A Performative Approach to Urban Informality: Learning from Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro

Frank Müller *University of Amsterdam*

Abstract: In light of perpetuated exclusions in and through urban development, governance and planning along the dichotomy of formality and informality, I argue that informality should be conceived of as a socially embedded and embodied signifier. Building upon recent approaches to overcome the dichotomy, I hence develop a performative approach toward urban informality. I discuss informality as a methodological orientation to rethink power relations inherent to dwelling and confined housing. Engaging in a transnational and mutual learning process, the paper conducts a "disjunctive comparison" (Lazar 2012) between suburban areas of Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro. Building on ethnographic data, I highlight the active integration of wealthier populations in performing informality and demonstrate that, as a socially embedded role and at times strategically appropriated signifier, informality partakes in a deepening precariousness, and in a normalisation of uncertainty as a form of governing in urban Latin America.

Keywords: urban informality, dwelling, uncertainty, precarisation, citizenship, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro

Résumé : Au vu des exclusions perpétuées dans et par la gouvernance, la planification et le développement urbains selon la dichotomie formel/informel, je soutiens que l'informel doit être conçu comme un signifiant socialement ancré et incarné. Ainsi, j'élabore une approche performative de l'informalité urbaine à partir d'approches récentes visant à surmonter cette dichotomie. J'envisage l'informel comme une orientation méthodologique qui permet de repenser les relations de pouvoir inhérentes à l'habitat et au logement confiné. Adoptant un mode d'apprentissage transnational et réciproque, j'effectue une « comparaison disjonctive » (Lazar 2012) entre les zones périurbaines de Mexico et Rio de Janeiro. L'article s'appuie sur des données ethnographiques pour mettre en lumière l'intégration active des populations aisées dans la performance de l'informel. Il démontre en outre que l'informel, en tant que signifiant socialement ancré et parfois même stratégiquement approprié, contribue à l'aggravation de la précarité et à la normalisation de l'incertitude comme forme de gouvernance en Amérique latine urbaine.

Mots-clés : informalité urbaine, habitat, incertitude, précarisation, citoyenneté, Mexico, Rio de Janeiro

Introduction

The relationship between informality and formality has received ongoing critical attention in the social sciences, particularly in urban studies (Boudreau and Davis 2016; Pasquetti and Picker 2017). To avoid reiterations of the dichotomy of both spheres, and its correlation with the Global North and South divide, urban scholars now argue that informality should be conceived as a power relation (Roy 2005). Conceived in this way, informality pervades knowledge production and circulation, planning procedures, and mundane ways of dwelling and working. In this paper I wish to follow this relational turn, which destabilises the dichotomy of formality and informality. A relational approach invites us to closely examine informality's class-specific connotations. Urban informality has been broadly discussed as referring to uncertain land tenure, to insufficient infrastructural provision and to transgressions of zoning regulations, or more generally, as referring to a "way of life" (AlSayyad 2004) of the urban poor. Yet it is now also experienced by other socio-economic groups who feel threatened by both expanding "slums" and the splintering subdivisions of upper-middle-class gated communities as well as by real estate developers' land-use transgressions.

This paper first situates this "post-dualistic" (Recio et al. 2016) shift in the long-lasting debates on the category of informality. In this way, I wish to contribute to the exploration of those urban, peripheral, or "gray spaces" (Yiftachel 2009) in which the notion of informality sustains and nurtures the exclusory, marginalising effects of capital-interest, elitist urban planning. This contribution adds to investigations of how "citizen claims for servicing informal areas can itself [*sic*] transform the formal contours of the law and state power" (Davis 2018, 375). In particular, I aim at highlighting the ways in which wealthier urban residents and real estate developers are actively forming part of this transformative potential of informality. To frame this argument, the paper

distinguishes three approaches that have conceptualised urban informality: first, as an objective fact coterminous with state failure; second, as a discursive process, as when informality is constructed as threat; and third, as material practice. Taking the practice approach further, I argue that urban informality is a methodological orientation through which scholars can rethink the nexus of urban space, citizenship and the state. To highlight the usefulness of this methodological perspective, I identify urban informality as a socially embedded category through which to address practices and power relations in urban land-use and housing-related conflicts. This approach addresses the heterogeneity of ways in which political alliances and affinities are shaped, enacting an unequal, spatialised citizenship. Drawing from a "disjunctive" (Lazar 2012) reading of informality's social embeddedness in polarised and fragmented peripheries of Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro, this paper identifies three facets of performing informality: in mundane ways of dwelling, informality (1) unsettles, (2) becomes enacted and (3) empowers in and through personalised social encounters between citizens and government officials. I will demonstrate that while these encounters are situated forms of acting out norms, they are not necessarily repressive (that is, leading to the eviction of settlements), but also underlie strategic appropriations that conversely can have an empowering impact on social positions. I conclude that, despite occasional empowerments, informalisation is deepening "precarity," which, although "lived differentially" (Butler 2015, 21) by members of different socio-economic classes, normalises the life experiences of uncertainty.

Urban Informality: A Performative Approach to Precarisation

Following Diane Davis's recent conclusion that informality is a "critical analytical point of departure for theorizing governance, citizenship, and social order" (2016, 2), this section develops a performative approach to urban informality. The performative approach will then provide methodological guidance to make sense of the emic uses of the signifier informality that underlie what I call the precarisation of citizenship. Before developing this methodological orientation, I will first introduce the concept of precarisation and then situate informality in broader debates on (mostly) Latin American urban development.

This paper draws from two cases that provided me with insights into everyday situations in which "informality matters" (Müller 2014) in marginalised communities' struggles for dwelling. I wish to argue that rethinking urban informality serves as a methodological orientation for understanding how the precarisation of citizenship is enacted in encounters between residents and government officials. Citizenship I understand as an enacted, negotiated and unequal relationship (Holston, 2009; Isin and Turner, 2007) in which articulating the right to dwelling assumes a constitutive role on normative "citizenship agendas" (de Koning et al., 2015). A precarious citizenship, in turn, can be characterised by the constant need to struggle for the most basic conditions of livelihood, such as dwelling and access to social goods and urban services. When this livelihood is threatened – for example, by the loss of a place to live, to dwell, that is, a house in a social environment – life's future itself becomes uncertain.

This uncertainty, turned systematic and as part of a neoliberal form of governing, has been termed "precarity." Building on Judith Butler's work, Isabell Lorey (2015) distinguishes three interrelated dimensions of the precarious. First, the socio-ontological dimension of the *precariousness* of human life refers to the condition of vulnerable existence and social dependency. The second dimension Lorey calls *precarity*, defined as a category of order, one "which designates the effects of different political, social and legal compensations of a general precariousness" (12). Precarity can be located in the unequal distribution of precariousness and the acclimatisation of different social groups to such inequality. This precarity turns into a principle in neoliberal governmentality in Lorey's third dimension of the precarious, *governmental precarisation* – individuals tend to increasingly embody the existential fact of living precariously and are therefore assimilating to precarisation as a form of (self-) governing that is in accordance with given normative frameworks.

I argue throughout this paper that precarisation is pervading the agendas of citizenship of diverse groups of residents. This precarisation is composed of physical, legal, political and social layers eroding people's ways of dwelling; urban informality is conducive to understanding how these layers intertwine as they condition a normative uncertainty.

The remainder of this article turns to the process of informalisation that concretises and sustains such normalised uncertainty, or: precarisation.

