

## **Rethinking Urban Informality through the Lens of Inclusive Planning and Governance in Contemporary Cities: A Case Study of Johannesburg, South Africa**

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**Abstract :** Background: Considering that Africa is urbanizing faster than any other region globally, managing cities in the global South has become the centerpiece for the New Urban Agenda (i.e., a shared vision of how we rethink, rebuild, and manage our cities for a better and more sustainable future). This study is centered on governance and planning of urban informality practices with particular reference to the relationship between the state, informal actors (e.g., informal traders and informal dwellers), and other city stakeholders who are public space users (commuters, businesses, and environmental activists), and how informal actors organize themselves to lobby the state and claim for their rights in the city, and how they navigate their everyday livelihood strategies. Aim: The purpose of this study is to examine and interrogate contemporary approaches, policy and regulatory frameworks to urban spatial planning and management of informality in one of South Africa's busiest and major cities, Johannesburg. Setting: The study uses the metropolitan region of the city of Johannesburg, South Africa to understand how this contemporary industrial city manages urban informality practices, including the use of public space, land zoning and street life, and paying a closer look at what progress has been made and gaps in their inclusive urban policy frameworks. Methods: This study utilized a qualitative approach that includes surveys (open-ended questions), archival research (i.e., policy and other key document reviews), and key interviews mainly with city officials, and informality actors. A thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collected. Contribution: This study contributes to large urban informality scholarship in the global South cities by exploring how major cities particularly in Africa regulate and manage informality patterns and practices in their quest to build "utopian" smart cities. This study also brings a different perspective on the hacking ways used by the informal actors to resist harsh regulations and remain invisible in the city, which is something that previous literature has barely delved in-depth.

**Keywords :** inclusive planning and governance, infrastructure systems, livelihood strategies urban informality, urban space

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