

## The Juxtaposition of Antagonistic Urban Landscapes: Rural-Urban Interface in South African Cities

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**Abstract:** *Unprecedented urbanisation has been a global character during the 21<sup>st</sup> century. During the apartheid era in South Africa, the rate of urbanisation was controlled which limited the invasion of black people into the city centre. However, with the relaxation of urbanisation policies, the country witnessed an unmatched invasion of black people into the city centre in the quest to access various resources. The inability of the new urbanites to access resources, many people resorted to land invasion to access public land illegally. The urban corridors were immediately harbouring a dye, ugly and unplanned antagonistic new urban character. Consequentially, cities in developing countries portrays the juxtaposition of antagonistic urban landscapes – rurality and urbanity interface. The ruralisation of urban centres in the midst of all the development framework question the applicability of urban planning theory in addressing the rurality within the cities. The paper argues that without good governance structure and effective urban planning model, rurality in an urban context will continue to characterise most South Africa cities. The paper concludes that the dearth of a clear strategy poses a deleterious ramification in the quest to resolve informality that local government are confronted in urban areas.*

**Key words:** urbanisation; informal settlements; ruralisation; rurality-urbanity interface

### Introduction

Globally, urbanisation is not a new phenomenon within the mobility and urban studies, and it can be coined back during the hunter-gatherer (nomads) era (Lee, 1972; Price and Brown, 1985). Therefore, the movement of people remain an important field of research in understanding the rural and urban interface. Developing countries such as South Africa continue to face an unmatched movement of people from rural areas and international migrants into the city centres. The densification of urban population continues to trouble most urban planners to plan for and manage urbanisation (Allan, 2009; Roy, 2009; Darkey and Visagie, 2013) due to its complexity. This densification of urban population has fuelled the increasing socio-economic problems such as housing deficit, urban poverty, congestion and informality within an urban context. Notwithstanding the densification population which perpetuate informality, market orientated

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growth play a major part in relegating people into informality (Steyn, 2007), and thus forced them to reside in informal settlements. Informal settlements are characterised by lack of water provision, sanitation, waste removal and planned structures.

Despite the attainment of democracy in South Africa, the aspiration of informal settlement dwellers to realise this democratic state remain vague and unattainable (Darkey and Visagie, 2013). Despite the political liberation that enabled poor South Africans the right to vote, the fruits of democracy have not cascaded down to the poor, particularly those residing in informal settlements. High poverty, informality and lack of proper services characterised urban sitting as rurality. "Although the promises of the Freedom Charter were reiterated at the ANC's (African National Congress) 50<sup>th</sup> National Conference as fundamentally transforming the South African economy, in order to empower black people, especially Africans (collectively, as well as communities and as individuals); eliminate poverty and the extreme inequalities generated by the apartheid system, for many residents in townships such as Mamelodi, as well as in poor rural communities, urban slums and informal settlements; very little improvement in the quality of life has been realised since the democratisation process began in 1994" (Darkey and Visagie, 2013: 302). The increasing level of urban poverty, lack of waste disposal, water and sanitation which characterises informal settlements has resulted in the emergence of a new character of rurality within an urban context. The continuous existence of informal settlement existing alongside formal settlements in urban areas has resulted in the "juxtaposition of contrasting urban landscapes" (Oelofse and Dodson, 1997: 91). However, in order to understand the characteristics of informal settlements, it is imperative to understand its genesis. Regardless of the actualisation of informal settlements in most developing countries, South Africa's apartheid context provide an interesting character of cities in the new political dispensation.

