



Examining the Role of Urban Planners in Preventing Informal Settlements and Promoting Orderly City Growth in Lagos

Babafemi John Durojjaiye, Zaccheaus Opeyemi Ademola, Davies Oluwaferanmi O. & Joan Oghenedoro

ABSTRACT

This study examines the complex and often misunderstood role of urban planners in shaping the growth of Lagos, with a particular focus on the persistence of informal settlements and the challenge of achieving orderly urban development. Rather than treating informality as a failure of planning, the research approaches it as an outcome of deeper structural conditions, including rapid population growth, limited institutional capacity, housing shortages, and the mismatch between formal planning frameworks and everyday urban realities. Using a qualitative, spatially oriented methodology, the study analyses the physical form of selected areas across Lagos, highlighting contrasts between planned neighbourhoods and informal settlements in terms of density, layout, land use, and environmental adaptation. The findings reveal that informal settlements are not random or chaotic, but instead exhibit consistent spatial patterns shaped by economic necessity, incremental development, and social organisation. At the same time, formally planned areas, while more orderly in appearance, often exclude a large portion of the population due to rigid regulations and high development costs. The research further demonstrates that urban planners influence city outcomes not only through active interventions such as zoning and development control, but also through inaction, selective enforcement, and institutional limitations. This dual role contributes to a fragmented urban form where formal and informal systems coexist and interact. Efforts aimed solely at preventing informality, particularly through demolition and eviction are shown to be largely ineffective, often reproducing the same challenges in new locations. Ultimately, the study argues for a shift in planning practice from strict control to adaptive engagement. It suggests that planners should move toward more inclusive, flexible approaches that recognise informality as a permanent and functional component of the city. By integrating insights from informal urbanism into planning and design, Lagos can move toward a more realistic form of urban order, one that balances structure with accessibility, and regulation with the lived realities of its residents.

Keywords: Urban Planners, Informal Settlements, Orderly City Growth, Lagos

INTRODUCTION

Lagos is a city that is difficult to describe using simple terms. One major fact is that Lagos is a megacity shaped by both formal planning and daily improvisation. Planning regulations and development controls only exist on paper; the actual urban growth often follows more flexible and informal patterns. This situation creates a major challenge for architects and urban planners and presents a question: how to impose order on a city that is expanding faster than regulations can be enforced, plans approved, or infrastructure delivered. Lagos has experienced rapid population and spatial growth over the last few decades, driven by migration from one part of Nigeria and beyond. People are drawn to the city because of the economic opportunities or the expectation of them. However, land administration systems, infrastructure provision, and formal housing supply have not expanded at the same pace as the population is growing. Due to this, the city's physical form is majorly shaped by informal processes rather than by official planning intentions.

In theory, urban planners are expected to guide development through zoning regulations, development control, master plans, and policy frameworks aimed at ensuring safety, order, and sustainability. The continued growth and persistence of informal settlements across Lagos raise important questions about the effectiveness of these tools. If planning systems are in place, why does informality remain widespread? More importantly, what does "orderly city growth" mean in a context where a large proportion of the population depends on informal housing and employment? From an architectural

perspective, this article focuses on urban form, spatial patterns, and lived environments. It examines how planning decisions, as well as gaps in implementation, influence the physical structure and everyday experience of the city. Informal settlements are not treated simply as planning failures but as outcomes of the interaction between policy intentions and social realities.

Problem Statement: The Gap Between Planning Ideals and Urban Reality

Lagos has long been associated with ambitious planning visions from inception. From colonial-era regulations to post-independence development schemes and recent megacity strategies, the city has repeatedly been imagined as a modern and orderly metropolis. But translating these visions into practice has been a major issue. Informal settlements continue to expand across the city by the day, often occupying infrastructure corridors, environmentally sensitive areas, and zones designated for non-residential use. A key issue is the mismatch between formal planning approaches and the socio-economic conditions of the city population. Conventional planning assumes the availability of affordable housing, effective enforcement mechanisms, and well-regulated land markets. But in reality, these conditions are only partially met. Planning institutions are under-resourced, formal housing remains inaccessible to large segments of the population, and land ownership is often complex and contested (Agunbiade, 2015).

