




# Exploring the Presence of Urban Informality in Botswana

## Case of Backyard Renting in Mogoditshane, Greater Gaborone


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### Abstract

This research reflects on the contribution of urban planning legislative and regulatory frameworks to the emergence and growth of informal backyard rental housing in Mogoditshane, Botswana. The existence of supportive planning legislation is central to the realisation of inclusive settlements and spatial justice. It has been concluded that Botswana's settlement planning legislation is elitist and exclusionary in nature and thus plays an important role in the creation of informal housing. Planning control measures, such as standards, procedures, and regulations, have been identified as contributing factors



that hinder the urban poor from affording decent housing or meeting planning requirements. The literature demonstrates that policies are not customised for local people, as they do not take into consideration their social, environmental, cultural, and economic needs. The investigation into the inclusiveness of Botswana's planning policy regarding adequate housing provision for the urban poor was conducted through a desktop analysis of planning policy and documents. Structured and semi-structured interviews were administered to Mogoditshane residents and planning experts to gain perspectives and in-depth information on the topic. The analysis demonstrated that informal backyard renting is prevalent in Mogoditshane and that the backrooms were not built according to planning standards and regulations. The results indicate that housing informality is present in Mogoditshane, mainly in the form of informal backyard rental rooms. The main recommendation is that planning policies should be customised to meet the housing needs of the local people.

**Keywords:** Housing informality, low-income, urban planning policy, regulatory framework.

## Introduction

Urban planning has the potential to promote harmony and bridge the socio-economic divide through an equitable distribution of amenities. Supportive planning legislation and regulatory frameworks are integral to the realisation of inclusive settlements and spatial justice (Kalabamu, 2018, p. 55). However, Malope and Batisani (2008, p. 383) concluded that Botswana's settlement planning legislation is elitist and exclusionary in nature. Molebatsi and Morobolo (2019, p. 34) reiterate that the resulting urban landscapes tend to be elitist, consequently generating evictions and the displacement of city dwellers, especially the poor, as is the case in Botswana. There is currently significant growth in backyard informal rental housing in African cities (Turok, 2020, p. 112). Botswana has also experienced this unusual growth of backyard informal rental housing, particularly in established peri-urban villages such as Mogoditshane, rather than in free-standing shacks in

dispersed squatter settlements (Crankshaw et al., 2000, p. 841; Lemanski, 2009, p. 472). This phenomenon has long been an integral part of South African housing stock, especially for the low-income urban population (Turok, 2020, p. 4; Turok & Borel-Saladin, 2016, p. 1). Furthermore, the existence and popularity of informal backyard living contribute to inequality in various aspects of urban life. This research aimed to explore the contribution of planning legislation to the emergence of the backyard renting phenomenon in Mogoditshane, Botswana, and to determine if the conditions of backyard rooms meet the United Nations' (UN) requirements for decent housing. The study reviews literature on urban informality and the contribution of planning regulatory frameworks to urban informal housing before discussing the methods, study area, conclusion, and recommendations.

Informal backyard rentals are a common occurrence in Botswana's capital city of Gaborone, and the trend is rapidly gaining popularity in peripheral villages such as Mogoditshane. If this phenomenon is left unchecked, it could lead to overburdened infrastructure services (electricity, Internet, water supply, and sewerage), overcrowded neighbourhoods with squalid environments, and the breeding of social ills associated with informal neighbourhoods. It will also result in visible patterns of spatial injustice and social disparities that will create unpalatable and divided communities. Nonetheless, despite the popularity of room rentals and their growing contribution to housing supply, there are significant gaps in the understanding of backyard rental housing (Brueckner et al., 2019, p. 6). This emerging housing trend has not been thoroughly researched within the policy and regulatory framework, particularly in developing countries, including Botswana. Furthermore, there has been minimal investigation into the underlying socio-economic and neighbourhood dynamics, such as the importance of backyard renting in the lives of impoverished households and its role in the urban housing market (Turok, 2020, p. 1).

