

Are Informal Actors Urban Citizen? Urban Management and Governance in So-called "Informal Cities"

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The representation of African cities (if such a thing exists...) as informal cities is a very common topic, and must be strongly discussed. The aim of this paper, based on fieldwork evidences from Lomé (Togo), is to explore the links between this representation and urban management, and specially the room left for "informal actors" (who are they? how can they be identified?) in urban participation and governance.

I shall develop 3 points:

- 1) There is, since 90's, a strong (neoliberal?) injunction from global agencies (UNDP, WB, Cities alliance...) to promote informal activities *sl.* Those injunctions are dealing with urban economic development issues and are strongly connected with urban management matters (especially public space management partly understanding as a spatial economic urban resource for informal street trading activities).
- 2) But are informal activities, especially street trading, a development issue or an everyday life / survival (two different things) strategy or a poverty and underdevelopment symptom in an (African?) urban crisis context (post-SAP)? The question is how do informal actors are really involved in urban participation and governance as economic agents (this is an important point of Cities alliance's CDS procedures)? In Lomé, informal actors are not recognised as economic agents, for several reasons: a representation of what must be a capital-city (a prestigious (or so) city without visible poverty, *ie* without street trading); a linked representation of order; leak of local democracy and thinking of what can be "participation" (only an injunction - another one - from global agencies, NGOs, donors and multi- and bi-lateral cooperation?) and "civil society"... especially when facing eviction policies.
- 3) This absence of informal actors from actually CDS's diagnostic procedures (2010-2011) is an interesting clue of the disconnection between international injunction and real local procedures. Nevertheless, and this is the key point of my paper, we must not conclude that the voice(s) of informal actors is (are) unheard. In the CDS context, informal actors can be heard at ward level meetings because they are neighbourhood inhabitants (more than 80% of urban workers in Lomé are working in so-called informal economy)... and in another context (everyday urban management?) they can be heard through "arrangements" (many definitions of what is an arrangement may be presented) with local administrations. The question is: is it possible to be an informal actor in Lomé (or more generally in another "African city") if you are not an urban inhabitant? Is it possible to be an informal actor if you are not a "citadin" (untranslatable french concept)? Is it possible to be an informal actor if you are not an urban citizen (complex concept in a country without real democracy)?