As a result, informal housing emerges not from resistance to planning but from the inability of formal systems to meet daily needs. Residents acquire land through informal means and build incrementally in line with their financial strength. Architecturally, this produces urban forms that diverge from planned layouts, including irregular plots, high building densities, limited setbacks, and poorly defined circulation networks. Despite their permanence, planning discourse often treats these settlements as temporary or illegal anomalies. Demolition and eviction exercises, frequently justified in the name of urban order, tend to displace communities without addressing the underlying causes of informality. Displaced residents often resettle informally elsewhere, reinforcing a continuous cycle of exclusion (Olajide, Agunbiade, & Bishi, 2018). The main problem is not only the existence of informal settlements but also the limited capacity of planning systems to engage with them meaningfully. This raises fundamental questions about how order, legitimacy, and urban quality are defined and for whom they are intended.

Research Aim

This research aims to examine the role of urban planners in shaping the physical development of Lagos, with particular attention to how planning tools influence the emergence, persistence, and spatial characteristics of informal settlements. Rather than evaluating planning success solely through policy outcomes, the study focuses on the city's built form as the primary expression of planning practice.

Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Analyse the spatial and morphological characteristics of informal settlements in Lagos.
2. Examine how planning regulations and institutional frameworks influence urban form and density.
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of planner-led interventions in preventing or managing informal settlement growth.
4. Identify architectural and planning implications for promoting more inclusive and structured urban development.

Research Questions

To achieve these objectives, the study is guided by the following questions:

1. How do urban planning laws and policies shape the physical form of Lagos?
2. What spatial patterns and morphological characteristics define informal settlements in selected areas of the city?
3. In what ways do planning approaches facilitate or constrain orderly urban development?

These questions link planning theory with architectural analysis, recognising that urban order is ultimately expressed through spatial form rather than policy documents alone.

Lagos Urbanisation Context: Continuous Expansion

Historical Roots of Lagos' Urban Form

The planning challenges facing Lagos state are deeply rooted in the city's history. Colonial-era planning prioritised administrative areas, port infrastructure, and segregated residential zones, often marginalising indigenous settlement patterns (Lamond, Awuah, & Falade, 2015). Post-independence master plans sought to modernise the city but frequently overestimated institutional capacity and underestimated population growth. Although informal housing was already emerging as a dominant form, it was rarely incorporated into formal planning frameworks. This legacy established a pattern in which urban realities consistently outpaced planning provisions. Informality was viewed as a deviation to be corrected rather than a structural component of urban growth.

Contemporary Growth and Housing Pressure

Lagos continues to grow rapidly, with population estimates exceeding 20 million and continuous in-migration. Formal housing supply has not kept pace with the expansion of the city in the last few decades, resulting in a housing deficit of several million units and pushing low-income households toward informal alternatives (Auwalu, 2023). Informal settlements play a central role in the city's functioning. Many residents are artisans, traders, transport workers, and service providers whose livelihoods depend on proximity to employment opportunities. These settlements are often strategically located to reduce commuting costs and support economic survival. Research by Aliu (2021) highlights high densities, shared facilities, and overcrowding in Lagos' informal neighbourhoods, alongside strong social networks and internal organisation. These areas function as stable communities rather than temporary shelters.

Environmental and Spatial Vulnerability

Many informal settlements in Lagos are located in environmentally vulnerable areas such as wetlands, floodplains, and coastal zones. These locations are often less regulated and less attractive within formal land markets. Although planning frameworks typically classify such areas as unsuitable for habitation, enforcement remains weak. Architecturally, residents respond through adaptive strategies such as stilt housing, raised walkways, and compact building clusters. While these solutions demonstrate resilience and ingenuity, they also expose residents to health and safety risks that reflect broader planning failures rather than individual choices (Auwalu, 2023).