### **Informality as an old character of South Africa cities: apartheid context**

The actuality of informal settlements in South Africa is not a new phenomenon, and can thus be coined back in the late 1800s and early 1900s (Harrison, 1992). Informal settlements initially mushroomed in the city after ex-slaves were emancipated in the 1830s (Harrison, 1992). Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town are some of the cities that experienced this antagonism in urban areas. Many informal settlements were demolished due to the outbreak of bubonic plague (Harrison, 1992). The demolition of informal settlement was a strategy used during the apartheid government to reduce disease outbreaks, and thus, legislated the control of black people into the city centre. In the expedition to black influx control, the Native Urban Areas Act was promulgated to restrict or control the invasion of black into the city centre (Harrison, 1992). Furthermore, blacks were only allowed to enter urban centres based on the demand by the whites (Groups Area Act, 1950). However, the years between 1939 and 1948 during the World War II witnessed an unmatched urbanisation as there was a great demand for soldiers. Consequentially, informal settlements re-emerged, and it was now a new character of South African cities. In 1948, Pretoria was hemmed by the continuous existence of informal settlements along the neighbouring areas (Harrison,

1992). The increasing number of informal settlements within South African cities was now seen a development gap.

Successive governments' attempt to eradicate informal settlements in Johannesburg were utterly failing. The reason for the failure was uttered by the informal settlement leader saying that: "the Government is like a man who has a cornfield which is invaded by birds. He chases the birds from one part of the field and they move in another part... we as scatters are the birds... we will see whether it is the farmer or the birds who gets tired first" (Harrison, 1992: 15). This farmer and birds chase created a huge development problem for the government to eradicate this antagonistic urban landscape that portrays poverty and wealthy, well planned settlement and poor, dirty, dyer and unplanned once, formality and informality, which are coexisting at the same space.

In the expedition of curb therurality-urbanity interface which portraysthis contradictingurban landscape, the government implemented the project to provide housing for informal dwellers. Therefore, by mid-1960, all the informal settlements in South Africa were completely eradicated (Harrison, 1992). Therefore, the government's fight against informal settlement was finally won. However, the successful eradication of informal settlements was short lived, with the provision of housing in urban areas pulling many black towards the city centre. Consequentially, the densification of black population into the city forced the government to cease the housing projects, thus the re-emergence of informal settlement within an urban areas. Therefore, the proliferation of informal settlements sparked a closer scrutiny in the expedition to solve housing problems within urban areas in South Africa. Some scholars argued that the legalisation of informal settlement can be seen as a nostrum to the housing challenges within the city. In South Africa which is characterised by high unemployment, poverty and illiteracy, informal settlement can now be seen as inevitable development gap. It is cogent that the contemporary urban challenged were bequeath by the apartheid era. The proliferation of informal settlement during the apartheid regime is now a character of South African cities 24 years into the democratic era.

### **Democratic policy context in South Africa**

The new democratic government was immediately confronted with a mammoth predicament of addressing housing deficit in urban areas and, thus eradicating the ever-increasing informal settlements (Ndinda, Uzodikeand Winnar, 2011; Arguello, Grant, Oteng-Ababio and Ayele, 2013; Darkey and Visagie, 2013). Since the democratisation of South Africa, various pieces of legislative framework have been promulgated to address the house backlog bequeathed by the apartheid regime. The Constitution of South Africa, 1996 (Herein referred to as Constitution) was adopted as a supreme law to afford all citizens with equal rights. Section 26 (1) of the Constitution afford all South African citizen with the right to access adequate housing. Since the adoption of the Constitution, there has been a significant shift in the housing trends from informal

to bricks houses (Ndinda *et al.*, 2011). The Constitution provided a new development trajectory for urban housing trend in addressing informality in urban centres.

In November 1994, the former president of South Africa Mr Nelson Mandela signed a Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) that aims at deepening democracy and eradicate all the injustices bequeathed by the apartheid regime (Reconstruction and Development Policy, 1994). The Constitution and RDP afforded the South African populace with the opportunity to live a place that preserves their human dignity. Therefore, the new democratic government was committed to provide basic services such as water, shelter and food to all South African citizens. Furthermore, since the promulgation of the RDP as a policy that is people centred, many people became the beneficiary in the provision of housing and other basic services. The provision of housing through the RDP has benefited many people poor over the past 24 years. SA News Agency (2014) noted that, in 1994, the housing backlog was on 1.2 million. It further indicated that those people living in informal settlement stood at 1.5 million. SA News Agency (2014) reported that by 2014, RDP has managed to house more 12.6 million poor people regardless of whether they are in rural and urban areas. The rapid population growth in urban area continue to puzzle urban planners (Ogbazi, 2013) in the capacity house the unprecedented invasion of people into urban areas. The densification urban population and the inability of local government to house these new urbanites, condition the proliferation of informal settlements. This proliferation of informal settlement continue to reflect the apartheid battle within a democratic era to address housing challenges in the cities.