As a result, there is a need for further investigation into the subject to enhance the knowledge and accuracy of conclusions regarding this matter. Given the lack of extensive

literature on planning legislation and its contribution to the emergence of informal housing, particularly in Botswana, this study conducted a thorough investigation into the link between informal housing and planning regulatory frameworks. This research provides greater insight into the impact of urban planning policy and regulatory frameworks on the adequate provision of housing for low-income urban populations. Understanding the impact and contribution of planning regulations to the proliferation of informal housing will assist decision makers in making choices that simultaneously improve both the housing sector and quality of life . Additionally, it will help to close the spatial gap between city inhabitants and make cities more attractive and visually appealing by enhancing their landscapes.

Furthermore, it can serve as a source for further research into planning and its contribution to the emergence of informal backyard housing in Mogoditshane by providing context for interested scholars. The study reveals that the backyard rooms in Mogoditshane are informal, as they are not built according to the UN's requirements for decent housing, nor in accordance with Botswana's planning standards. This is due to the fact that Botswana's settlement planning regulatory frameworks are not inclusive. The general inclination is that the planning regulations do not accommodate all income groups, particularly the urban poor, since the regulations adopt a blanket approach. If a well-thought-out and effectively supportive planning regulatory framework is established, it will lead to the realisation of inclusive housing and spatial justice. The researchers accept and confirm this hypothesis based on the study's findings, which indicate that an inclusive and supportive framework will significantly help to alleviate the informal housing phenomenon and facilitate adequate housing provision.

## **Literature Review**

Even though the housing rental market is prevalent in African cities, it is generally ignored by governments' spatial planning legislative frameworks, and information on rental housing is sparse.

### **The Informal Backyard Room Renting Sector**

Backyard room renting refers to a situation in which formal homeowners build additional roomed outbuildings, either by formal or informal means, in their yards and rent them out to people or allow tenants to erect makeshift structures, such as shacks, and pay rent to the landlord. These backyard rentals can lead to slum-like conditions, where the building materials, density, location, legality, and/or access to services are inadequate (Brueckner et al., 2019, p. 1). This type of accommodation arrangement is mainly popular in low-income urban communities. Although the informal housing rental market has grown substantially in the Global South, it is frequently disregarded by government legislative frameworks, and information on informal rental housing is sparse. Consequently, this situation has contributed to the marginalisation of individuals in this demographic group (Gunter & Massey, 2017, p. 28). Nonetheless, it is important to note that, apart from planning legislation, other factors also contribute to the existence and persistence of informal housing. These include changing socio-demographic, economic, and social factors (Uğurlar & Özelçi Eceral, 2022, p. 1), inadequate building requirements, costly or oppressive regulations, and tenants' inability to pay high rents (Peppercorn & Taffin, 2023).

### **The Significance of Backyard Room Renting**

Informal backyard rental accommodation is the fastest-growing sector of the housing market (Turok & Borel-Saladin, 2016, p. 11). Gilbert (2016, p. 173) points out that in African cities, millions of people rely on the backyard rental housing sector due to its adaptability and cost-effectiveness. The popularity of this form of housing arises from the fact that it is one of the few viable alternatives for marginalised households and groups, such as informal labourers, migrants, young professionals, and female-headed families (Scheba & Turok, 2020, p. 109). It also serves as a stopgap for low-income families and young professionals in need of accommodation. Similarly, this study found that Mogoditshane has a significant number of backyard rental room tenants, primarily youths and migrants from

neighbouring Zimbabwe. Some of the room rental properties contain a ratio of up to 95% migrant tenants.

While governments offer other subsidised alternatives to address the proliferation of urban housing needs, Lemanski (2009, p. 472) believes that backyard renting is the most popular housing option amid the prevailing housing shortage. This backyard rental choice often provides easier access to employment sites and facilities than new standalone informal communities or formal government housing schemes. It is therefore a preferable alternative to homeownership for young individuals. However, it is essential to recognise the instability and imminent changes in informal rental markets. For example, backyard rental dwellings in Cape Town are densifying and commercialising, resulting in higher-quality but more costly dwellings (Scheba & Turok, 2020, p. 114).

