emergent way of life on the African continent. As the target of stringent economic restructuring in a neoliberal global order, it carries important implications for the future dynamics of cities *around the globe* (Myers 2011; Davis 2006). In part, the challenges faced by urban African residents are due to the direct legacies of colonialization as a total social project. These legacies impact how power is accessed and channeled on the continent. Colonial imports such as the urban ideal as planned, standardized and aesthetically appealing still influence urban planning in Sub-Saharan Africa (Freund 2007). Such ideals exclude vast areas of informal housing in city centres and on their peripheries. These are routinely pronounced in public discourse to be chaotic, dirty, unsightly and detracting from the image of a 'world class city' that could bolster political legitimacy and attract foreign investment (Transberg Hansen 2004; Potts 2007:17).

Ethnography as urban research method

All the contributors of this volume lean – in varying degrees and ways – towards an ethnographic approach. Ethnography is dual in nature: the term refers both to method and a written text. Also the positions of the writers in the field have a huge influence on the approach.

Methodically, the authors have carried out in-depth interviews, (participant) observation, and some have employed visual methods. They possess a deep familiarity and understanding of the urban contexts and locations under study. Their positions vary from those of a well-informed outsider (Lappi, Lanzano, Myllylä, Stark) to virtual insiders (Bagayoko, Segen, Wamala-Larsson, Udelsmann Rodrigues). Many of them have worked in the same field for years, or have live(d) the country of their study.

Ethnography in this sense also implies more than just a form of data collection. It involves a deep commitment to the field, and a particular way of seeing how people experience their daily lives and represent their everyday experiences to themselves. The writers take a critical stance that examines these representations within their historical, political, socio-economic, cultural and spatial contexts. Ethnography as a method uses empathy to focus on the motives, values, beliefs, and attitudes of the people studied in order to learn not just *what* people do but *why* they do it. Ethnography can thus reach to areas of life that remain uncharted, out of reach, and sometimes also misunderstood in quantitative understandings of the city. Large-scale surveys are still the method favoured by development researchers and economists for studying urban poverty, but they cannot – nor are they meant to – capture the motivations and strategies in the lives of urban residents. Ethnography is more adept at this, although surveys and ethnography are not mutually exclusive methodologies

As a textual exercise, ethnography tends toward holism. By tracing the causal connections between multiple dimensions of poverty and inequality, ethnography achieves a broader perspective. Through ethnography, we ideally enter into a dialogue with those social worlds and individual persons we study. In the chapters of this volume, we pay attention to their understandings and explanations of the cause-and-effect relations of poverty and inequality that impact their lives.

Scholars have argued that the poor are often not able to behave in the ways that city planners expect them to, and that urban planning in so-called developing countries is ill-suited to socio-economic realities (Fox 2013:8; also Hardoy & Satterthwaite 1989; Hansen and Vaa 2004; Jenkins 2013). Due to their mobility and relative invisibility, the urban poor in Sub-Saharan Africa can be elusive objects of research, and defy attempts to measure and study them through large-scale surveys or through methods that take the city as the primary unit of analysis (Jha et. al. 2005). Urban planners, policymakers and decision-makers require a fuller understanding of how people struggle and strategize within urban agglomerations, and how urban informality operates and functions.

Ethnographic fieldwork, and the ways it has been reflected in the texts of our authors brings to light hidden aspects of micro-power. This, in turn, reveals new links between macro- and micro-levels of analysis. Ethnography recognises tensions and conflicts as well as the opportunities for social mediation that the informal sector holds. By going beyond familiar concepts and assumptions grounded in Western forms of knowledge, our book situates itself within broader critical discussions on Southern urbanism.

Beyond 'rights to the city'

For many decades, the single most important determinant of urban poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa has been lack of formal employment. High unemployment has been accompanied by falling wages: between the early 1970s and the early 1990s real wages fell by over 90 per cent in much of the continent (Meagher, Mann & Bolt 2016:474; also Ferguson, 1999; ILO, 2002; Jamal & Weeks, 1993; Mkandawire & Soludo, 1999; Vandemoortele, 1991). As a result of decreased formal employment opportunities, the urban informal sector expanded rapidly (Rakodi 1997; Hansen & Vaa 2004: 12; UN-Habitat 2010). This has meant that whole sections of the population now have incomes that are 'unbelievably precarious and insecure', requiring 'a continual process of flexible improvisation' in order to survive (Ferguson 2015:92).