Framing the Planner's Role

Lagos urban planners basically work under tight circumstances. They are meant to control a city whose development drivers go much beyond planning offices. Still, through what they authorize, what they overlook, and what they decide to enforce, planners can affect results. To grasp the planner's part, one must go beyond a straightforward success-failure dichotomy. It calls for consideration of how planning choices affect urban form obliquely, how legal loopholes enable informal development, and how other planning strategies could provide other spatial results. These problems lay the groundwork for the conceptual framework and literature review that comes next.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Informal Settlements as an Urban Process

The perspective on informal communities has evolved dramatically over time. Planning literature from earlier times often portrayed informality as a transitional phase, a fleeting reaction to urbanisation that would ultimately fade away when cities became more developed. Particularly in fast-growing cities all around Africa, Asia, and Latin America, that idea has proven persistently false. Early in the 2000s, researchers started claiming that formality is a rule rather than an anomaly for the urban system. Though even that simplification understates the complexity involved, UN-Habitat (2003) famously dubbed slums the "physical and spatial manifestation of urban poverty and inequality." Unformal settlements are not only sites of poverty; they are also places of production, social organisation, and spatial invention. Roy (2005) takes this point one step further by seeing informality as a kind of urbanisation rather than just a sector or area. This perspective sees informality as generated by governmental action as much as by its lack thereof. Planning rules, selective enforcement, and political discretion all help to define what is formal and what stays informal. For a city like Lagos, where informality frequently coexists with and even within officially designed areas, this viewpoint is quite helpful.

Urban Planning and Informality in African Cities

Planning methods imported from Europe and North America have always presented difficulties in African cities. These models typically presume consistent governance structures, applicable land-use regulations, and projected growth patterns. In truth, a lot of African cities have fast growing populations, not enough money, and complicated land ownership systems. Watson (2009) contends that in many cases of urban planning in Africa, formal planning logic conflicts with everyday survival tactics within a “conflict of rationalities.” Planning restrictions in such situations usually lack legitimacy among locals since they do not represent actual experiences. Informality then turns out to be a sensible reaction to exclusion rather than a defiant gesture. Many studies show how inflexible development rules and zoning can mistakenly encourage informal settlement expansion. People from low-income homes are essentially excluded from the formal system when building codes, infrastructure needs, or minimum plot sizes are defined beyond their reach (UN-Habitat, 2016). In Lagos, where formal house construction is mostly market-driven and priced far above the reach of the impoverished city dwellers, this is especially relevant. This poses a challenge for planners. Strictly enforcing standards could worsen exclusion, loosening them runs the risk of compromising planning power. The research rather points to adaptive planning frameworks that permit gradual development while yet directing spatial order than in choosing one extreme (Watson, 2014).

Lagos-Specific Scholarship on Informality and Planning

Lagos has drawn a lot of attention mostly because it shows how hard it is to balance fast growth of cities with the fact that there isn't enough planning ability. Researchers often emphasize the scope and persistence of informal settlements as well as the limits of traditional planning solutions. Valuable empirical knowledge comes from Aliu's (2021) thorough socio-spatial examination of Lagos slum areas. Using GIS and household-level data, Aliu shows that while Lagos's informal communities have high density, poor infrastructure, and overcrowding, they also have internal structure and social unity. The research demonstrates that many people have lived in these areas for years, which contradicts the notion that informality is only temporary. From a planning and governance angle, Lawanson and Odekunle (2020) contend that informality in Nigeria is a sign of underlying institutional flaws rather than particular disobedience. Planning policies, they argue, sometimes fail to meaningfully involve unofficial communities and instead depend on exclusionary rules and sporadic implementation. They contend, this compromises trust and reduces the efficacy of planning initiatives. Other research concentrated on Lagos underline the society repercussions of planning-led restoration. Olajide, Agunbiade, and Bishi (2018) look at how Lagos's plans for urban growth impact the living conditions of the city's. Their results imply that, instead of solving issues, regeneration initiatives and clearance activities typically drive people from their homes without offering workable substitutes, hence perpetuating cycles of poverty and informality. From an architectural point of view, Auwalu (2023) draws attention to the way that Lagos's informal communities, which include coastal regions, wetlands, and floodplains, are located in places that are ecologically sensitive where formal construction is not permitted. This spatial marginalisation is no coincidence; it shows how land markets and planning policies interact to drive low-income people into dangerous areas.