Situating Urban Informality

Since the late 1960s, the study of informality, originating from urban development discourse (ILO 1972; Turner 1968), has determined the dwelling and economic activity of the marginalised as a threat to progress and modernisation. Early studies emphasised the intrinsic correlation of formality and informality with a "dependent"

capitalism (Hardoy and Satterthwaite 1987, 23; Holston 2009, 245). As the constitutive other to the state (Castells 1972; Bromley 1978, Schteingart 1973), informality signified a way of urbanisation that was to be tolerated rather than regulated by strict building standards. The lack of registration of property and the misuse of technical land-use prescriptions made informal urbanisation a mass phenomenon in the 1960s, mainly in Mexico and Peru (Azuela 2006). While eventual formalisation gave a legal framework to the urbanistic status quo of the neighbourhoods, it did not account for the demographic, social and political dynamics in the expanding urban outskirts (Gilbert and Varley 1991), leaving marginalised communities in a precarious legal, political and economic state.

Discourse-oriented studies have critically assessed the stigmatising and criminalising effect of public planners', academics' and development agencies' use of the signifier informality. Including such discursive agency in the examination of livelihood in peripheral neighbourhoods acknowledges that precarity is (at least co-) produced by academic and urban policy-oriented knowledge production. This orientation makes it clear that universalising the formally planned Western city as a model envisions the urban South as, at best, a geographical referent for creative, yet deviant forms of urbanisation (Ong and Roy 2011). These critical voices argue that naming the inhabitants of informal settlements as culprits of violence and crime has engendered negative effects for the urban poor residing in those areas, including the militarisation of the neighbourhoods (Gledhill 2015). In this regard, Mike Davis's dystopic vision of "slums" (Davis 2004) has fed the arguments of military strategists and theorists (Kilcullen 2012). They claim that the concentration of poverty in these areas, together with a fragmented authority, builds the fertile ground for urban insurgencies, whether politically or economically motivated (Müller and Müller 2016).

Providing an analytical orientation toward the materials, objects and practices of diverse urban actors, others address the production of the urban from the ground up (Angotti 2013). These approaches propose an orientation toward material state–citizenship relations through the materiality of urban infrastructure (Amin 2014) or housing (McFarlane 2011). Citizenship is shaped by (political) practices of private actors, residents and public officials to secure land tenure and access urban services (Morange, Pilo, and Spire 2018). With human and non-human agentic "infrastructure" put centre stage, the class-specific inequalities that typically rule access become visible (Amin and Thrift 2017). However, such assemblage thinking has not overcome the dichotomy of formal and informal practices. The "rhizomatic" self-organisation of the urban poor is again represented in ways that oppose it to formal, "tree-like" master planning (Dovey 2012, 354). Similarly, Amin and Cirolia (2017) conceive informality as a form of governance that they locate in particular places ("informal" settlements). These approaches thereby obscure the informal practices of the urban elite (real estate developers, politicians, etcetera) and remain uninterested in the political alliances and affinities that routinely connect members of different socio-economic classes in segregated urban spaces, such as household workers, or vigilantes that live in "informal" settlements and work in the adjacent gated condos.

Despite the growing awareness that "language matters" (Gilbert 2007), informality-related labels such as poverty, criminality and exceptionality continue to reproduce hierarchies and exclusions in and through urban development and planning. It is therefore necessary to engage with an analysis of the power-laden process of signification and ask how informality is enacted, performed and appropriated by urban citizens. Various scholars now propose an end to the dichotomy of formality and informality (see the discussion in the introduction to this paper). Such a relational approach allows for a blending of emic and etic understandings of urban informality. The way in which informality has entered the everyday language as a signifier in order to establish social distinction, as well as social alliances, and to justify the construction of physical boundaries in the built environment can thereby be addressed (Fischer et al. 2014; Müller 2014), allowing us to understand citizenship as a differentiated relationship with the state, produced in everyday encounters (Connolly and Wigle 2017; Goldstein 2010). The turn toward the encounter as a particular element of dynamic power relations foregrounds the procedural informalisation in everyday practices of dwelling. Included in this methodological orientation toward power relations enacted in and through encounters are not only the urban poor, but also those who act in the name of the state, that is, government representatives, the police and public planners. In addition, the signifier accumulates meaning inasmuch as the relationship between state and citizens involves materials and objects of urban dwelling.

I will trace the contested, socially distinguishing and power-framing uses of the signifier in everyday encounters. I call this practice-based methodological orientation to urban informality a performative approach. I propose to understand informality – borrowing from Butler's (1993) and West and Zimmermann's (1987) concept of "doing gender" – as a socially performed role, the doing of informality. Informality functions similarly to gender roles, which are socially constructed and performed, as well as socially ascribed and situationally self-assumed.

Subjects' (here: urban residents') capacities to both play out socially expected roles and disrupt normalised links with a particular subjectivity – that is, informality as being linked to the urban poor – constitute an emancipatory and transformative power. This capacity, moreover, depends on other material, social and symbolic forms of capital related to ethnic and gendered ascriptions.

Using this performative approach, I am interested in understanding how informality is being enacted – "doing informality" (Müller 2014). Similarly to how gender has been discussed as a simultaneously (externally) ascribed and (self-)appropriated role embodied in "repeated acts" (Butler 2010, 15), this approach translates a descriptive use of informality (as characterising poorer settlements) into a discursive and political practice.

I examine how different actors, such as residents, developers, planners and associations, act on behalf of formalising land use, access to urban services, and landed property and thus negotiate their social position as citizens. This turns researchers' attention toward concrete everyday processes, and embodied, material encounters by which competing groups attempt to establish urban order and shape understandings of social phenomena, territories, subjects and practices.

I understand informalisation as a process that establishes precarity as a governance principle by normalising uncertainty. However, it is my contention that this hegemonic signification also reveals informalisation to be a political space for urban residents; they can strategically appropriate the signifier to make their claim for urban improvements. To show this at times empowering use, I analyse the emic uses of informality.

Comparison as Procedural Strategy

My methodological orientation directs me toward theorising on the performativity of ascribed and embodied roles and subject positions alongside socio-material encounters and the formation of political affinities. In drawing from fieldwork in two distinct contexts, peripheries of Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro, I use comparison as a procedural strategy to build a theory of informality. It was only by rereading empirical data, fieldwork notes, and interviews collected in Mexico City a few years after the fieldwork, and after familiarising myself with a new research site in Rio de Janeiro, that said empowering appropriation of the signifier became clearer to me. Phrased in methodological, and less contingent, terms, such comparative reflection "across apparently divergent urban experiences" (Robinson 2011, 2) can be a heuristic way of reading one's own research results through lenses that were shaped in another place/research site. I propose to call this reading, following Sian Lazar, a "disjunctive comparison." Lazar (2012, 352) understands this "as a concept that aids in thinking through ethnographic research and analysis, a process that is ongoing and responsive to the kinds of ethnographic material that many anthropologists gather over the course of their research careers." Her approach thus resonates with my objective to compare fieldwork data from studies of two different sites, from different phases of my research trajectory (PhD to postdoc), that had not been designed as comparative studies in the first place. Lazar proposes to strategically "set two groups (or cultures, societies) alongside one another and see what comes out of an examination of their similarities and differences" (352). This is a call for juxtaposing cases and using preliminary conclusions in order to improve understandings of each case and, beyond that, to learn about more general processes.