Rubin and Gardner (2013, p. 6) reiterate that the backyard rental industry was developed and grew in different countries in response to a lack of adequate housing near economic or social opportunity nodes such as places of employment, residential areas, schools, and other social facilities. Nonetheless, despite its growing contribution to the housing supply, there are significant gaps in the understanding of backyard rental housing (Brueckner et al., 2019, pp. 5-6). Brueckner et al. (2019, p. 5) also point out that backyard rentals, both informal and formal, have not been thoroughly researched in terms of their economic aspects, particularly in developing countries. Furthermore, there has been minimal investigation into the underlying socio-economic and neighbourhood dynamics, such as the significance of backyard renting in the lives of low-income urban households and its role in the urban housing market (Turok, 2020 p. 1).

The backyard housing sector clearly constitutes a significant component of the housing market. However, it is concerning that, despite its contribution to housing stock provision, backyard rentals nearly always violate the law (Turok & Borel-Saladin, 2016, p. 1). It is therefore imperative that a backyard renting scheme be adopted, as these options are part of both the current and future housing provision market.

For this reason, alternative backyard housing options must be developed to provide better living conditions for individuals, particularly since some are destined to live in them permanently. By and large, the informal rental market, with a focus on backyard rooms and houses, warrants further research, rethinking, reception, and ultimately, a reset.

### **The Purpose of the Urban Planning Regulatory Framework**

The legislative and regulatory framework typically comprises laws that encompass diverse policies and legal and pseudo-legal instruments, which may include policy papers, legislation, by-laws, rules (planning, building, environment, etc.), procedures and practices (procurement, design, public works, financial, audit, etc.), and standards (products and services) (Bourton-on-Dunsmore et al., 2002, p. 2). In essence, urban planning frameworks are a collection of efforts intended to guide the lives of urban dwellers (Abd Elrahman & Asaad, 2021, p. 1663). They represent basic social agreements about how cities and towns will continue to be created and developed, as well as how their residents will interact with one another. As a result, regulatory frameworks have a substantial impact on overall development, specifically on planning, zoning, mobility, land use and plot development, space requirements, infrastructural services and delivery, and land management and administration (Payne & Majale, 2012). Effective urban legislation is therefore a necessary foundation for long-term growth in all its aspects (economic, spatial, environmental, etc.).

In essence, the outcome of spatial developments in a city or town is heavily influenced by urban planning legislation and regulatory frameworks. Inefficient or impractical policy and regulatory schemes can constrain progress in socio-spatial justice (Irazabal, 2021, p. 151). Conversely, a functional regulatory and legislative system can yield positive effects in advancing socio-spatial justice. A high-quality urban planning legislative framework and policy combine official expertise with local relevance, culture, environment, and context to efficiently execute its specified duties (Xanthaki, 2013, p. 59). In contrast, incompatible, outdated, or ineffective urban planning rules and

regulations contribute to socio-spatial inequality. This is due to the fact that they may not be aligned and/or may impose limitations on connections between resources, abilities, and backgrounds that could provide opportunities for all social and economic classes. Consequently, these frameworks are unable to manage continuous urban transitions or anticipate present and future issues. They also maintain the socio-economic status quo and the power of self-perpetuating elites (Xanthaki, 2014, p. 3; 2013, p. 19). Furthermore, they deny millions of people the genuine enjoyment of their fundamental human rights, such as access to adequate housing and land rights (Xanthaki, 2013, p. 59).

### **The Significance of an Urban Planning Regulatory Framework in Urban Housing Informality**

When discussing urban housing informality, it is imperative to include planning policies and their contribution to the prevalence of housing informality in African cities. The causes of urban planning dysfunction must be addressed to enable effective planning development, especially in the Global South. Sustainable urban planning and design are thus required to mitigate causes of segregation and exclusion, such as a lack of a sustainable spatial environment and suitable housing for the urban poor (Kalabamu, 2018, p. 56). Nevertheless, developing-world governments have established various paradigms, policies, programmes, and projects intended to combat the proliferation of informal housing and settlements while alleviating the urban housing crisis, which is a major breeding ground for informal housing (Nassar & Elsayed, 2018). These strategies include a variety of initiatives, such as low-cost housing, sites and services, redevelopment, and slum improvement. However, none of these approaches have been able to resolve environmental quality and housing demands on a larger and more sustainable scale (Wakely, 2014, p. 1). Meanwhile, in response to this unsustainable and inadequate land transformation system, individuals have formed self-planned settlements or informal housing.