The lives of these precarious workers in cities of sub-Saharan Africa still receive relatively little attention despite their vital role in maintaining urban economies. In many cities of the Global South, the cheap labour and goods provided by micro-traders are vital for the continued functioning of the neoliberal city (de Oliviera 1985; Roever & Skinner 2016). Throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, urban residents depend on day labourers and irregular workers to obtain goods and services not distributed through formal channels, and to keep down the costs of living in the city. Micro-traders generate demand for services provided by other informal workers, and help the poor by providing goods and services at more affordable prices closer to home. Informal producers and vendors are particularly vital for the food security of the poor, as the majority of food insecure households in Sub-Saharan Africa obtain their food from informal food outlets (Roever & Skinner 2016).

To earn livelihoods, the poor must have access to high-traffic city areas where monetary flows are busiest. There is an increasing push within many cities to recognize that residents have a socially legitimized right to access urban public spaces due to their key role in livelihood generation (Cole 2015). Yet governments aiming to curb growth in the informal sector have restricted the rights of the poor to create beneficial social networks within city spaces (Roever & Skinner 2016; Goodfellow 2010). Sub-Saharan African cities are

increasingly being reconstituted to conform to the visions and interests of a small circle of political and economic elites. The main motives of city governance revolve around urban competitiveness to lure and hold on to global investors (Turok, 2004; Harvey 2006, 2012; Lyons & Brown 2009). This renders the poor superfluous to the formal economy and motivates their restriction from it (Huchzermeyer, 2013; Roever & Skinner 2016).

Rights to city spaces and services are not enough. The poorest residents — whose labor makes cities and towns functional and affordable while benefitting intermediaries and powerful business interests — should have the right to demand that planners and decision-makers understand how their lives and needs are intertwined with the city. This includes the right to retain elements of the city that may not conform to international standards or market pressures but that provide low-cost housing, easy-entry work, affordable communication, affordable schooling and health care, and affordable expedited documentation and legal assistance (see Danso-Wiredu & Poku this volume; Wamala-Larsson, this volume). These rights should also include the right to communicate 'up' to local decision-making and national policy-making levels. Mechanisms for channeling unsolicited information about the needs and experiences of the poor are often missing from governance structures. Similarly, devolution of authority to lower levels of governance – which could provide a vital link in this 'bottom-up' flow of information – is severely impeded by insufficient funding to local governments (Kessey & McCourt 2010; Fox 2014; Yeboah-Assiamah 2014). In order for governments to encourage, process and incorporate feedback from all income groups into decision-making, platforms could be created through smartphones, for example. But this means that governments and planners must be committed to taking into consideration feedback from lower-income groups and to being accountable to poor urban residents (Green & Hulme 2005).

All of the chapters in this volume point to how persons struggling in informal livelihoods do not passively adapt to urban spaces and dynamics, but actively reshape how these spaces are understood and experienced by residents through their everyday activities. Taken together, these chapters highlight the need for urban residents to have the right to transform the city in ways that meet their basic needs.

The complex dynamics of urban informality: the view from the ground
Despite a globally peripheral position, many of Africa's cities play important roles as nodes in local and regional contexts, disseminating information, providing services and facilitating economic transactions. Ruling parties and city governments, allied with foreign capital, seek

to capitalize on this and attract global investment through the image of a 'world-class city' (Potts 2007:17). This has meant that diverse agendas overlap in urban policy arenas of African cities (Pieterse 2008). In Cristina Udelsmann Rodrigues' analysis of the rise and fall of Luanda's real estate boom, residents from all income levels sought to capitalize on high urban land values. In other chapters, the ways in which lower-income residents understood the aims of urban life stand in sharp contrast to urban visions favored by governments or the international firms of architects hired to create master plans for them (Wragg & Lim 2013). The effects of government-led urban renewal on residents in one city – Addis Ababa – are addressed in Chapter Eight (Susanna Myllylä) and Chapter Nine (Segen Yainshet Tesfamariam, Laura Stark and Elias Yitbarek Alemayehu). Despite the fact that the Addis Ababa youth discussed in these chapters are from different income groups and live under different material conditions, both chapters report that the needs of the youth have tended to be overlooked in a city where over 70 per cent of residents are under the age of 30 (UNDP 2018: 45).