This paper draws from 24 months of qualitative, mainly ethnographic research (semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, and participant observation) in Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro between 2010 and 2016. Such a translocal learning process shall suffice to identify practices of informalisation that are common to different, but similarly polarised urban areas. While these processes are configured differently in each site, they can nevertheless be used to determine "connections and circulations through which cities already inhabit one other" (Robinson 2011, 2). This strategy then contributes to a theory of urban informalisation as the embodied acting out of a differentiated citizenship, and of differently lived precarisation as a global process that shapes urban environments.

Socially Embedding Informality

I will start with two vignettes from my fieldwork in suburban conflictive and contrastive areas of Interlomas, Mexico City (2010–2012), and Barra da Tijuca/Jacarepaguá, Rio de Janeiro (2014–2016).

Situation 1: A Historical Alliance

> I arrive at the house of Maria Soledad in Montón Cuarteles [a popular neighbourhood in Huixquilucan, Mexico City]. A meeting between residents of the neighbourhood with representatives of the municipality [of Huixquilucan] and of [the construction company] ALDESEM has just started. As I squeeze into the packed living room, engineers of ALDESEM start to explain technical details about a tunnel to be constructed in the area. The tunnel is going to cut through the hill under the neighbourhoods and will connect [the luxury gated community] Ciudad Bosque Real to Interlomas [a business and shopping district in Mexico City's western periphery].

> An engineer points at a map with technical drawings to visualize how this tunnel will be constructed without destabilising the hill. Residents around me start to articulate concerns, first quietly, then more loudly until interrupting the presentation. (field notes, 4 November 2012)

The crowd turned its attention toward Daniel de los Ángeles, a resident of the community, when he raised concerns regarding the tunnel. He articulated what many of the present neighbours were thinking: the tunnel had already been rejected by the community, and the engineers should stop giving technical explanations. As he directed the focus of the meeting toward the delegates present, Teresa and Margarita, asking them to take a clear position with regards to the project, the meeting changed its character from being technologically informative and educational to what in the Mexican context is called *concientización*.[1] At the time of this research (late 2012), both delegates had been intermediaries between residents and political parties, distributing material goods among their fellow citizens and guaranteeing the beneficiaries' votes for the sponsoring party in exchange. When these "brokers" (Koster 2016) refused to support the community majority's opposition to the project, Daniel called me to acknowledge that the delegates' close personal contacts with the local conservative political party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) would limit the community's political opposition to the tunnel. He stated that

> this will be our first legal manifestation, which tomorrow we will dispose for the signature [of all residents] so that it receives the highest possible support. Because now we will deprive the delegate of her responsibilities, although ideally she would sign as our representative. Yet as we are about to constitute ourselves as citizen resistance, we do not limit ourselves to our representative. (field notes, 2012)

Brokers embody diverse social roles and thereby consensually generalise socio-economic and socio-political positions. In this case, the then still delegates attempted to ease frictions between the community's collective will and the ruling political party as well as the real estate developers who put the latter under pressure to file a construction licence for the tunnel. This way they are not merely representing the interests of "the state," "the market," or a societal group, but actively constituting a novel position, one of an intermediary between the members of the allegedly homogenous tripartite of state, market and people, as James (2011) shows. During the meeting, the residents present unitedly deviated from the delegates', or brokers', position, which was perceived as being unbalanced and catering too much to the local elites' interests. The first public expression of a newly forming group of residents, with Daniel as delegate, claimed a simultaneously physical and political space: "The situation grows tense again after Daniel's input and Teresa and Margerita in tears and accused of badly representing the community's will, as well as the engineers getting pushed out of the living room quite forcefully" (field notes, 2012). What brought up the residents' concerns was the fear of (involuntary) resettlement as a result of the construction. The residents feared that the tunnel would, in this earthquake-exposed area, physically endanger the houses, when compensation as promised by public authorities in case of damage or destruction was not legally guaranteed to everyone: While the neighbourhood[2] as a whole had been included in the Municipal Urban Development Plan (Municipio 2009) and had thus been "regularised," its legal status thereby confirmed, the individual houses and plots had not been regularised in the same way. Subdivisions, vertical expansions, and changes in the land use (commercial to residential or vice versa) had usually not been reported to the authorities, submitting parts of the neighbourhood to an "informal" status.

Several persons explained that they had not always paid tax nor retained electricity bills. As a result, proving legal ownership of their plot and house, as well as the vertical expansions along the years, would be a problem for them that could cause partial or complete loss of their belongings. The turn toward one's own state of informality – when becoming threatened by urban development projects and planning practices – was appropriated as a common basis for the political alliance. There were several self-referential uses of the term "informality." This suggests that it has entered the everyday vocabulary of those populations who are subject to official recognition by planning authorities.

The residents furthermore appropriated the signifier informality to express class difference. They felt treated in unjust ways by the municipality, which, in their eyes, would easily change land-use prescriptions when real estate investment firms' interests were concerned and thus act informally on behalf of wealthier populations. As a result, their contestation was directed against the larger political apparatus: a few days after the above-described situation, street protests would bring together residents of Montón Cuarteles and of the adjacent upper-middle-class neighbourhoods where many gated communities are located. Residents of both areas shared concerns with the fraudulent tactics of the local government in accepting the informality of the real estate elite. This unified protest was called "historical" in local newspaper coverage (Reforma 2012) because of its cross-class composition. While both gated condo

homeowner associations and the more spontaneous collective around Daniel opposed the local "informal" and fraudulent governance routines with different means and objectives, both groups were united by what they called the "informality" of the local elite (*la informalidad de los ricos*, the informality of the wealthy) and government.

In this sense, the here-discussed uses of the signifier informality suggest rethinking its position as functioning on a continuum between emic and etic articulations. Similar to the way in which Smart and Smart recently cautioned against the use of the often (analytically and geographically) overstretched concept "gentrification" (Smart and Smart 2017), we need to carefully distinguish informality's context-specific uses. On the one hand, the analytic dimension of informality incorporates a long career of academic and policy-related development; on the other, it has become a notion that is embodied by the members of urban societies, primarily of cities in the Global South. While the etic uses allow for greater generalisability and analytical comparisons across cities and regions, the latter emic dimensions attune us to the way in which informality becomes coterminous with the societal, political and economic local effects of urban development, such as ascribing illegality or nuisance to poorer residents, naming (elites') fraud, or self-justifying anarchic and improvised ways of dwelling in the face of an absent support of the public body. Delving further into informality's emic dimension lets us follow the ways in which the use of the signifier underlies member-specific group formations on the one hand and social distinctions and otherings on the other. As I will discuss in more detail below, a member-announced, thus emic, use of the signifier informality in the case of Montón Cuarteles' residents became a basis for broader struggles against opaque planning practices. Moreover, as residents' own informality became related to the broader political apparatus, an uncertainty regarding the residents' property and livelihood was turned into and thus appropriated as a commonly shared concern between two socio-economic groups and their distinct forms of dwelling. Appropriation can become a strategic tool of empowerment. I will illustrate this with a second vignette, this time based on my fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro.