According to Ikgopoleng and Cavric (2007, p. 35), Botswana's Self Help Housing Agency (SHHA), specifically designed for the urban low-income bracket, had a limited impact on the provision of housing for these groups. The low impact of the programme was attributed to a lack of serviced land, issues with cost recovery, and the failure of beneficiaries to repay the loans. Furthermore, this may indicate that the planning regulatory framework for self-help housing was not adequately aligned with the needs of the beneficiaries.

The programme may have been effective in its initial stages, as beneficiaries were able to retain their plots, secure funding, build homes, and subsequently repay their loans on a reasonable schedule. However, circumstances may have changed regarding spatial and domain trends. There is spatial evidence that SHHA plots are being sold to and owned by middle-class residents who are building larger houses. This could suggest that the planning legislative framework has not kept pace with changing circumstances, or that it was never suitable for the specific group it was intended to serve, which led to its decline over time.

There is thus a need to include housing provisions for the urban poor in policies, particularly for those who fall below the stipulated income threshold (Nkwae & Dumba, 2010, p. 372). This income group typically cannot access building loans from financial institutions (Kampamba et al., 2018, p. 361). Consequently, it is essential to explore other policy and regulatory options that may enhance accessibility and affordability for the urban poor, such as rental tenure and subsidies (Nkwae & Dumba, 2010, p. 372). This is where backyard rental options could be investigated and improved for adoption.

According to Debrunner and Hartmann (2020), minimal inquiry and emphasis have been directed towards the potential influence that planning regulatory frameworks have on urban housing markets, as well as on the capacity of low-income residents to access formal housing and the increase of informal housing. This is the gap that this research intended to bridge.

Due to the isolated link between informality and planning policy or regulation, informal housing has long been managed reactively through uniform housing policies and programmes (Nassar & Elsayed, 2018, p. 2368). This paradigm and approach have contributed little to the overall urban quality of life and failed to prevent the spread of informal housing.

Regulatory frameworks currently have a negative impact on low-income urban communities, which adversely affects their livelihoods for various reasons (Payne & Majale, 2012, p. 25; Schilderman & Lowe, 2002, p. 2). These include regulations that prohibit developments that meet the needs and budgets of the urban poor, as uniform regulations can be burdensome and may lead to more resistance than compliance (Payne, 2001). The regulations also impose strict and incompatible planning and building standards, such as large minimum plot sizes, house sizes, zoning compatibility, density restrictions, and height restrictions. This can result in the low-income urban population being unable to afford the development of formal housing that meets the stipulated criteria. Furthermore, regulations may prevent the poor from earning a living in residential areas, as the standards are seldom cost-related and often expensive for them. Additionally, procedures can be time-consuming and costly.

According to Kalabamu (2018, p. 76), Botswana's urban planning regulatory framework, in its current form, does not adequately address the provision of housing. Furthermore, Kalabamu (2018, p. 56) states that an analysis of Botswana's planning legislation remains centralised, with minimal opportunities for direct participation by urban inhabitants. Active participation is further compromised by the technocratic nature of the planning system. It is noted that planning documents are written not only in technical language but also in English, which makes them less accessible to the general public (Kalabamu, 2018, p. 56). This issue of incomprehensible language and terminology was evident during data collection for this research with residents of Mogoditshane. When questions were posed to the residents using seemingly simple planning terminology, such as "planning regulations", "building

regulations”, and “building permission”, there was a clear lack of understanding of their meanings. Consequently, there was a need to switch to Setswana for better comprehension.