Planning, Urban Form, and Architectural Implications

Although many publications concentrate on policies and governance, fewer research investigate how at a minute level planning methods affect metropolitan design. Still, spatial patterns like street networks, plot layouts, building density, and public space availability clearly reveal urban order or disorder. Hillier (2007) contends that urban form actively influences social processes rather than just arises from them. Movement patterns, financial activity, and social interaction all depend on spatial arrangement. Though they present difficulties for emergency access and infrastructure supply, in informal communities compact designs and mixed-use buildings sometimes promote vibrant street life and financial activity. Research on informal settlements, including morphometric studies of sites such as Makoko, show that despite their deviation from formal planning norms, these settings typically have consistent spatial logics (Venerandi, 2022). This implies that for architects and planners informality should be studied rather than rejected.

Theoretical Framework

Informality as a Structuring Logic

Theoretically, this study builds on the idea that, especially in cities like Lagos, informality is a organizing principle of urbanisation. Central here is Roy's (2005) idea of informality as a form of municipal government. Through selective enforcement, political discretion, and inconsistent implementation of planning regulations, informality is created. While some changes are standardised, others are accepted, still others are destroyed, often depending on power dynamics rather than planning ideas. This viewpoint questions the idea that planners work outside of informality. Planning agencies are really involved in informal procedures in reality. Just as much as zoning maps do, decisions on which communities to renovate, which to expel, and which to ignore influence urban morphology.

Planning Capacity and Urban Form

Planning capacity is yet another important theoretical thread. Highlighting how constraints in institutional capacity, staffing, data, funding, and political support restrict planning results in Nigeria (Lamond, Awuah, and Falade (2015)). Urban development follows alternative logics when planners lack the means to regularly uphold rules. This usually produces dual urban shapes in Lagos: formally intended communities with defined layouts and amenities alongside informal areas with dense, flexible spatial patterns. These forms are interdependent components of the same city, not distinct worlds.

Architecture, Order, and Everyday Practice

Theoretical architecture layers another depth to this system. Order in cities is sometimes defined by symmetry, rules, and aesthetic coherence. Yet, daily city life often flourishes in situations that from a distance appear to be chaotic. Informal communities force designers to reconsider the parameters of functional order. This research regards informality as vernacular urbanism, spatial practices formed by necessity, culture, and collective experience rather than as the lack of design. This recognises that inhabitants actively create space in ways that planning systems have failed to fit, not that informality is romanticized or its dangers are disregarded.

Conceptual Framework

The investigation uses a conceptual framework that links planning practice to physical urban results by drawing together these strands. Planning systems plus institutional capacity equal regulatory enforcement (or absence thereof), urban form, degree of order or informality.

Within this context:

- Informal settlements are considered as spatial results of planning voids, not just illicit activities.
- Form is affected by urban planners both actively and passively.
- Patterns in architecture offer actual proof of planning efficacy.

This structure directs the study in following chapters, which thoroughly investigate spatial data and urban morphology.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design and Rationale

Based on architectural and urban design inquiry, this study uses a qualitative, spatially analytical research strategy. This path's selection is intentional. Although quantitative measures like population counts and housing shortages are crucial, they do not, by themselves, explain how planning choices actually appear in space. Ultimately, architecture deals with the physical look, feel, and operation of cities.

- Consequently, the approach gives top relevance to:
- Examination of metropolitan shape
- Understanding of spatial patterns
- Contrast between arranged and informal surroundings

Rather than determining planning success only via policy results, the research assesses planning effectiveness via physical manifestations: street networks, density, plot configuration, and building designs. This approach complements earlier architectural studies viewing the city as a spatial artifact fashioned by institutional decisions, social customs, and financial demands (Hillier, 2007).