Situation 2: Strategic Appropriation

> I follow Roberto as he enters the front yard of a two-story house next to his own on Avenida Canal do Anil [Jacarepaguá, Rio de Janeiro]. We meet Solange, who lives on this plot with her four children. Roberto tells her my name and where I'm from, a university in Berlin, Germany. As we walk, the three of us talk about the rain this morning, the 7:1 [the result of the previous year's World Cup semi-finals between Germany and Brazil], my first Brazilian Carnival experience. The plot stretches seemingly limitlessly into the *mata* [forest/thicket]. Right and left we pass piles of sorted stuff: rubber, metal, plastic, etcetera. Solange talks about her family, her father, a fisher from the Northeast, who had once first occupied the front end of the plot. Her husband left some years ago. She continued working in recycling materials. (field notes, 13 May 2015)

Accepting the invite to have a coffee in her kitchen together with Roberto and the kids (around 4–15 years old), I learn about the history of Canal do Anil. The *comunidade* – as residents refer to the neighbourhood – expanded westwards along the river through continuous squatting. Despite attempts of eviction by the Ministry for Housing in preparation for the Pan-American Games in 2006–2007, the community leaders managed to negotiate official recognition. The area, which contains five hundred houses, was collectively formalised in 2008; streets, plots and boundaries were electronically measured, registered and mapped. The documentation should have from then on adequately represented the neighbourhood's ownership in housing and occupation. However, because of internal demographic and social dynamics the community continued to grow, producing second and third storeys on top of the buildings and expanding further into a *mata*.

Interestingly, in her narration Solange used the same word to refer to the legal messiness that governs ownership in the area: "*nos vivemos numa mata de regras e documentos* [we are living in a jungle of rules and documents]" (informal conversation and field notes, June 2015). Solange proudly presented a collection of evidence of her being the legal owner and possessor of the plot: receipts, a *titulo de posse* (possession certificate) issued by the local neighbourhood association (Associação Canal do Anil), and a rental contract for the ground on which she runs her recycling business. This rental contract, she went on to explain proudly, she personally negotiated with a representative of the nearby gated condominium Vila do Pan.

To keep the paperwork in good order is, I learn at this coffee table, halfway toward securing land tenure, as it allows one to effectuate a *declaração de posse* (a declaration of possession). The local housing association, which certifies the paperwork's credibility, is acknowledged by the municipality as an "intermediary" between state and citizens. Being the first step toward formal recognition as land possessor, any claim to a possession certificate needs to be forwarded to the municipality's Central de Registro de Documentos (CERD). However, as I will explain in greater detail below, several families from this

community have been resettled, and resettlement and eviction remain a constant threat for individuals and the community as a whole.

> We return to Roberto's house. He takes me to his one-room flat, opens a thick blue plastic folder in which he had filed receipts, copies of letters, newspaper articles. He encourages me to take photos of each document that, as he says, is an essential proof of their legislative fight and struggles over the years – "*é a nossa defesa*" ["this is our defence"], he says. As Roberto explains, each eviction will demand an individual juridical process and decision. (field notes, June 2015)

This practice of defence against eviction consists of establishing a system of formality (with piles of paper proving residency, stamped and recognised by the local association) while at the same time "practising informality" (the ongoing vertical growth of the favela is called an informal practice by some residents). In appropriating such a "government of paper" (Hull 2012), the community's strategy is to deploy a status of informality through subdivisions of registered plots and adding second, third or fourth storeys on top of buildings, thus complicating eviction and provoking lengthy juridical processes in case the Ministry of Housing attempts eviction. While collective and violent repression however continue threatening the residents, the legal procedure to clear the area from the settlement would demand individual juridical procedures with every family/household. Residents thus reversed Hetherington's (2011) figure of the "guerrilla auditor": they, despite their well-kept documentation of the neighbourhood's internal development, constituted a protective system of intransparency. Acting on this threshold of formality and informality, then, is part of a strategy to claim and practise the right to dwelling. I suggest calling this coexistence of regulatory logics – the formal registration of property-proving papers together with an active transgression of the registers – a strategic appropriation of informality. Beyond *either* being evicted *or* being granted permanent formal recognition, the status of the neighbourhood as a whole and of the individual household continues being enmeshed, based on inventive forms of resistance to the logics of (forced) eviction, in a precarious form of citizenship. This way, the residents organised in Canal do Anil engage in the transformative politics of urban informality, thereby instantiating a form of "deep democracy" (Appadurai 2001).

Comparing Precarious Dwelling

While urban Mexico and Brazil have different planning and formalisation legacies (Azuela 2006 and Azuela and Tomas 1997 for Mexico; Huchzermeyer 2003 for Brazil), the exposed research areas, Huixquilucan and Jacarepaguá, show striking similarities. They are both suburban areas characterised by stark architectonic and socio-economic contrasts (Abramo and Faria 1998; Bayón and Saravi 2012) and are both rapidly urbanising peripheries with confinements (both of richer and poorer resident groups) (Müller 2014 for Mexico City; Müller 2017 for Rio de Janeiro). They share commonalities in terms of consumption (international retail and fast food chains); as residential spaces attractive for providing the opportunity to leave behind the dense inner-city neighbourhood in search of greener urban environments (Herzog 2013; Maricato 2017); and as showcases of how parallel regulatory logics of land ownership, uneven provision of infrastructure, and segregating strategies of spatial confinement proliferate to culminate in a widely felt uncertainty in regard to planning procedures and urban development. In both areas, such uncertainty has led to class-specific fragmenting solutions of physical separation and to a "spatial strategy of distinction" (Roy quoted in Hamel and Keil 2015).

I will now compare both areas along three axes: (1) uncertainties as to heterogeneous, coexisting regulatory logics; (2) the social effects of the enactments of these uncertainties; and (3) the potential empowerments that enactments provoke.

Comparative Ground 1: Uncertainties

At the entrance of Mexico City's largest and most prestigious gated community, Ciudad Bosque Real, in the city's western periphery, a sign welcomes visitors, clients and residents by reading "*Bienvenido al Primer Mundo – Bienvenido a Bosque Real*" ("Welcome to the First World – Welcome to Bosque Real"). The gated community promises clients/residents all amenities in order to overcome their uncertainty as related to service provision, land tenure and personal security and protection from crime and violence. In locating uncertainty outside of the community's spatial confinement, signs such as these contribute to the normalisation of uncertainty, and its seemingly necessary answer, confinement, as a characteristic of unplannable Third World urban dynamics. Moreover, real estate developers claim to be the guarantors of formal urbanisation by physically confining what they call the "informal sprawl" of popular settlements (Müller and Segura 2017). Walls do not manifest the semantic difference of formality and informality in a political void: state authorities tolerate land-use transgressions by real estate developers while at the same time evicting poor people's settlements for the same reason:

> I meet Daniel de los Ángeles, in his late 30s and a primary school teacher in Chapultepec in Mexico City, at

> a gas station in Lomas de Tecamachalco. After picking me up with his car, we drive down a dusty road [the Camino Viejo a Huixquilucan] along the five-metre fences at the back of Lomas Country Club. He points to zoning regulation transgressions by the real estate developer (FUNTANET): the fences cross-cut the border to the natural reserve area. Some shacks have remained inhabited on the slope of the hill, while others have been evicted for the reason of illegally occupying land in the protected area. (field notes, October 2012)

Daniel ascribes informality to the transgression of the spatial confinements of marginalised settlements and of the prestigious gated community alike. Yet this transgression has unequal effects, since residents of *colonias'* expanding fringes live in continuous legal uncertainty of whether they will be evicted. Communal organisation is a necessary practice for defending one's own livelihood. Residents resort to long-established forms of internal political representation, mentioned in the initial vignette. The negotiation with public authorities has a political dimension in which *dirigentes* ("local leaders") (Das and Walton 2015) mediate between citizens and government officials. Their acting is, however, largely limited to defending the community's and its residents' precarious status rather than proactively influencing the municipality's development. Instead of providing for a participatory form of democratic acting out of citizenship, such a reduced spectrum of representation reinstates the structural exclusion of marginalised populations from democratic governmental processes (Auyero 2000).