Furthermore, the democratic government promulgated National Housing Policy and Subsidy Programme (NHPSP) in 2010 as a way of addressing the housing challenges in South Africa. The vision of NHPSP was to provide for the national sustainable human settlement for all the citizens of South Africa. The programme focused on profiting those people who have never owned fixed residential property. Furthermore, only lawful South African citizenry with certified copies of relevant documents were allowed to make the application. Furthermore, South African government implemented the housing subsidies as a panacea to eradicate informal settlements and shift to brick houses in urban areas (NHPSP, 2010; Ndinda *et al.*, 2011). The eradication of informality within an urban context was imperative in maintaining a “good image” that does not harbour environmental challenges. Since the inception of housing subsidies in 1994, it has sheltered more 2.8 million households (Ndinda *et al.*, 2011). Thus, the housing subsidies has seen the reduction in the proportion of people living in shacks and informal housing structures (African National Congress, 1994; Ndinda, 2009; Ndinda *et al.*, 2011).

Contrary to the important milestone in housing the homeless in South Africa, the government continue to chase a moving target in the expedition to eradicate informal settlements. Due to the fact that all this legislative prescribes aim to house only South African citizenry, informal settlements are characterised by people from other countries. Therefore, due to many people from other countries, the plethora of legislative

frameworks does not adequately address this development gap. The lack of resources, capacity and the increment of foreign nationals in South Africa complicate the commitment to eradicate informal settlements. The manifestation of informal settlement in urban areas continue to ruralise urban centres. Regardless of the plethora of legislative framework to combat housing problems in South Africa, informal settlements continue to be a serious character of democratic city.

### **Local government housing challenges in urban areas**

The demise of apartheid regime signalled a renewed hope for better life for all South African citizenry. Local government was immediately confronted with a mammoth challenge to eradicate informal settlement and reduce housing backlog (Housing Development Agency (HDA), 2012; SA News Agency, 2014). According to HDA (2012), informal settlement continue to house about a significant proportion of South African urban population. Local government immediately committed to address this housing problem by providing RDP houses. Twenty-four years into democracy, informal settlements continue to be an underlining character of most South African cities, and other African cities. Contrary to this notion, there has been an unmatched progress to provide housing for the homeless, however, the rapid urbanisation continue to overwhelm the efforts made by urban planners provide equitable houses for the poor. The manifestation of service delivery protests and the distraction of property hinder the achievement to house the poor in urban areas. The manifestation of informal settlements 24 years into democracy connotes that urban planning and governance continue to face a serious predicament. Furthermore, Ogbazi (2013) argued that the conventional planning and management practises have proved ineffective and inefficient in many cities to address the contemporary urban challenges, particularly informal settlements. Twenty-four years and counting, the fight against informal settlement and ruralisation of urban centres continue to evade most urban planners.

Over the years, one of the most pressing challenge that local government are confronted with, is the increasing number of undocumented foreign internationals. The foreign internationals residing in informal settlements create a huge predicament and fuel the government's inability to provide housing and eradicate informal settlements in South Africa. The multifaceted or convoluted challenges that urban planning is facing, is tied to their financial deficits within local municipalities which is answerable for the manifestation of informal settlements. Furthermore, finance is an important factor in dealing with informal settlement for those provinces that are doing well (African National Congress, 1994; Ndinda, 2009; Ndinda *et al.*, 2011). Those provinces without clear path in resolving the perpetuation of informal settlements appear to be failing to deal with the proportion of informal dwellers within the country (Ndinda *et al.*, 2011). The availability of resources, both capital and human resources provide an avenue in dealing with the problems confronting local government.