Creation and destruction of the lived city

Massive construction projects in housing, commercial buildings and infrastructure have made Addis Ababa's urban renewal one of the largest-scale social experiments in Sub-Saharan Africa (Alemayehu et. al. 2018:1). Prior to this renewal, the dwellings of the majority of low-income residents were low-rent, government-owned and informally planned *kebele* housing. *Kebeles* have been systematically demolished and their residents moved to government-built concrete apartment blocks known as condominiums, which are built mostly on the outskirts of the city. Condominium apartments are awarded by government lottery, but residents must make a downpayment as well as monthly loan repayments for new condominiums which are often beyond what the poor can afford. Moreover, sub-renters within kebeles are restricted from entering the lottery in the first place. Most sub-renters belong to lowest income group in the city. Susanna Myllylä examines the plight of those caught in a situation where they cannot afford to move to new *kebeles*, and thus have no choice but to remain in a settlement that is being demolished around them.

The chapter by Tesfamariam and colleagues provides a different snapshot of Addis Ababa. It examines how development of green open spaces through city-community co-production succeeded in achieving some but not all of its aims, and only for the benefit of some residents. Neighbourhood resident-owners used new construction and tree-planting within the spaces between their housing blocks to retain legal right to the land for their housing

cooperative, and to raise the real-estate value of their homes. The alternative would have been for the city to appropriate the spaces as unclaimed land and auction them to private developers. The process of 'improving' the open spaces was far from smooth, however, and failed in the sense that it neglected to sufficiently address the needs to renters, children and youth. In their chapter, the authors analyze the reasons behind these flaws in the co-production process. The chapters by both Tesfamariam et. al.'s and Myllylä show that there existed nominal devolution of authority to local levels of governance, but in reality local-level officials were left with few resources or skills to help the most vulnerable residents or to ensure that all residents could express their views regarding the transformations to their Neighbourhoods.

Intricate circuits of goods and people

Most research on informal vending and micro-trading in urban Sub-Saharan Africa has focused on street or market vendors selling in fixed, public locations. The bulk of the research literature to date has focused on issues of governance, street traders' associations, and forced relocations of street traders (e.g. Skinner 2008). A far broader range of informal actors, however, are involved in the day to day manufacturing and transport of goods, services and people throughout the city. Many micro-traders do not sell in streets per se but in other spaces where different logics apply (Lappi & Stark 2013), or sell by staying physically mobile to 'find the market' in diverse locations each day (Malefakis 2015). Also illegal forms of trade, though much less visible than street or market trading, channel goods to those who might not be able to afford them from formal shops. Caroline Wamala-Larsson examines the daily work of young men who work as motorcycle taxi drivers in Kampala, Uganda. Esther Danso-Wiredu and Adjoa Afriyie Poku focus on both male youth who scavenge, sell, and buy recyclable scrap and young female porters in Accra, Ghana whose work keeps them moving through the city streets. Tiina-Riitta Lappi's and Laura Stark's contributions focus from different perspectives on the same low-income, informal settlement in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Lappi examines Neighbourhood vending as a 'hidden' and often overlooked form of informal trade, whereas Stark focuses on the cycle of theft and resale of mobile phones.

The authors of these chapters point out that urban informality, despite evident drawbacks, can nonetheless make life more livable for the poor and enable them to obtain basic necessities. This is due to the particular characteristics of poverty. The poor need to buy staples in smaller quantities, they need affordable housing which means that dwellings will not meet urban planners' size or quality standards, and they need to lease transport vehicles and earn money from driving them before they can own them (Rao 2002; Kironde 2006; Haregewoin 2007: 4;

Lappi, this volume; Wamala-Larsson, this volume). In Danso-Wiredu's and Poku's chapter, residents in Accra were less concerned than urban administrators and policymakers about the poor conditions of their living environment because their reasons for being in the community were first and foremost to find income. As precarious and dangerous as informal livelihoods are, they provide relatively easy entrance for young persons with little education and few skills. In Accra, portering and dealing in scrap are labourious occupations, and new migrants to the city entering these occupations face eviction threats, physical dangers, and deprivation. Yet the unskilled male and female youth discussed by Danso-Wiredu and Poku can be seen as having created new income-earning niches for themselves. Young men have squeezed value out of recycling waste by scavenging for metals, and young women have made an existing job more efficient by carrying loads on headpans rather than on the handcarts used by male porters.