In the above story of popular settlements living in fear of eviction, the destabilisation of routinised ways of organising the distribution of goods (in exchange for electoral votes) has again sensitised the residents to their dependency on communal affinity alongside individual protection. Residents are conscious of transgressing land-use prescriptions and construction norms. Many are aware of the necessity of paying electricity and ground tax, yet they live with the feeling that this, under specific circumstances, will not be sufficient to prove legal ownership of their dwelling. Such "formalisation" tactics have engendered community-internal bureaucratic procedures. The *dirigentes*, besides their distributive task, also manage local registers of residents with addresses, while the settlements often remain a grey spot in official urban plans, as *dirigente* Soledad (Partido de la Revolución Democrática, Pirules) explained in an interview. Nevertheless, as it is a routine in these settlements to build additional storeys on top of the officially registered construction on the ground level, the ground tax calculations are outdated, and, moreover, any compensation would cover only the ground level.

I found a very tangible illustration of this tension in the neighbourhood introduced above, Canal do Anil in Rio de Janeiro. While the neighbourhood association works hard to update changes in land occupation and use and issues property certificates, several processes of land occupation remain out of their monitoring reach and thus surmount their register capacities as well as unravel any pretension to complete internal cadasters.

The initially mentioned situation of material recycler and resident Solange showcases the multiplicity of land regulatory practices in such formalised informality: she holds a land-use contract with the nearby real estate proprietor of Vila do Pan, which grants her the right of individual use of two hectares of land. The contract also puts Solange in a privileged position in the community: the family head provides not only her offspring with a landed future, but also several families in the neighbourhood – whose "subcontracted" land use is then again registered by the Associação Canal do Anil (ASCA).

In regulating Canal do Anil's contested external and internal borders, two normative frameworks coexist. First, a land-use regulation in accordance with the local zoning law defines the community's borders as of the late-1990s expansion and forms the basis on which the ASCA keeps registers. This logic provides a form of protection, albeit an uncertain one, against eviction. While subdivisions can be registered with the association, they are not necessarily sufficient to prove a justified claim for entering the social housing scheme Minha Casa Minha Vida (MCMV). Several respondents pointed out that either MCMV was not a sufficient alternative to their present life circumstances or they would most probably not be able to sustain their claim as legitimate beneficiary. Second, a private and individualised, yet strategic protective logic engenders temporal agreements between residents of Canal do Anil and the nearby Vila do Pan. In this procedure of formalisation, land use is without charge and very short termed (with yearly cancellability). However, while the agreement grants the temporal user no particular right of protection, it suffices for the real estate developer to acquire personal information on those using the land and allows the developer to back any legal procedure to drive them off the land in case of other – particularly real estate developing – future interests. At the same time, the written agreement also highlights the fact that private land developers seem to distrust the state/municipality in protecting their property against "informal" invasion/use.

Urban informality is being acted out in these coexisting logics. The similarities between these two areas illustrate that access to goods and subsidiary housing, land, and infrastructure are an uncertain material basis

of citizenship. In these performances, informality unsettles communities by producing a generalised uncertainty. While these examples mostly locate the diverse uses of the signifier informality in the practices of the urban marginalised, the following section turns to processes through which this uncertainty is also enacted in relations with other (class) actors.

Comparative Ground 2: Enactments

In Canal do Anil, uncertainty is acted out *in the encounters* with government officials, as well as with real estate developers and the residents of upper-middle-class condominiums. The menace of losing one's ground and dwelling hit the community of Canal do Anil strongly during the preparations for the Pan-American Games in 2007. Residents suffered from violent confrontations with representatives of the Secretariat of Housing that were partially successful in demolishing houses (Gaffney 2016).

Dispossession and resettlement have become a normality whenever settlements of the urban poor are in the way of infrastructure projects or of real estate investment on private ground in a southwestern suburb of Rio de Janeiro, Barra da Tijuca. Community divisions have resulted from forced and involuntary resettlements in various favelas in Barra da Tijuca throughout the last decades (Müller, 2017).

During the lead-up to the Pan-American Games, an eviction notice was justified on the basis that the Canal do Anil community was in the way of the Vila Pan-Americana, the housing estate for the athletes (Figure 1). This had been planned and was finally built a few hundred metres away, and the presence of Canal do Anil was never physically in the way of Vila Pan-Americana. This sustains the interpretation that it was

Figure 1: View from Canal do Anil to Vila Panmerican

rather aesthetics that motivated the repressive actions by the municipality. In the following years, partial evictions were justified by pointing to the area being a natural reserve endangered by the presence of the community and to the risk of flooding and diseases (Moscatelli 2015).

This suburban periphery is characterised by various layers of uncertainty that put residents' lives under pressure – economic uncertainty, natural disasters such as floods, threats such as viruses, and soil degradation due to the area's proximity to a swamp – together with the constant threat of being evicted. Canal do Anil stretches across a protected natural area and a potentially urbanisable zone that might become included in the real estate market. While in some cases property titles are held, various families have expanded their dwellings beyond the defined limits or on top of registered buildings. When the municipality carried out a census on the fringes of the river Anil in 2016, several residents had already foreseen the relocation to a MCMV project as a near-future reality. As one respondent remarked:

> My sister and I were hiding inside the house when we saw them coming. But her kids were playing outside and ran to open our entrance door, so the guys from the municipality knocked on the open door and we had no other way than to answer their questions. And we had no way to avoid telling them who inhabits the second and third floor of our house. (Paulo, Avenida Canal do Anil, June 2015)

Paulo describes his and his sister's encounter with government officials as a threatening moment. Facing the "formal" sphere *in persona*, he saw his family's dwelling put at risk. While the frequent flooding of the Anil stream hit the ground floor of their house the hardest, he and his wife, who are living on the second floor, fear legal restriction the most. The plot is certified only for a one-storey dwelling. Such situations can unsettle families and the community as a whole. As I carried out several interviews with residents living in houses along the river Anil, I came across quite diverse attitudes to these encounters with "the state." While some expressed the hope for improved life circumstances in a state-subsidised apartment, for others this was no option for different reasons – some are lacking paperwork; for some, condo/apartment living would run counter to their preferred lifestyle; others foregrounded a disruption of social ties, or difficulties sustaining their living, as in the case of Solange's recycling business.

Facing multiple threats, residents have accumulated practical-legal knowledge to defend their claims and joined the neighbourhood association ASCA: The struggle for certainty in a context of generalised uncertainty

has taken multiple forms, such as sub-renting or sub-selling, and residents have developed a way of obtaining approval by the local neighbourhood association (the *titulo de posse*). Solange, Paulo and other research participants perceive the association as a legitimate institution that, despite their explicitly informal way of constructing their own houses, can, because of its formal status, act as an entity of protection.