Study Area Selection

The investigation centers on chosen areas mirroring many planning pressures and developmental trends given the size of Lagos:

- Lagos Mainland: for older, inner-city districts with well-known informal settlements.
- Alimosho: a densely populated, peri-urban area formed by quick growth and little planning control
- A coastal and high-value area, Eti-Osa combines official development with informal waterfront communities.

These sites were chosen to allow for comparison between:

- Planned versus unwritten development
- High-value versus low-income areas.
- Inner-city vs peri-urban dynamics

Taken together, they capture a representative picture of Lagos's geographical conflicts.

Urban Morphology of Informal Settlements in Lagos

Density and Plot Configuration

Unmatched density distinguishes Lagos's informal settlements. Often spanning almost the whole plot, satellite imagery shows little open space surrounded by dense building clusters. Narrow and erratic are obstacles if they exist at all. Aliu's (2021) research notes shared living areas and high occupancy rates inside slums, therefore supporting this conclusion. Architecturally, this density is not coincidental; it mirrors:

- Lack of territory
- Financial requirement
- Stepwise building approaches

As resources permit, locals frequently construct vertically, producing tiered buildings with different rooflines and uneven heights.

Street Networks and Accessibility

Usually without a well-defined road hierarchy, informal settlements include. Narrow paths and alleys that develop naturally offer access instead of primary, secondary, and tertiary routes. Though these routes place pedestrian movement and local engagement first, difficulties arise for:

- Emergency access
- Trash gathering
- Setting of infrastructure

Planned communities, however, have ordered road systems intended for car movement and service delivery. These designs, nevertheless, somewhat limit social contact and are less flexible for casual commercial activity. This contrast emphasizes a core planning conflict, adaptability against efficiency.

Building Typologies and Mixed Use

With residential, business, and productive activities taking place inside the same building, informal settlements in Lagos often exhibit mixed-use architectural styles. Upper levels offer living quarters, whereas ground floors could house tiny businesses or workshops. Consistent with findings by Olajide et al. (2018), who stress the value of distance between homes and income-generating activities, this spatial mixing helps to create income and lower commute costs. Formal zoning rules, by contrast, frequently separate residential and commercial activities, therefore driving illicit economic activity into uncontrolled areas.

Environmental Adaptation

Architectural form in seaside communities like Makoko reacts straight to environmental limitations. Structures are built on stilts; movement is accomplished by canoes or wooden walkways, materials are chosen for affordability and simplicity of replacement. Although these adaptations show creativity, they also introduce inhabitants to environmental threats including water pollution and floods. Auwalu (2023) points out that such communities cover environmentally marginal terrain partly because formal development shuns these areas, making their access solely by informal means.

Planned Neighbourhoods and Spatial Order

Layout and Infrastructure Provision

Planned neighbourhoods in Lagos are typically characterised by clearly defined plot boundaries, regulated building heights, and designated infrastructure corridors. These spatial features contribute to a level of visual clarity and administrative legibility that makes such areas easier to service. Roads are generally wider, drainage systems are formally installed and public spaces are clearly demarcated. Despite these advantages, planned neighbourhoods remain largely inaccessible to low-income households. High land values, formal approval processes, and construction standards effectively exclude a significant proportion of the urban population from participating in the formal city. As a result, spatial order is achieved at the cost of social inclusion.

The Illusion of Order

Although planned neighbourhoods appear orderly, their rigidity often limits adaptability. Strict development controls leave little room for incremental construction or flexible use of space, forcing residents to conform to standards that do not reflect their economic realities. This produces a fundamental contradiction within Lagos' urban structure, the formal city is orderly but exclusive, while the informal city is inclusive but exposed to risk.

