

Housing Dynamics and Informal Businesses in Built-Up Areas of Major Cities in Cameroon

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KEYWORDS Regeneration. Housing Refurbishment. Cameroon Cities. Resettlement. Urban Sustainability. Economic Hardship. Unregulated.

ABSTRACT Housing transformations in most Third World towns have been unsuccessful and misdirected, resulting in poor control on building and construction by local authorities. The urban poor have modified their homes to accommodate business as a survival strategy. Such modifications are unregulated and affect urban development. Forceful evictions from unregulated business sites have hardly been the panacea, especially where adequate provisions have not been made to accommodate the displaced population. This has been the approach pursued by the local administration in the large cities of Cameroon like Douala, Yaounde and Bamenda. This paper investigates the recurrence of illegal housing structures along most commercial streets. Data were obtained through interviews with planning officials, house owners and tenants. Urban refurbishment and regeneration can pay off through a progressive reconstruction rather than the spontaneous demolition of outmoded and dilapidating structures which is often pursued. Housing modifications need to be integrated into the development plan of local planning authorities and should be concomitant with regeneration so as to avoid social stress and non-conformity of residents to housing standards.