In the introductory vignette from Mexico City, this personified acting out of formalisation and the political frictions that had been engendered became virulent. Similar to in Rio's peripheries, multilayered uncertainty (unstable grounds, the menace of eviction) affecting lives and respective coping strategies can be found. The tunnel puts people's livelihoods at risk. An acting out of uncertainty, threatening acts prefigure a future threat to come, as the ground upon which the houses are built is becoming unstable and the legal status of some of these houses is also uncertain. Yet in terms of how encounters occur and are performed, there is a difference: The interests of homeowner associations and of *colonias'* neighbourhood associations meet in their opposition to the infrastructure project. Both lament the "bend the rules" strategy (*visto gordo*) of the municipality when it comes to land use transgressions (the highway will pass through an area that is declared a natural reserve). The motivation between the two groups differs, however. Whereas *colonia* residents see their livelihoods as at risk, as well as feel treated in unjust ways by the municipality (as told in the vignette above), the residents of the gated communities of Interlomas and Tecamachalco consider the tunnel a risk to their quality of life, as it increases traffic congestion in the already-saturated streets of the business district Interlomas. Informality (as performed by real estate developers in union with public planners and the mentioned constructing company), and the uncertainty deriving from it, hits different socio-economic groups differently.

It is a generalised uncertainty, however, that is also expressed in the following statement of then president of the homeowner association (HA) of Tecamachalco, an upper-middle-class neighbourhood next to Interlomas. The association monitors what they call "the impunity" of real estate developers' fraudulent ways of constructing apartments in the area.

> The heaviest problems of this zone are the lack of recognising the urban development prescriptions and the generalised informality that results from it. The persons or companies or developers take advantage of gaps in the law and the monitoring by the municipality and thus develop their projects under the sympathising eye of the authorities, who issue licences anyway. (Andrade, interview, October 2012)

Through denouncing the informality of the local elite, the HA thereby assume legitimacy in the face of a planning apparatus that they identify as being unable or unwilling to stop the unplanned in their own neighbourhood. Effects of these state–citizen encounters include community divisions and internal frictions. When the role of being informal is acted out (as one's own by the residents of Canal do Anil; as opposite to one's own formality as when the Tecamachalco's HA denounces the real estate company's practices), uncertainty – as a general lack of secure dwelling – becomes embodied. I call this process an embodiment of informality to highlight that informality is a social role that can be ascribed to oneself or one's political opponent and that thereby guides processes of social distinction along class difference. Thus, a common ground between the peripheries of Rio and Mexico City is that urban informality is unsettling urban societies, separating, however also interweaving, social groups. In acting within a situation of informalisation (whose agency is distributed among different actors, including estate developers and municipal planners), uncertainty is territorialised: it characterises the way urbanisation transforms these peripheries, how infrastructure projects are taken forward, and where spatial confinements such as walls and gates are placed.

Comparative Ground 3: Empowerments

However, the generalised feeling of uncertainty in the face of near-future urban development is also a starting point for new alliances in conflicts over resources and access to goods. Informality also empowers: it matters in strategic appropriations. As such, this empty signifier, while engendered in the matter of encounters, can also be subverted. It is through the previously discussed performative approach that the repressive, hegemonic use of a signifier (informality) can be studied as a way of appropriation to subvert power relations.

Butler (2015) sketches a theory of performative acts that envisions the body as being central to emancipatory politics. The presence of bodies, which decries the conditions of their precariousness, expresses that "we are still here, persisting, demanding greater justice, a release from precarity, a possibility of a livable life" (25). In a parallel way, residents of so-called informal settlements expose themselves by corporally performing the ascription of informality to public assembly. However, in the narrated cases this alliance does not take the form of mere class antagonism; a cross-class alliance counters the socially and politically constructed condition of precarity and subverts it into one of empowerment.

Juxtaposing the two areas illustrates this. On the one side, informality is used to ascribe nonconformity with

the law to oneself. As Daniel explains, "residents make all kinds of modification and we do not ask for permission. For this reason, it is also a question of our conduct of informality, a bit, we are not too much interested in the law, nor does it usually consider us" (de los Ángeles, interview, November 2012).

Related to the routinised practice of exceeding local construction norms, to constructions without a formal licence and to the avoidance of paying land tax, residents of this neighbourhood acknowledge their informal way of acting and thereby understand themselves as subjects in urban development. Yet on the other side, and complicating the emic use of the signifier, informality is also used to make justice claims: "Yet if anyone pops up and does the same to us, we suddenly do perceive the abuse, or if you will, the informality of the wealthy" (de los Ángeles, interview, November 2012). While one's own informality seems to be an accepted state of being for the residents of the area, the appropriation of this role occurs only up to the point at which the associated uncertainty does not privilege "the rich." The limits of the signifier are class-bound and acted out in antagonistic ways. In a perceived state of lawlessness, informality is enacted as one's own privilege ("we do not ask for permission"). Yet when the perceived elite in the person of a real estate developer acts informally and this is tolerated by state representatives, opposition forms.

Although antagonistic, this strategic appropriation then is a way of subverting the persistent association of informality with poverty. Residents of different urban forms and socio-economic classes identified the signifier as providing common ground in protesting against local planning decisions and the informality of the local elite: "A few days later I meet Daniel during a public protest against that tunnel; also present are several other earlier interviewees, presidents of HAs of upper-middle-class gated communities of the area that oppose to the tunnel as it would dramatise the traffic congestion of the area." (field notes, November 2011). Facing the prospect of the tunnel, HAs of upper-middle-class condominiums appropriated the same signifier to tag the practices of real estate developers as informal. This common identification sustained a loose political affinity that brought together residents from both urban areas: "On this occasion, the colonos formed the "Unión Vecinal de Huixquilucan" [neigbourhood union] with the participation of 21 local leaders of colonias like La Herradura, Hacienda de Las Palmas, Palo Solo, Montón Cuarteles, Lomas Anáhuac y Tecamachalco, to express their reproach towards the construction of the tunnel" (Jimenez in Reforma 2016). However, while unity was performed during those events and several meetings around them, as my interviews suggest, the protest acquired very different meanings for the residents. And Carlos Zavala (then president of the HA Hacienda de las Palmas) made it clear that "while they have the street protest, we have regular meetings with the public authorities; while they are fearing a total loss of their belongings and their place in the community, we are simply struggling against traffic congestions. That's the difference" (Zavala, interview, November 2012). Subversion, in this case, leaves the antagonistic limits of the signifier intact. While being used to denote a common threat, the very basis of a "differentially lived" (Butler 2015, 25) uncertainty remains. In relation with the state, citizens come to enact their claims differently and dependent on the place they inhabit. In this sense, the strategic appropriation of the signifier informality has brought together groups of citizens across socio-material boundaries.

Let us then turn back to Rio for insights on how subversion and strategic appropriation played out there. To recall, residents of Canal do Anil are keen on keeping a system of formal tenure in order to prove ownership – an ensemble of paperwork, certificates and authorisations is mobilising a logic of formalisation. This coexists with a municipal project of urban ordering. In order to postpone or avoid eviction, some residents have opted for being compensated by the Housing Secretariat and accepted an apartment in the MCMV scheme. Among them are also families who have constructed a second or third storey on top of their houses, and while they now rent out the lower part of their houses as an act that gets approved by the neighbourhood association, the Ministry of Housing may destroy the upper part of the house. As an active member of the ASCA explained: "This way, several families have ensured an income. They let the lower part of their house to, let's say, their sister" (anonymous member of ASCA, interview, May 2015). The residents thus have found ways to navigate the process of formalisation. At the same time, residents and HAs of gated condominiums also suffer from informalisation – and form opposition against it. The associations pressure local public authorities to act against the "informality" of real estate developers. In a public hearing, for instance, the licensing of new upper-middle-class condominiums was denounced as constituting a "criminal act" (O Globo 2015) by the HA from Vila Panamericana. The leader of the association explained that his community could not accept the newly built area because of its insufficient sanitation system: "The government's failure is menacing our well-being. This is an area of wild development, with everyone invading without limits. And authorities need to be controlled as they let everyone do here what they want" (Erick, interview, 23 May 2015). Here, HAs

also pursue urban ordering and employ the signifier informality to denote the powerful influence of the local economic elite, personified by real estate developers. HAs appropriate the signifier to point out government's failure to sanction developers lacking respect for land-use and preservation rules. As a performative relational act, population groups of different socio-economic classes residing in different urban forms have jointly detached informality from its habitual subject: low-income communities. Instead, they have linked it to the local elite. This reframing of informality has empowered the protesters to call out threatening or undesired urban planning politics. Nevertheless, informality still remains an avoidable – for some marginalised residents, however, necessary – condition.