Lappi's chapter discusses the 'internal economy of the slum' formed by female micro-vendors in a low-income neighbourhood of Dar es Salaam. Women's businesses in this internal economy do not bring in any real profit in most cases, but are used to maintain a minimum fund of money for unexpected expenses among those suffering from extreme poverty. At the same time, neighbourhood vending makes the neighbourhood more 'livable' for all residents: a busy resident needing milk, eggs, or tea can quickly buy small quantities of these from neighbours rather than walking to an open-air marketplace 20 minutes away, and children can go (or be sent by mothers) to neighbours to buy breakfast snacks or chapattis for the family supper if parents are busy. Wamala-Larsson's chapter on motorcycle taxi drivers in Kampala discusses how these drivers are denigrated in public discourse at the same time that they serve a vital function in a traffic-congested city. At times, these motorcycle taxi-drivers are used by the authorities themselves to gather intelligence for police or participate in political rallies. At the same time, they suffer from the inadequate transportation infrastructure that the formal city authorities are unable to improve. It appears to serve the purposes of city authorities to keep informal services such as motorcycle taxis outside the formal sector and thus without full legal protection or recourse, even if this means that the motorcycle taxi sector remains largely beyond authorities' full control. Literature on informality tends to focus on the power exerted by city or state authorities over low-income residents. Less attention is paid to exploitation and predation *within* low-income communities. Laura Stark examines what happens when low-income residents in Dar es Salaam are compelled to buy phones that are low-priced because they have been stolen from other city residents. Mobile phones have become a vital tool in the lives of most Africans, and particularly the poor need them to call relatives for help in crises. Yet unlike the wealthier and middle classes, the poor often cannot afford price of new phones

in shops. The theft and resale of mobile phones within the neighbourhood studied by Stark creates a cycle of violence and retaliation that is dangerous for all.

Beneficiaries, the disadvantaged, and value extraction

Consequences 'on the ground' of commodity extractions and booms in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as the mechanisms that link labourers and consumers to global capitalist processes are addressed in Cristina Udelsmann Rodrigues' chapter on the real estate boom in Luanda, Sidylamine Bagayoko's chapter on informal gold miners in Mali, and Cristiano Lanzano's study of goldmining in Burkina Faso. Udelsmann Rodrigues' chapter examines how residents of Angola's capital, Luanda, were affected by Angola's oil crisis stemming from global economic fluctuations. All of Luanda's land is formally state-owned, but during the oil-fueled boom (2002–2014), a lively informal real-estate market was enabled through a range of formal and informal/customary transactions that operated in both planned and unplanned residential areas. If residents could lay claim to a land title, they could either sell the land or demand compensation when it was demolished to make way for new buildings. Those active in buying, selling and speculating on real estate came from all socio-economic levels. Udelsmann Rodrigues' chapter shows how global economic and commodity booms and downturns – and concomitant flows of investment capital – affected urban residents through rising real estate and housing values in one African city, and how residents strategized to maximize their own interests.

The chapters by Lanzano and Bagayoko show how forms of governance and negotiation can vary across goldmining sites located in neighbouring countries. In Lanzano's fieldsite in Burkina Faso, the pseudonymous goldmining company GoldMin was a private domestic company that did not actually extract the ore themselves but instead provided a loose organizational umbrella for informal labourers. In return for securing needed alliances with local customary landowners and providing organization and security at the site where gold was mined and sold, the self-organized miners were expected to sell their gold only to GoldMin. GoldMin thus made its profit from its monopolized control over the purchase of already extracted ore. Bagayoko's chapter, by contrast, depicts the lives of informal artisanal miners in Mali. These Malian miners were not allowed on the site operated by a foreign gold mining company and therefore dug for gold outside its perimeter. The Burkinabe mining company in Lanzano's chapter absorbed self-organized informal miners into its structure of operations, whereas the South African mining company in Bagayoko's chapter strictly excluded them. These very different organizational setups account for the authors' different emphases when

discussing the actual beneficiaries of informal gold mining. Although the gold extraction industry in Mali brings some benefit to Malians, it also produces adverse effects: abandonment of agriculture in rural areas, degradation of the environment, health dangers, and lack of basic services endured by artisanal miners and their children who are trapped in poverty and cannot afford to leave. These effects are also poised to contribute in the next generation to food insecurity, human suffering, and lack of employment (Bagayoko, this volume). Both authors note, however, that the competitive economy of artisanal gold mining could not exist without 'losers': the vulnerable labourers who bear the physical risks, have very little starting capital, and whose irregular earnings are diminished through rents and fees over which they have little control. In both sites studied, companies and/or gold buyers prospered from labourers' self-organization and technical experience that ensured a steady supply of gold.

