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**Informal practices in Vienna’s urban renewal – constraints and opportunities for migrants**

Literature on cities of the so-called Global North has paid little attention to informality in urban development in relation to migration, with the exception of Southern Europe. This paper underlines that it is necessary to consider informal practices in order to capture the actual constraints and opportunities for migrants in Vienna’s urban renewal. I draw from literature that frames informality and formality as merging into the very same processes of urban development (Roy 2011, McFarlane 2012). Such a notion of informality is processual; it is seen as co-constitutive for urban development itself, even in cities of the so-called Global North.

I will debate this by presenting empirical material that was collected in the context of my PHD project during six months of fieldwork in 2014. I look at the dwelling, renting out and renewal of substandard apartments in a Viennese neighborhood commonly referred to as “Kreta”. Since the 1970s, the apartments have been mainly home to migrants from Turkey and Southeast Europe. Derelict houses constructed around 1900 constitute a grey zone of the Viennese housing market and its legal framework. This condition has enabled many inhabitants to illegally modify their apartments: several flats are merged without a permit; running water is illegally tapped; toilets are built without sewage pipes. At the same time, the ownership structure of many estates is ambiguous, as there can be many co-proprietors, who are not always officially registered. Some managed to find co-proprietors, others to modify their apartments without permit and to sublet them to migrant newcomers.

Literature on informal urbanism frequently pictures migrants as peculiarly informal in their way of shaping urban development. Similarly, migration literature tends to frame migrants as standing at the margin of or in opposition to dominant, formal modes of urban renewal. This paper, on the contrary, discusses how informal practices and formal procedures frequently overlap in processes of urban development also in Vienna, a city of Europe’s “North”. This interplay offers surprising opportunities for migrants as well as multiple constraints.

**References**

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Roy, A. (2011). “Slumdog cities: Rethinking subaltern urbanism.” International Journal of Urban and Regional Research 35(2): 223-238.