### **Antagonistic urban sceneries: rural-urban interface**

Steyn (2007) and Ngetich, Opata, Mwasi, Obiri and Meli (2015) posited that informal settlement portrays various alleys, lanes and small patches of open ground. The layout is informal and organic, but certainly not amorphous, organised by the distorted grid of lanes and alleys. Student architects trained to appraise ambience and environment have commented on the 'rural feel' and 'sense of place' within urban areas. This phenomenon was sensitised by Matthews and Kazimee quoted in Steyn (2007: 72) indicating that "in Third-World cities, we no longer see urbanisation of the rural migrants, but rather a growing ruralisation of the cities". The densification of urban population at a face value, can be seen as increasing the informality in urban areas. Contrary to the notion of informality, there is an emergence of a deeper meaning of rurality in the cities. The proliferation of informal settlements demonstrates the faltering democracy because of the country's inability to shelter for all its citizenry. The persistence of informal settlements in cities creates a problem of ruralisation of urban centres (Ndinda *et al.*, 2011; Ngetich *et al.*, 2015). These phenomenon of rurality in an urban context remain a serious development issue in the cities (Gxowa-Dlayedwa, 2006; Steyn, 2007). Consequently, the eruption of informal settlements has resulted in the increasing environmental problems such as pollution, land degradation, congestion and spread of communicable diseases. Therefore, the proliferation of informal settlements has changed the complexion of most cities in South Africa, thus perpetuate the ruralisation of urban centres (Steyn, 2007).

Informal settlements, though often pronounced by diverse appellations of low income and unplanned settlement (UN-HABITAT, 2003 cited in Agunbiaide, Olajde and Bishi, 2015), is a spatial construction of the living condition that portrays a certain character of a rural setting. Furthermore, these spatial construction of the living condition "do not conform to formal planning and legal rules, standards and institutional arrangements in the cities, and are often characterised by lack or limited access to one or more of the following five conditions: water, sanitation, durable housing sufficient living area and security of tenure" (Agunbiaide *et al.*, 2015: 1046). The phenomenon that is characterised by lack of water, sanitation, durable housing, and the security of tenure (Steyn, 2007, Agunbiaide *et al.*, 2015; Ngetich *et al.*, 2015) and most in particular unplanned coupled with urbanisation should be viewed from the rurality perspective. The concept of land invasions, squatting and informal settlements present an important and inevitable re-ordering of space in the process of post-apartheid social restructuring, that the poor will continue to 'make their own geographies', and that this must simply be accepted and managed by the urban authorities (Oelofse and Dodson, 1997). The re-ordering of the urban spaces has created the antagonistic urban sceneries. Urban areas are now facing the two divergent elements of informality and formality that coexisting in the same space. On one hand, urban landscape portrays a clean, well planned, serviced, appealing space which remain the main element of the city. However, alongside the well planned, clean, serviced and appealing spaces, exist an unplanned, unappealing space and informality that holds the characteristics of rural areas (Raveesh, 2014, Agunbiaide *et al.*, 2015; Ngetich *et al.*, 2015). Consequentially, the rurality and urbanity interface. Due to the proliferation of informal settlements in urban

sitting, this has created multiple problems in the city such as crime, spread of diseases and environmental problems.

The economic deficit resulted in the inability of the industrial sector to increase the employment opportunities to cater for the increasing urban population. The “deficit tends to impede efforts of providing planned plots for housing and basic services” (UN-Habitat, 2009 cited in Sakijeg *et al.*, 2014: 1). Consequently, the urban deficit has significantly contributed to the progression of informal settlements, thus question the planning ideology to effectively manage urbanisation. Drawing from an international experience, “the situation is worse in capital cities; for instance, 60% of inhabitants in Jakarta, Indonesia lived in informal settlements (commonly known as urban *kampung*sin Bahasa, Indonesia) by 2006 (UN-Habitat, 2006). The situation is even direr in the city of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where 80% of all residential houses in urban areas are found in informal settlements” (Harrison, 1992; Sakijeg *et al.*, 2014: 1). The envisaged urban landscape is clouded by the increasing rurality that portrays antagonistic image.