Distinctive modes of self-organization
Informal economies do not lack organization. Across Sub-Saharan Africa, actors in diverse sectors have a high degree of self-governance, demonstrating the 'distinctive regulatory capacities operating within informal economic networks, associations, and communities' (Meagher & Lindell 2013:61; also Schoofs 2015; Lanzano this volume; Wamala-Larsson, this volume). Informal economies can be understood as alternative modes of governance to the state (MacGaffey 1991: 9; Meagher 2005:217; Schoofs 2015:7), those that interface with formal production and distribution. Cristiano Lanzano's chapter examines the mechanisms that connect these levels of activity in Burkina Faso, focusing on the gray areas between national law and actual practice at the local level. In both Lanzano's and Bagayoko's chapters, the appearance of artisanal miners in a particular locality has attracted not only gold buyers but also other informal workers to the site. These include vendors offering goods and services, motorcycle taxi drivers, carpenters, welders, and cooks. The pull exerted by gold mining has very quickly created centres of urban commerce in previously agrarian settings. When urban forms suddenly emerge in rural spaces and societies, the result is hybrid patterns of governance 'on the ground' in which a wide range of actors, both human and material, are instrumental in assigning spaces to functions, sorting out rules for safety and stability, engaging in mediation, negotiating terms, fees and rental payments, and performing rituals to reassure local inhabitants (Lanzano, this volume). Dense and multi-tiered networks of gift-giving and loans arise, creating an extensive system of 'indebtedness and informal economic arrangements that facilitated the circulation of financial resources throughout the entire value chain' (Lanzano, this volume, p. XX). In Lanzano's analysis, actors were self-organized into chains of

interaction that encompassed mining companies, quasi-legal permits and authorizations, experienced miners and less-skilled labourers, local politicians, village spokespersons, customary chiefs, and spontaneous local committees. These actors facilitated the extraction, purchasing and transportation of the smelted ore that joined formal gold production and the world's gold supply. Lanzano points out that the legal concessions and authorizations that gold companies procured from the national Ministry of Mines in the distant capital city of Ouagadougou did nothing to regularize gold mining activities or impose standards, but were instead used to negotiate with local authorities, stake claims, and maneuver past rival companies.

The chapters in this volume thus highlight crucial hidden processes characteristic of informal economies. As people self-arrange within the informal economy in order to subsist or maximize resources, they reshape how urban spaces are perceived, read and used by urban residents in ways that were not foreseen by any urban planner (de Certeau 1984; Simone 2004; Danso-Wiredu & Poku, this volume; Lappi, this volume, Wamala-Larsson, this volume). These practices should not be seen as the simple mobilization – by informal groups or institutions – of tactics that 'work'. Instead, they are shaped by relations of power at many levels (Cleaver et al. 2013, 67-68; Meagher & Lindell 2013). One example of this is the fact that customary authority continues to re-invent itself and exert power in new forms in Sub-Saharan Africa (Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal & van Dijk 1999; Oomen 2005). In the chapter by Danso-Wiredu and Poku we see informal urban ethnic 'chiefs' transplanted into the crowded urban setting of Old Fadama, and Bagayoko's and Lanzano's chapters both note the continued relevance of customary authorities in negotiations over land use, fees, and rituals to be performed when extracting gold. Informal and customary land titles can be useful as a basis for making compensation claims in contexts of urban renewal and rapidly fluctuating economic conditions as in the case of Luanda (Udelsmann Rodrigues, this volume). However, such claims are not always sufficient to guarantee rights in compensation and relocation processes, as has occurred in the case of some residents of state-owned informally built housing (*kebeles*) that have been demolished to make way for urban renewal in Addis Ababa, (Myllylä, this volume). From the perspective of residents actively shaping the city, the practices that embody the authority of urban officials have sometimes walked a thin line between predation/corruption and arbitrarily applied law enforcement (Stark, this volume; Wamala-Larsson, this volume). It has been particularly in the gap between publicly proclaimed policy and what actually occurs in daily life that urban residents report experiencing hardship and resentment.

Notes

[1] The Structural Adjustment Programs aimed at neoliberal economic restructuring were implemented in Africa and Latin America by the International Monetary Fund starting in the 1980s, resulting in the rapid expansion of the urban informal sector and decreased formal employment opportunities (Rakodi 1997; Hansen & Vaa 2004; UN-Habitat 2010).

Literature cited

Alemayehu, E. Y., Soressa, Y.A., Hassen, I. M and Stark, L. (2018). 'New perspectives on Urban Transformation in Addis Ababa', In E. Y. Alemayehu and L. Stark (eds), *Addis Ababa: Transformation of a Multiform African City*, 1–20, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishers.