Conclusion

Two main conclusions can be drawn from this discussion. First, contrastive urban spaces such as the two suburbs compared in this paper are particularly promising for understanding the central stage that informality assumes in precarisation, that is, broadly experienced, normalised uncertainty. Informality has, on the level of everyday interaction and communication, become a contested signifier that now is used to characterise even the livelihoods of the middle and upper-middle classes. Nevertheless, informality is still signified as a social practice in processes of social distinction, justifying the physical confinement of residential areas in political discourse and local narratives. In this sense informality, as a performed signifier and even when re-signified to qualify the alleged informality of the elite in Huixquilucan and Jacarepaguá, has more negative effects for the urban marginalised than for residents of urban middle-class neighbourhoods, limiting the transformative potential of bottom-up politics.

Second, in both areas the paper has addressed spatial differences, societal struggles, stigmatisation and differential citizen–state relationships. This broadens our understanding of informalisation as a heterogeneous process in which social positions are taken, ascribed and reconfigured and alliances formed, effectuating spatial confinements. In effect, and to use the words of AbdouMaliq Simone (2001, 17): "Urban residents appear increasingly uncertain as to how to spatialize an assessment of their life chances – that is, where will they secure livelihood, where can they feel protected and looked after, and where will they acquire the critical skills and capacities?" Such uncertainty is visibly encountered in separating walls and fences. Protection in regard to material property and personal safety, as it is preventive of social interaction with diverse socio-economic groups, is the spatial-temporal answer to such generalised and normalised uncertainty. Such generalised uncertainty, while emerging as the very condition of urbanity, is forcefully ascribed at the same time as it is an embodied basis of empowerment.

Rather than only a politics of the urban poor, urban informality then is a practice-based methodological orientation for addressing the heterogeneity of ways in which political alliances and affinities are shaped, enacting a highly differentiated and unequal, spatialised citizenship. Tracing these uses and their way of being ascribed, embodied, and appropriated allows us to conceive the spatiality of "precarization as an instrument of governing" (Lorey 2015, 63) as being located in physical and symbolic housing confinements (gated communities and marginalised settlements/favelas) on a micro scale.

Frank Müller, *Department of Human Geography, Planning and International Development Studies and Center for Urban Studies, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Email: f.i.mueller@uva.nl.*

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Martijn Koster, Alan and Josephine Smart, Thurid Bahr, Laura Kemmer, Sonja Luehrmann as well as the two anonymous reviewers for their comments on earlier versions of this article.

A special thank you to the residents of the communities who shared with me their concerns and experiences.

The research on which this article is based was funded by the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nivel Superior (CAPES), Brazil. In addition, the article project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement no. 337974 – SECURCIT).

Notes

1 *Concientización* refers to gatherings that are open to all members of a localised community. These gatherings foster the formation of a collective will through long monologues of individuals who discourse about a commonly shared problem/experience and suggest ways of collectively confronting this.

2 I will translate the Mexican notion *colonia popular* as "neighbourhood." *Colonia popular* is a notion used both in official planning documents and in the everyday language of residents of those *colonias* and beyond.

References

Abramo, Pedro, and Teresa Cristina Faria. 1998. "Mobilidade Residencial Na Cidade Do Rio De Janeiro: Considerações Sobre Os Setores Formal." *XI Encontro Nacional de Estudos Populacionais.* Associação Brasileira de Estudos

Populacionais: 421–456. http://www.abep.org.br/~abeporgb/publicacoes/index.php/anais/article/view/852/818.
AlSayyad, Nezar. 2004. "Urbanism as a 'New' Way of Life." In *Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives*, ed. Nezar AlSayyad and Ananya Roy, 7–32. Lanham: Lexington Books.
Amin, Ash, and Liza Rose Cirolia. 2017. "Politics/Matter: Governing Cape Town's Informal Settlements." *Urban Studies* 55(2): 274–295. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098017694133.
Angotti, Tom. 2013. "Urban Latin America: Violence, Enclaves, and Struggles for Land." *Latin American Perspectives* 40(2): 5–20. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0094582X12466832.
Appadurai, Arjun. 2001. "Deep Democracy: Urban Governmentality and the Horizon of Politics." *Environment and Urbanization* 13(2): 23–43. https://doi.org/10.1177/095624780101300203.
Auyero, Javier. 2000. *Poor People's Politics: Peronist Survival Networks and the Legacy of Evita*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Azuela, Antonio. 2006. *The Regularization of Irregular Settlements in Cities in the Developing Countries: Techniques, Procedures, Policies: Mexico Case Studies*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
Azuela, Antonio, and Francisco Tomas. 1997. *El Acceso de Lo Pobres Al Suelo Urbano*. Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
Bayón, María Cristina, and Gonzalo A. Saravi. 2012. "The Cultural Dimensions of Urban Fragmentation: Segregation, Sociability, and Inequality in Mexico City." *Latin American Perspectives* 40(2): 35–52. https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582x12468865.
Boudreau, Julie-Anne, and Diane. E. Davis. 2016. "Introduction: A Processual Approach to Informalization." *Current Sociology* 65(2): 151–166. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392116657286.
Bromley, Ray. 1978. "Introduction – The Urban Informal Sector: Why Is It Worth Discovering?" *World Development* 6(9): 1033–1049. https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X(78)90061-X.
Butler, Judith. 1993. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York and London: Routledge.
———. 2010. "Performative Agency." *Journal of Cultural Economy* 3(2): 147–161. https://doi.org/10.1080/17530350.2010.494117.
———. 2015. *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. London: Harvard University Press.
Castells, Manuel. 1972. *La Question Urbaine*. Paris: François Maspero.
Connolly, Priscilla, and Jill Wigle. 2017. "(Re)constructing Informality and 'Doing Regularization' in the Conservation Zone of Mexico City." *Planning Theory & Practice* 18(2): 183–201. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2017.1279678.
Das, Veena, and Michael Walton. 2015. "Political Leadership and the Urban Poor." *Current Anthropology* 56(11): 44–54. https://doi.org/10.1086/682420.
Davis, Diane E. 2016. "Informality and State Theory: Some Concluding Remarks." *Current Sociology* 65(2): 315–324. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392116657301.
———. 2018. "Reflections on 'The Politics of Informality': What We Know, How We Got There, and Where We Might Head Next." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 53(3): 365–378. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12116-018-9273-2.
Davis, Mike. 2004. "Planet of Slums: Urban Involution and the Informal Proletariat." *New Left Review* 26: 5–34. http://www.foresightfordevelopment.org/sobipro/54/503-planet-of-slums-urban-involution-and-the-informal-proletariat.
Dovey, Kim. 2012. "Informal Urbanism and Complex Adaptive Assemblage." *International Development Planning Review* 34(4): 349–368. https://doi.org/10.3828/idpr.2012.23.
Fischer, Brodwyn, Bryan McCann, and Javier Auyero. 2014. *Cities from Scratch: Poverty and Informality in Urban Latin America*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Gaffney, Christopher. 2016. "Gentrifications in Pre-Olympic Rio de Janeiro." *Urban Geography* 37(8): 1132–1153. https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2015.1096115.
Gilbert, Alain, and Ann Varley. 1991. *Landlord and Tenant: Housing the Poor in Urban Mexico*. London: Routledge.
Gilbert, Alan. 2007. "The Return of the Slum: Does Language Matter?" *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 31(4): 697–713. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2007.00754.x.
Gledhill, John. 2015. *The New War on the Poor*. London: Zed Books.
Goldstein, Daniel. 2010. "Toward a Critical Anthropology of Security." *Current Anthropology* 51(4): 487–517. https://doi.org/10.1086/655393.
Hamel, Pierre, and Roger Keil. 2015. *Suburban Governance: A Global View*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
Hardoy, Jorge E., and David Satterthwaite. 1987. *La Ciudad Legal y La Ciudad Illegal*. Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano.
Herzog, Lawrence A. 2013. "Barra da Tijuca: The Political Economy of a Global Suburb in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil." *Latin American Perspectives* 40(2): 118–134. https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582x12467765.
Hetherington, Kregg. 2011. *Guerrilla Auditors: The Politics of Transparency in Neoliberal Paraguay*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Holston, James. 2009. *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Huchzermeyer, Marie. 2003. *Confronting Fragmentation: Housing and Urban Development in a Democratising Society*. Cape Town: Cape Town University Press.
Hull, Matthew S. 2012. *Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan.* Berkeley: University of California Press.
ILO (International Labor Organization). 1972. *Employment, Incomes and Equality: A Strategy for Increasing Production Employment in Kenya*. Geneva: ILO.
Isin, Engin, and Bryan S. Turner. 2007. "Investigating Citizenship: An Agenda for Citizenship Studies." *Citizenship Studies* 11(1): 5–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621020601099773.
James, Debora. 2011. "The Return of the Broker: Consensus, Hierarchy, and Choice in South African Land Reform." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17(2): 318–338. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2011.01682.x.