As indicated above, the manifestation of informality and the inability of an industrial sector to absorb the surplus of labour resulted in increasing poverty, unemployment, congestion and lack of services such as water, sanitation, and waste removal, infrastructure (roads and clinics). Urban setting is portraying the juxtaposition of two divergentsceneries where rurality and urbanity interface. Ruralisation of urban centres is increasingly becoming a persistence phenomenon in the 21 century. Therefore, the increasing informality and mushrooming of informal settlement painted a new image which is remote to the conventional understanding of the image of the cities. With regard to the increment of industrialisation in the cities, rurality now emerges as one of the defining character of urban landscape. Furthermore, urban centre harboured a vast amount of informal sector (informal trading) which was viewed as a nostrum to escalating poverty in urban areas. Informality and informal settlements provide a contrasting image to the notion rooted within an urban setting.

### **Paradigm shift within local government**

Urbanisation has been labelled as a complex phenomenon (Portugali, 2006) to plan for and manage in order to address the challenges that cities are confronted with on a daily basis. Cities hold both social and economic opportunities for most people, however, the management of urbanisation continue to evade urban planning. The conventional planning practises which most were inherited from the colonial system failed to provide solutions to the continuous rising in informal settlements and its deep inherent nature of rurality in it (Ogbazi, 2013). South African government has legislated that every municipality must come up with an Integrated Development Plan (IDP) as a planning tool to provide services and address the development challenges. However, since the inception of IDP in South Africa, housing the urban poor remains the hard nut to crack.

Therefore, the eradication of informal settlements requires a shift in planning paradigm. It was argued that planning has become an important tool in shaping the policy formulation and the growth of a city. In Britain, planning has been viewed as an area of public policy which is rooted and front-loaded from an evidence base perspective (Davoudi, 2015). The evidence base perspective articulates the importance of the acquisition of evidence about the areas prior to the preparation of the development plan. It was argued that the acquisition of evidence has the capacity to improve planning and eradicate informal settlements in urban areas. Furthermore, it was argued that the acquisition of evidence provides a sound planning. "This view perpetuates the Geddesian dictum of 'survey before plan' and assumes a linear and unproblematic process that begins with the collection of often descriptive data and ends with a blue print" (Davoudi, 2015: 317). In most cases, the policy implementation and impact on the eradication of informal settlement remains to be seen on the ground. The 2013 census report on informal settlements indicates that there are approximately 1,29,777 households which continue to house more than 3,306,697 individuals (Housing Development Agency (HDA), 2013). This shows that despite the implementation of IDP, there is a perennial existence of informal settlement in urban areas. Furthermore, it is predicated that better evidence has the potentiality to promote better policy (Davoudi, 2015).

In contrast, evidence alone does not provide sufficient insight in addressing the urban development problems. The acquisition of evidence and planning as a practice of knowing provide a new paradigm in understanding the entrenched predicament that conditions the manifestation of informal settlement. The planning theory views knowledge as a bottom-up approach which provides a formidable force for addressing the informal settlement. Davoudi (2015) pays attention to the practice of knowing as an important element that planners need to do to address urban problems.

Instead of thinking about knowledge as having an instrumental place in the planning process (i.e. to inform action), it is more useful to think about planning as a process of knowing and learning. This means articulating knowledge and action as recursively interlinked rather than considering the former as a precondition to, or coming before, the latter in a linear, causal chain... To conceive of planning as practice of knowing requires an understanding of the complex interrelationship between knowing what (cognitive/ theoretical knowledge), knowing how (skills/technical knowledge), knowing to what end (moral choices) and doing (action/practice). Together, these multiple forms of knowing provide the foundation for the art of practical judgement (wisdom) (Davoudi, 2015: 317-318).

Therefore, these provide an important insight in understanding planning of a complex phenomenon such as the eradication of informal settlements and addressing urban problems. According to Davoudi (2015), the sources of knowledge as a basis of planning can be viewed from different perspectives such as empiricist and rationalist perspectives. For empiricists the source of knowledge lies in the bottom-up (inductive), specific observations which can then lead to generalisation and theory building. For rationalists, knowledge comes from top-down (deductive) theories and laws which can then lead to hypotheses and their confirmation or refutation. The application of empiricist view provides important solutions to the perpetuation of informal settlements which can be rooted in the understanding of the real issues regarding residing there.