Planning Enforcement and Spatial Outcomes

When planning boundaries are compared with actual development patterns, significant enforcement gaps become evident. Areas designated for non-residential uses frequently accommodate dense residential development, while peri-urban zones continue to expand informally beyond planned limits. These inconsistencies are not simply administrative oversights, they represent spatial evidence of planning systems struggling to respond to rapid urban growth. Lamond et al. (2015) attribute uneven enforcement to limited institutional capacity, political interference, and fragmented governance structures. These weaknesses are reflected in fragmented urban form, uneven infrastructure provision, and the close juxtaposition of formal and informal layouts.

Interim Reflections

The spatial analysis demonstrates that informal settlements in Lagos are neither random nor chaotic. Instead, they display consistent morphological patterns shaped by necessity, exclusion, and adaptation. At the same time, planned neighbourhoods reveal the limitations of rigid regulatory frameworks in a rapidly changing urban environment. Urban planners influence these outcomes not only through intentional interventions but also through regulatory omissions and selective enforcement. Recognising this relationship is essential to rethinking what "orderly growth" can realistically mean in the context of Lagos.

Discussion: Rethinking the Role of Urban Planners in Lagos

Why "Prevention" Often Fails

At this point, it becomes clear that informal settlements in Lagos persist not because planning is absent but because planning systems are poorly aligned with the city's actual patterns of growth. The concept of prevention assumes the availability of viable alternatives within the formal housing market. In Lagos, this assumption is rarely valid. Formal housing provision remains heavily oriented toward middle and high income groups, while regulatory standards continue to exclude the majority of urban residents. In this context, informality emerges not as a rejection of planning but as a response to its limitations. Olajide, Agunbiade, and Bishi (2018) note that many state-led initiatives prioritise global competitiveness and visual modernisation over social inclusion. Clearance operations are frequently justified using arguments related to environmental risk or urban order, yet their social consequences displacement, livelihood disruption, and community fragmentation are often overlooked. From an architectural standpoint, such interventions rarely produce improved spatial outcomes, as demolished settlements tend to reappear elsewhere under more precarious conditions.

Planners as Mediators Rather Than Enforcers

Recent studies increasingly suggests that urban planners in cities such as Lagos must move beyond a strictly enforcement-based approach toward a mediating role. This shift does not imply abandoning regulation but rather adapting it to local realities through negotiation and incremental implementation. Lawanson and Odekunle (2020) argue that planning legitimacy is as important as formal authority. Where planning systems are perceived as exclusionary, compliance is unlikely. Conversely, participatory approaches such as community mapping, upgrading programmes, and tenure recognition encourage residents to invest in their environments. Planners therefore shape urban form not only through direct regulation but also through decisions about infrastructure investment, settlement upgrading, and the selective application of standards. These choices determine whether informal areas remain marginalised or become integrated into the wider urban system.

Informality and the Meaning of Urban Order

A central theme of this study is the tension between formal definitions of order and lived spatial realities. Conventional planning often equates order with visual regularity, zoning clarity, and geometric layouts. Informal settlements challenge this view by producing a different form of order grounded in social relationships, proximity, and everyday use. Hillier's (2007) work on spatial configuration highlights that urban order is not solely visual. Dense, mixed-use environments can support movement, economic activity, and social interaction more effectively than strictly zoned districts. In Lagos, informal settlements frequently perform well in these respects, despite clear deficiencies in infrastructure and environmental safety. Acknowledging this does not imply idealising informality. Rather, it requires recognising that residents actively produce functional urban space under constrained conditions.

Architectural Implications

Learning from Informal Urban Form

For architects, informal settlements offer important insights into how space is produced when design is driven by necessity rather than regulation. Practices such as incremental construction, flexible space use, and adaptive density demonstrate strategies that formal architectural systems often struggle to accommodate. Makoko's stilt-based architecture, for example, represents a rational response to water-based conditions and land scarcity rather than a deliberate violation of planning norms. While these structures raise significant health and safety concerns, their spatial logic warrants serious architectural engagement rather than outright dismissal.