Alemayehu, E. Y. (2018), 'Addis Ababa: A Collage of Cities', in E. Y. Alemayehu and L. Stark (eds), *The Transformation of Addis Ababa: A Multiform African City*, 21–76, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Banks, N., Lombard, M. and Mitlin, D. (2020), 'Urban Informality as a Site of Critical Analysis', *The Journal of Development Studies*, 56 (2): 223–238. DOI: 10.1080/00220388.2019.1577384

Barrientos, S., Gereffi, G. and Rossi, A. (2011), 'Economic and social upgrading in global production networks: A new paradigmfor a changing world', *International Labour Review*, 150 (3–4): 319–340.

Bayart, J.-F. (2009). The State in Africa: the Politics of the Belly. Cambridge, Polity.

Beaverstock, J., P. Taylor, R. Smith. (2002). A Roster of World Cities. *Cities*, 16 (6).

Bjarnesen, J., & Utas, M. (2018). Introduction Urban kinship: the micro-politics of proximity and relatedness in African cities. *Africa*, *88*(S1), S1-S11.

Bromley, R. (2000). 'Street Vending and Public Policy: A Global Review.' International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, Vol. 20, No. 1-2

Brown, A., Lyons, M. and Dancoko, I. (2009), 'Street Traders and the Emerging Spaces for Urban Voice and Citizenship in African Cities', *Urban Studies*, 47 (3): 666–683.

Cleaver, F. Franks, T., Maganga F., and Hall, K. (2013). 'Institutions, security and pastorialism: Exploring the limits of hybridity. *African Studies Review 56*(3): 165–189.

Davis, M. (2006), *Planet of Slums*, London & New York: Verso.

de Certeau, M. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. trans. Steven Rendall, Berkeley: University of California Press.

de Oliviera (1985). A critique of dualist reason: The Brazilian economy since 1930. In P. Bromley (Ed.), *Planning for Small Enterprises in Third World Cities*, Pergamon Press, Oxford, New York (1985), pp. 65-95.

Ernstson, H., Lawhon, M. and Duminy, J. (2014), 'Conceptual vectors of African Urbanism: 'Engaged Theory-Making' and 'Platforms of Engagement'', *Regional Studies*, 48 (9): 1563–1577.

Feige, E. (1990), 'Defining and Estimating Underground and Informal Economies: The New Institutional Economic Approach', *World Development*, 18 (7): 989–1002.

Ferguson, J. (1999), *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and meanings of urban life on the Zambian Copperbelt*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ferguson, J. (2006), *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*, Durham, N.C, USA: Duke University Press

Ferguson, J. (2015), *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution*, Durham, NC, USA: Duke University Press.

Fox, S. (2014), 'The Political Economy of Slums: Theory and Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa', *World Development,* 54: 191–203.

Freund, B. 2007. The African City, A History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goodfellow, Tom (2010) *'The bastard child of nobody'? Anti-planning and the institutional crisis in contemporary Kampala.* Crisis States Research Centre working papers series 2 (67). Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK.

Green, M. and Hulme, D. (2005), 'From Correlates and Characteristics to Causes: Thinking About Poverty from a Chronic Poverty Perspective', *World Development*, 33 (6): 867–879.

Greenberg, S. (2010), The Gauteng City-Region: Private and Public Power in the Shaping of the City', *Politikon*, 37 (1): 107–127.

Hansen, K. and *Vaa*, M. eds (2004), *Reconsidering Informality: Perspectives from Urban Africa*, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

Hardoy, J. E. and Satterthwaite, D. (1989), *Squatter Citizen: Life in the Urban Third World*, London: Earthscan.

Haregewoin, Y. M. (2007). Integrated housing development programs for urban poverty alleviation and sustainable urbanization (the case of Addis Ababa). Paper presented at the ENHR International Conference: Sustainable Urban Areas, June 25–28.

Hart, K. (2006), Bureaucratic form and the informal economy. In: Guha–Khasnobis, B., Kanbur, R. and Ostrom, E. (eds.), *Linking the formal and informal economy: Concepts and policies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 21–35.

Hart, K. (2010), 'Informal Economy', in K. Hart, J. Laville and A. D. Cattani (eds), *The Human Economy: A Citizen's Guide*, 142–154, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Harvey, D. (2006), 'Neo-Liberalism as Creative Destruction', *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 88 (2): 145–158.

Harvey, D. (2012), *The Right to the City*, Paper for Urban Uprising Symposium New York. Available online: http://www.urban-uprising.org/sites/default/files/files/righttothecity.pdf

Hickey, S. and du Toit, A. (2007). Adverse incorporation, social exclusion and chronic poverty. Chronic Poverty Research Centre Working Paper 81. http://www.chronicpoverty.org/uploads/publication_files/WP81_Hickey_duToit.pdf

Huchzermeyer, M. (2013), 'Humanism, creativity and rights: invoking Henri Lefebvre's right to the city in the tension presented by informal settlements in South Africa today' Inaugural Lecture, School of Architecture and Planning, University of the Witwatersrand 12 November, 2013. (https://www.wits.ac.za/media/news-migration/files/Inaugural%20lecture.pdf)

Hull, E. and James, D. (2012), 'Introduction: Popular Economies in South Africa', *Africa*, 82 (1): 1–19.