Bottom up approach can be an important approach to unlock and dislodge the entrenched predicament of this antagonistic urban areas.

The enforcement of policy has been viewed as an important framework to shape and address the image of the city (Shen, Ochoa, Shah and Zhang, 2011). The growth patterns of the city are shaped by a robust and knowledge base policy direction. In China and other developed countries have implemented urban villages to redress and mitigate the emergence of informal settlement (Shen *et al.*, 2011, Shen and Zhou, 2014; Zhang, 2015). These indicate that with a robust policy that target the structure of the city can have a profound impact in redressing the development challenges in urban areas. The policy should focus on the bottom up approach to capture the fundamental reasons behinds the emergence informal settlements. The urban planning should focus on knowing as a bottom up approach and integrated planning. However, during the apartheid era, many policies were implemented to control the emergence of informal settlements, but led to their perennial existence. One of the factors the contributed to the perennial existence of informal settlements during the apartheid era regardless of all this contingencies is the discriminatory and forceful control of black population in urban areas. This led to continuous 'cat and mouse chase' in the expedition to solve informal settlements. Therefore, a more collaborative, democratic and inclusive strategy is required to address rurality in an urban context.

The question is: can the legalisation of informal settlement act as panacea to the housing problem in urban areas or will it propel their existence? Can South Africa win the fight against housing backlog within the current economic climate? Can these challenges facing urban population be eradicated against the background of high unemployment and inequality? This are the questions that needs to be addressed if the fight against informal settlements and ruralisation of urban areas needs to be won. The different approaches of addressing informal settlements connote that, provinces are confronted with unique demographic challenges in addressing the rurality and urbanity interface. The provision of title deed to qualifying informal settlers will help to reduce that number of people residing in informal settlements (IMIESA, 2015). Contrary, the provision of title deeds my serve as a pulling factor and increasing complexity of management of urbanisation. Title deeds as a panacea to informal settlements should be reviewed. In order to provide a sustained settlement, the incorporation of people as part of participatory governance system provide an important form of knowledge acquisition for planning. Regardless of the manifestation of informal settlements in South Africa, there are some provinces that dearth clear strategies in addressing the housing problems (Ndinda *et al.*, 2011). Of paramount importance, clear provincial strategy hold an important factor in reducing the proportion of informal settlements than those who lack a clear strategy. For provinces to address the manifestation of informal settlements, there are several aspects that are needed to reduce the housing challenges. Collaboration and holistic approach to planning can be seen as new effective planning to curb the aggregation of rurality in urban areas.

## Conclusion

The paper highlighted that informal settlement has mushroomed under the market oriented growth of urban sector resulting in the emergence of urban poverty and housing deficit, thus relegating those who are unable to buy, lease, renting and hiring property. The mushrooming of informal settlement has been responsible to the transference of poverty to urban areas. Urbanisation remain the most complex and difficult to plan and manage in mitigating the emergence of urban environmental problems. With regard to the failure of the conventional urban planning that is rooted in the colonial era, the shift in planning paradigms must be inevitable. Thus, in order to address urban challenges, planning has to be rooted in the notion of knowing as a basis of planning paradigm. Bottom up approach in acquiring knowledge as the basis of providing an effective planning and management of informal settlement and other environmental problems. The paper concludes that the proliferation informal settlement coupled with lack of capacity to effectively planning, cities will continue faces various problems associated with urban centres such as crime, unplanned, dirty, land degradation, informality and most in particular ruralisation of cities. Furthermore, dearth of a clear strategy poses a deleterious ramification in the expedition to resolve the delinquencies of informal settlements that local government are confronted with in urban areas. Further, the paper concludes that within the current economic climate characterised by high unemployment and inequality, informal settlements will continue to characterise urban centres, thus rurality-urbanity interface with remain an entrenched character of South African cities.

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