Furthermore, the existing planning regulatory framework excludes indigenous/non-capitalistic and informal sectors, which results in adverse regulations. This exclusion has significant consequences for the physical, economic, social, and technical conditions of underprivileged groups. Domaradzka (2018, p. 609) reiterates that to achieve inclusivity and related rights and benefits in the city, the participation of urban inhabitants in all decisions that affect the production of urban space is critical. Additionally, there is a pressing need for mutual understanding and interpretation of the regulatory frameworks among inhabitants, so that their participation and input can be meaningful and serve as tools for the improvement of their lives.

## **Research Objectives and Questions**

### **Main Objective**

This research was conducted to explore the extent to which Botswana’s settlement planning legislative and regulatory framework is inclusive, and to determine whether it contributes to the emergence of informal housing and backyard room renting in Greater Gaborone (Mogoditshane), Botswana.

### **Sub-Research Objectives**

- Explore the contribution of the planning legislative and regulatory framework to the emergence of informal housing/backyard renting in Mogoditshane, Botswana.
- Assess whether Botswana’s planning landscape has been localised to cater to its population’s needs with regard to the provision of adequate housing.
- Identify the specific issues that could be attributed to planning systems concerning inadequate housing provision for the urban poor and the emergence of informal housing.

- Propose recommendations in planning policy towards the provision of adequate housing for the urban poor and reduce the emergence of informal backyard housing in Mogoditshane, Botswana.

## **Methods**

Given the nature of the research, qualitative methods were adopted to collect primary data for this study. Information was gathered from participants, including planning academics, government officials, and private planning professionals, through semi-structured interviews. Structured interviews were also conducted with residents of Mogoditshane. The concept of saturation was used to determine the number of interviews required. Additionally, document analysis and observation were employed to gather further information for the study.

### **Study Area (Mogoditshane)**

A case study approach was adopted to assess the contribution of planning to the emergence of informal housing in urban areas. Mogoditshane, located on the periphery of Gaborone, was chosen as the study area. Before Botswana's independence in 1966, Mogoditshane was a small village with a population of less than 4 000 (Kalabamu, 2014, p. 18). However, this population more than doubled to 14 246 in 2001 and reached 58 079 in the 2011 National Census Report (Republic of Botswana, 2011, p. 12). The village continues to grow rapidly, having been identified as the highest populated village in Botswana in the preliminary results of the Population and Housing Census (Republic of Botswana, 2022, p. 8), with a current population of 88 098 inhabitants and a growth rate of 4.0%. Mogoditshane is now an extension of the capital city, Gaborone, which has a current population of 244 107 (Republic of Botswana, 2022, p. 8). The two settlements have physically merged into one continuous urbanised area referred to by the Botswana National Spatial Plan 2036 (Republic of Botswana, 2018, p. 109) as the Gaborone/Mogoditshane/Tlokweng Built-Up Area. While the merging of these three entities provides a platform for a common planning

process and strategy, the settlements will retain their distinct identities and administrative governance (Republic of Botswana, 2018, p. 109).

In the case of Mogoditshane, informal housing should not be equated with slums, which are defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (2025) as a “squalid and congested urban street or neighbourhood populated by very poor people”. According to Kalabamu (2006, p. 227), within the informal housing of Mogoditshane, some individuals are ranked among the highest income brackets in society; a mix of affluent and poor people therefore live side by side. Furthermore, the majority of Mogoditshane’s urban poor, particularly the youth, meet their housing needs through room renting, which involves multiple households renting one or two rooms in a single house or the backyard (Kalabamu, 2006, p. 226).