ILO (2002), 'Decent Work and the Informal Economy', Geneva: International Labour Organization.

Jamal, V. and Weeks, J. (1993), *Africa misunderstood: Or whatever happened to the rural-urban gap?*, London: Macmillan.

Jenkins, P. (2013), *Urbanization, Urbanism and Urbanity in an African City: Home Spaces and House Cultures, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.*

Jha, S., Rao, V. and Woolcock, M. (2005), 'Governance in the Gullies: Democratic Leadership and Responsiveness in Delhi's Slums', World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 3694. Available online: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=801504

Kessey, Ambrose and Willy McCourt (2010) 'Is Decentralization Still Recentralization? The Local Government Reform Programme in Tanzania' *International Journal of Public Administration*, 33: 689–697.

Kironde, J. (2006). The regulatory framework, unplanned development and urban poverty: Findings from Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Land Use Policy 23(4):460-472.

Lappi, T.-R. (2017), 'Naisten toimeentulo tansanialaisessa slummissa', in O. Fingerroos, M. Lundgren, S. Lillbroända-Annala and N. Koskihaara (eds), *Yhteiskuntaetnologia*, 123–146, Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society.

Lappi, T.-R. and Stark, L. (2013), 'Neighbourhood Vendors and the Internal Economy of the Slum: Informal Livelihoods Among the Chronically Poor in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania', in N. Çatak, E. Duyan ja S. Seçer (eds). *Rethinking the Urban*, CUI '13/Contemporary Urban Issues Conference, Istanbul: Dakam Publishing, 287–291.

Lerche, J. (2011), 'The Unfree Labour Category and Unfree Labour Estimates: A Continuum within Low-End Labour Relations', Working Paper no. 10, Manchester: Manchester Papers in Political Economy, CSPE. Available online: https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/14855/1/Lerche_unfree_working_paper_2011.pdf

Lindell, I. and Utas, M. (2012). Networked city life in Africa: Introduction. *Urban Forum*, *23*(4), 409-414. Heidelberg: Springer Netherlands.

MacGaffey, J. (1991), *The Real Economy of Zaire: the contribution of smuggling and other unofficial activities to national wealth*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Malefakis, A. (2015), ''Beyond informal economy': Street vending as a culturally creative practice in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania', Paper presented at the RC21 International Conference, Urbino, Italy. Available online: https://www.rc21.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/E6-Malefakis.pdf

Meagher, K. (2005), 'Social capital or analytical liability? Social networks and African informal economies', *Global Networks*, 5 (3): 217–238.

Meagher, K. (2010), *Identity Economics: Social Networks and the Informal Economy in Nigeria*, London: James Currey.

Meagher, K. and Lindell, I. (2013). 'Introduction', *African Studies Review*, *56* (3): 57-76.

Meagher, K., Mann, L. and Bolt, M. (2016), 'Introduction: Global Economic Inclusion and African Workers', *The Journal of Development Studies*, 52 (4): 471–482. DOI: 10.1080/00220388.2015.1126256

Mkandawire, T. and Soludo, C. (1999), *Our continent, our future: African perspectives on structural adjustment*, Dakar: CODESRIA.

Mosse, D. (2007), 'Power and the Durability of Poverty: A Critical Exploration of the Links Between Culture, Marginality and Chronic Poverty', Chronic Poverty Research Centre Working Paper 107. Manchester: IDPM. Available online: www.chronicpoverty.org http://www.chronicpoverty.org/uploads/publication_files/WP107_Mosse.pdf

Myers, G. (2011), *African Cities: Alternative Visions of Urban Theory and Practice*, London: Zed Books.

Myllylä, S. (2018), 'Dimensions of youth poverty in Addis Ababa: Liminal urbanism in the era of urban renewal', in E. Y. Alemayehu and L. Stark (eds), *The Transformation of Addis Ababa: A Multiform African City*, 183–210, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Oomen, B. (2005) *Chiefs in South Africa: Law, Power & Culture in the Post-Apartheid Era*. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan.

Pieterse, E. (2008), *City Futures: Confronting the Crisis of Urban Development*, London & New York: Zed Books.