Kilcullen, David. 2012. "The City as a System: Future Conflict and Urban Resilience." *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 36(2): 19–39. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/579fc2ad725e253a86230610/t/57ec7faf5016e1636a22a067/1475116977946/Kilcullen.pdf.

Koning, Anouk De, Rivke Jaffe, and Martijn Koster. 2015. "Citizenship Agendas in and beyond the Nation-State: (En)Countering Framings of the Good Citizen." *Citizenship Studies* 19(29): 121–127. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2015.1005940.

Koster, Martijn. 2016. "Brokers in Participatory Urban Governance: Assembling Formal and Informal Politics." *L'Espace politique* 29(2): 1–12. http://dx.doi.org/10.4000/espacepolitique.3930.

Lazar, Sian. 2012. "Disjunctive Comparison: Citizenship and Trade Unionism in Bolivia and Argentina." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18(2): 349–368. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2012.01747.x.

Lombard, M., and Margo Huxley. 2011. "Self-Made Cities: Ordinary Informality?" *Planning Theory & Practice* 12(1): 120–125. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2011.545626.

Lorey, Isabell. 2015. *States of Insecurity*. London: Verso.

Maricato, Erminia. 2017. "The Future of Global Peripheral Cities." *Latin American Perspectives* 44(2): 18–37. https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582x16685174.

Morange, Marianne, Francesca Pilo', and Amandine Spire. 2018. "Experiencing Regularisation in Accra, Cape Town and Rio de Janeiro." *City* 22(5–6): 685–702. https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2018.1549834.

Moscatelli, Mario. 2015. "Cresce a Ocupação Desordenada Nas Margens Do Rio Anil." *O Globo*, 11 November. https://oglobo.globo.com/rio/bairros/cresce-ocupacao-desordenada-nas-margens-do-rio-anil-18140748.

Müller, Frank. 2014. *The Global City and Its Other: Decentering Informality in and from Mexico City*. Berlin: Tranvia.

Müller, Frank, and Markus-Michael Müller. 2016. "(Re-) Importing Counterinsurgency: From Rio de Janeiro to Port-au-Prince and Back Again." *Peripherie* 141(36): 74–92. https://doi.org/10.3224/peripherie.v36i141.22890.

Müller, Frank, and Ramiro Segura. 2017. "The Uses of Informality: Urban Development and Social Distinction in Mexico City." *Latin American Perspectives* 44(3): 158–175. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0094582X16682760.

———. 2017. "Urban Informality as a Signifier: Performing Urban Reordering in Suburban Rio de Janeiro." *International Sociology* 32(4): 493–511. https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580917701585.

Municipio de Huixquilucan. 2009. "Plan Parcial de Centro de Desarrollo Urbano La Herradura Magnocentro." Mexico City: Gaceta Oficial del Gobierno.

Ong, Aihwa, and Ananya Roy. 2011. *Worlding Cities*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

O Globo. 2015. "MPF vai pedir embargo de dragagem das lagoas: "E crime autorizar obras sem o devido Estudo Ambiental", 22.5.2015, Rio de Janeiro: O Globo.

Pasquetti, Silvia, and Giovanni Picker. 2017. "Urban Informality and Confinement: Toward a Relational Framework." *International Sociology* 32(4): 532–544. https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580917701605.

Recio, Redento B., Iderlina Mateo-Babiano, and Sonia Roitman. 2016. "Revisiting Policy Epistemologies on Urban Informality: Towards a Post-Dualist View." *Cities* 61: 136–143. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2016.08.018.

Reforma. 2012. "Es una Unión Vecinal Histórica en Huixquilucan." *Reforma*, November 20.

———. 2016. "Agilizan término de Viaducto Interlomas Preparan licitación para última etapa de distribuidor vial." *Reforma*, February 29.

Robinson, Jennifer. 2011. "Cities in a World of Cities: The Comparative Gesture." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35(1): 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2010.00982.x.

Roy, Ananya. 2005. "Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 71(2): 147–158. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944360508976689.

Schteingart, Martha. 1973. *Urbanización Y Dependencia en América Latina*. Buenos Aires: Edition Siap.

Simone, AbdouMaliq. 2001. "Ways of Seeing: Beyond the New Nativism." *African Studies Review* 44(2): 15–41. https://www.jstor.org/stable/525572.

Smart, Alan, and Josephine Smart. 2017. "Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Gentrification: The Erasure of Alternative Idioms of Displacement Resulting from Anglo-American Academic Hegemony." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 41(3): 518–525. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12493.

Turner, John F.C. 1968. "The Squatter Settlement: Architecture That Works." *Architecture of Democracy, Architectural Design*, August: 353–360. http://www.communityplanning.net/JohnFCTurnerArchive/pdfs/ADAug1968SquatterSettlement.pdf.

West, Candace, and Don H. Zimmerman. 1987. "Doing Gender." *Gender & Society* 1(2): 125–151. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0891243287001002002.

Yiftachel, Oren. 2009. "Theoretical Notes On 'Gray Cities': The Coming of Urban Apartheid?" *Planning Theory* 8(1): 88–100. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095208099300.