Rethinking Design Standards

A key implication of this study is the need to reconsider conventional design and planning standards. Minimum plot sizes, rigid zoning, and fixed building typologies frequently exclude low-income households by default. More flexible standards—allowing incremental development, mixed uses, and higher densities—could support more inclusive urban growth without undermining safety or functionality. Achieving this requires closer collaboration between architects and planners. Architects can help translate informal spatial practices into safer, scalable design solutions, while planners can develop regulatory frameworks that support gradual upgrading rather than wholesale replacement.

Policy Implications

From Clearance to Upgrading

The findings strongly suggest that clearance-based approaches are counterproductive. They disrupt social networks, eliminate affordable housing, and fail to address the structural drivers of informality. Incremental upgrading—focused on infrastructure provision, tenure security, and livelihood support—offers a more sustainable alternative. UN-Habitat (2016) identifies in-situ upgrading as an effective strategy for improving living conditions without displacement. Although such approaches remain limited in Lagos, they demonstrate the potential for more equitable and effective planning outcomes.

Strengthening Planning Capacity

Meaningful planning reform in Lagos must also address institutional capacity. Chronic shortages in staffing, funding, and data continue to undermine planning effectiveness (Lamond, Awuah, & Falade, 2015). Without adequate capacity, even well-conceived policies struggle to translate into spatial change. Data-

driven planning tools—such as spatial analysis, community mapping, and real-time monitoring—could improve responsiveness and accountability. However, these tools must be supported by sustained political commitment to inclusive urban development.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the role of urban planners in addressing informal settlements and promoting orderly growth in Lagos. Rather than a simple failure of planning, the findings reveal a deeper misalignment between regulatory frameworks and urban realities. Informal settlements emerge where planning systems fail to accommodate economic constraints, housing demand, and social practices. Urban planners shape the city not only through direct intervention but also through regulatory gaps and selective enforcement. Moving forward, orderly growth in Lagos will require a shift from prevention to integration and from rigid control to adaptive governance. Architects and planners must engage with informality as a permanent spatial condition, learning from its efficiencies while addressing its risks. Order in Lagos will be negotiated, incremental, and imperfect but potentially more inclusive and resilient if grounded in the realities of the city itself.

REFERENCES

- Agunbiade, M. E. (2015). The limit of land regularisation as a poverty alleviation strategy in informal settlements: Empirical evidence from Lagos, Nigeria. *Journal of Construction Project Management and Innovation*, 5(1), 134–154.
- Aliu, I. R. (2021). Living on the margins: Socio-spatial characterization of slum communities in Lagos, Nigeria. *Habitat International*, 107, 102307. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2020.102293>
- Auwalu, F. K. (2023). A study of Lagos City, Nigeria. *Journal of Contemporary Urban Affairs*, 7(1), 120–135.
- Hillier, B. (2007). *Space is the machine: A configurational theory of architecture*. Space Syntax.
- Lamond, J., Awuah, K. B., & Falade, J. (2015). *Urban land, planning, and governance systems in Nigeria*. University of the West of England.
- Lawanson, T., & Odekunle, D. (2020). *Urban informality in Nigeria: Town planning priorities for engagement and inclusion*. Nigerian Institute of Town Planners.
- Olajide, O. A., Agunbiade, M. E., & Bishi, H. B. (2018). The realities of Lagos urban development vision on livelihoods of the urban poor. *Journal of Urban Management*, 7(1), 21–31. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jum.2018.03.001>
- Roy, A. (2005). Urban informality: Toward an epistemology of planning. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 71(2), 147–158. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944360508976689>
- UN-Habitat. (2003). *The challenge of slums: Global report on human settlements*. United Nations.
- UN-Habitat. (2016). *World cities report 2016: Urbanization and development – Emerging futures*. United Nations.
- Venerandi, A. (2022). A morphometric comparison between Makoko and Venice. In *Comparative urban studies* (pp. 423–441). Springer.
- Watson, V. (2009). Seeing from the south: Refocusing urban planning on the globe's central urban issues. *Urban Studies*, 46(11), 2259–2275. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098009342598>
- Watson, V. (2014). African urban fantasies: Dreams or nightmares? *Environment and Urbanization*, 26(1), 215–231. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956247813513705>