Portes, A. and Haller, W. (2005), 'The informal economy', in N. Smelser and R. Swedberg (eds), *Handbook of economic sociology* (2nd ed.), 403–425, New York: Russell Sage.

Potts, D. (2007), 'The State and the Informal in Sub-Saharan African Urban Economies: Revisiting Debates on Dualism', Crisis States Research Centre Working Paper 18, London: London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). Available online: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08beee5274a31e0000ea6/wp18.2.pdf

Rakodi, C. ed. (1997), *The Urban Challenge in Africa, Growth and Management of its Large Cities*, Tokyo, New York & Paris: United Nations University Press.

Rao, V. (2002), 'Experiments in 'Participatory Econometrics': Improving the connection between economic analysis and the real world', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37 (20): 1887–1898.

Robinson, J. (2010). Living in dystopia: past, present, and future in contemporary African cities. In G. Prakash (ed.), *Noir Urbanisms: dystopic images of the modern city*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 218–240.

Roever, S. and Skinner, C. (2016), 'Street vendors and cities', *Environment & Urbanization*, 28 (2): 359–374.

Roy, A. (2005), 'Urban informality: Toward an epistemology of planning', *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 71 (2): 147–158.

Sanyal, K. (2007), *Rethinking capitalist development: Primitive accumulation, governmentality and post-colonial capitalism*, New Delhi: Routledge.

Schoofs, S. (2015), 'Making sense of informal economies in fragile Context: issues, dilemmas and questions', CRU Policy Brief, *The Netherlands institute of international relations 'Clingendael'*. Available online: https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/PB_Informal_Economies_0.pdf

Simone, A. (2004), *For the City Yet to Come, Changing African Life in Four Cities*, Durham, N.C.: London: Duke University Press.

Simone, A. (2004), 'Transversals of Trauma through Urban Africa', Conference lecture at the symposium 'Urban Traumas. The City and Disasters' 7-11 July 2004, CCC Center of Contemporary Culture of Barcelona.

Simone, A. 2008. Some Reflections on Making Popular Culture in Urban Africa. *African Studies Review* 51(3): 75–89.

Skinner, C. (2008), 'Street trade in Africa: A review', Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) Working paper 5. Available online: https://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/Skinner_WIEGO_WP5.pdf

Stren, R. and Halfani, M. (2001), 'The Cities of Sub-Saharan Africa: From Dependency to Marginality', in R. Paddison (ed.), *Handbook of Urban Studies*, 466-485, London: Sage Publications.

Transberg Hansen, K. 2004. 'Who Rules the Streets? The Politics of Vending Space in Lusaka.' In K. Transberg Hansen & M. Vaa, eds. Reconsidering Informality, Perspectives from Urban Africa. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute.

Turok, I. (2004), 'Cities, Regions and Competitiveness', *Regional Studies*, 38 (9): 1069–1083.

UNDP (2018), National Human Development Report. UNDP Ethiopia, Addis Ababa. http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/ethiopia_national_human_development_report_2018.pdf

UN-HABITAT (2010), 'The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements 2003. Revised and updated version April 2010', London & Sterling, VA.: Earthscan Publications Ltd. Available online: https://mirror.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/GRHS_2003_Chapter_01_Revised_2010.pdf

van der Merwe, I.J. (2004) The global cities of Sub-Saharan Africa: Fact or fiction? *Urban Forum* 15, 36–47.

Vandemoortele, J. (1991), 'Labour market informalization in Sub-Saharan Africa', in G. Standing and V. Tokman (eds), *Toward Social Adjustment: Labour Market Issues in Structural Adjustment*, Geneva: ILO.

Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal, E. & R. van Dijk (eds) 1999. African Chieftaincy in a New Socio-Political Landscape. Hamburg : LIT

Wamala Larsson, C. and Svensson, J. (2018), 'Mobile phones in the transformation of the informal economy: stories from market women in Kampala, Uganda', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 12 (3): 533–551. DOI: 10.1080/17531055.2018.1436247

Wragg, E. and Lim, R. (2013), 'Urban Visions of the Excluded, Experiences of Globalisation in Lusaka, Zambia', N-AERUS 14th Conference, 12-14 September, Netherlands: Enschede. Available online: http://n-aerus.net/web/sat/workshops/2013/PDF/N-AERUS14_Wragg_Lim_FINAL.pdf

Yeboah-Assiamah, E. 2014. Power to the People! How far has the Power Gone to the People? A Qualitative Assessment of Decentralization Practice in Ghana. *Journal of Asian and African studies* 51(6):1–17.