

When the Poor Do Not Matter: Environmental Justice and Solid Waste Management in Kinshasa, the Democratic Republic of Congo

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Abstract : The purpose of this paper is to understand the urban environmental problems in Kinshasa and the consequences of these for the poor. This paper particularly examines the concept of environmental injustice in solid waste management in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The urban low-income communities in Kinshasa face multiple consequences of poor solid waste management associated with unhealthy living conditions. These situations stemmed from overcrowding, poor sanitary, accumulation of solid waste, resulting in the prevalence of water and air borne diseases. Using a mix of reviewed archival records, scholarly literature, a semi-structured interview conducted with the local community members and qualitative surveys among stakeholders; it was found that solid waste management challenge in Kinshasa is not only an environmental and health risk issues, but also, a problem that generates socio-spatial disparities in the distribution of the solid waste burden. It is argued in the paper that the urban poor areas in Kinshasa are often hardest affected by irregularities of waste collection. They lack sanitary storage capacities and have undermined organizational capacity for collective action within solid waste management. In view of these observations, this paper explores mechanisms and stakeholders' engagement necessary to lessen environmental injustice in solid waste management (SWM) in Kinshasa.

Keywords : environmental justice, solid waste management, urban environmental problems, urban poor

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