## **Data Analysis**

The data collection was divided into two main parts. Firstly, secondary data were collected from literature reviews and documents from the Department of Town and Country Planning, as well as the Department of Housing. This included urban planning legislation and policies such as the revised Development Control Code 2013; the Mogoditshane, Gabane, Metsimotlhabe, and Mmopane Development Plan (2001–2025); and the Town and Country Planning Act of 2013. Secondly, primary data were collected via interviews with key informants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with planning experts from different sectors, alongside structured interviews with residents of Mogoditshane. Observations made during this process were also valuable. To understand the participants’ experiences and to address the main research question, both semi-structured and structured interview data were interpreted using a coding or framework analysis approach. This form of thematic analysis provides researchers with a systematic structure for managing and analysing information, which allows for the deduction and organisation of codes into categories (Goldsmith, 2021, p. 2061). Other facets of the research topic were also analysed; discussions thus include data from the

interviews and descriptions that drew inferences based on document analysis, informant information, and images obtained during the observation sessions. The rationale for conducting both semi-structured and structured interviews was grounded in a purposive sampling technique, which involved a total of 27 participants. Research findings were obtained from structured interviews administered to 18 residents of Mogoditshane and semi-structured interviews administered to nine urban planning professionals from different organisations.

## **Discussion and Analysis**

The study aimed to identify the specific issues related to planning systems that contribute to inadequate housing provision for the urban poor and the emergence of informal housing in Botswana. Extracts from the interviews indicate that urban policies are not entirely inclusive. One reason for the lack of policy inclusivity is that Botswana's planning standards and regulations adopt a blanket approach. Furthermore, there are no standards that are designed to facilitate access for the poor, which makes it difficult for them to meet the often expensive requirements.

The research confirmed that some of the backrooms in Mogoditshane are not constructed according to planning standards and regulations. Several factors contribute to the contravention of these standards, including residents claiming ignorance of the planning requirements. There is also a perception that planning processes are costly as they involve expenses for designs, architectural services, and related consultancies. Furthermore, planning requirements restrict them from fully densifying the plot without changing the use to multi-residential (with only one outbuilding allowed), which poses a limitation for landlords. As a result, they often choose to build outside the established regulations to maximise their profits.

The results of the literature review, along with interviews with experts and residents, reveal that informal backyard renting is popular in Mogoditshane. The majority of tenants

in Mogoditshane are aged between 19 and 35 years, with an average of three people per household. This trend is largely due to the affordability of rooms for low-income urban groups, particularly for those engaged in small businesses and working in and around the capital city of Gaborone. Another reason for the prevalence of rental rooms is that they provide a significant source of income for landlords. Specifically, backyard renting has become a means for plot owners in Mogoditshane to maximise their space by constructing rooms for rent to earn a living.

However, while renting serves as a source of shelter for various individuals, there are downsides; landlords may exploit poor and vulnerable tenants by charging high rents for crowded and substandard housing.

The results above raise concern, as rental informality in Mogoditshane is common, yet the informal housing sector in Botswana is not openly embraced. This study therefore aimed to stimulate discussion around the informal backyard renting sector and encourage further research on the phenomenon.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the conclusions drawn from the findings of the study, this research makes several recommendations for the future improvement of decent housing provision in Mogoditshane through inclusive planning policies by the responsible institutions.

### **Government Urban/Town Planners**

The relevant government authorities, i.e., local councils, should emphasise the need for stronger enforcement of regulations so that residents do not feel that non-compliance bears no immediate penalties. Designated members from the local community could be trained and employed to monitor building activities and to report non-conforming practices to the Land Board and the City Council.

As it stands, backyard renting needs to be integrated into the official housing system for African governments, including Botswana's Mogoditshane. According to Lategan and Cilliers (2013), the backyard rental industry delivers significant advantages by providing shelter to hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of South Africans who would otherwise be forced to live in shanty townships while waiting for local government-subsidised housing. However, even though informal backyard rentals encourage compact development, which combats urban sprawl and affords low-income urban individuals some shelter, the sector is not sustainable in its current form (Lategan & Cilliers, 2013). Backyard renting therefore needs to be regulated, protected, serviced, and managed if social, economic, environmental, and spatial sustainability is to be established.

For existing backyard renting, especially in densely populated areas, rehabilitation should be prioritised over demolition. A working example can be drawn from South Africa, where strategies to address the issue of Cape Town's backyard renters can be traced back to 2010. At that time, the city's Department of Housing Policy and Research was tasked with conducting further research into the sector and identifying potential reform measures (Fieuw & Mitlin, 2018, pp. 215-217; Grady et al., 2019, pp. 6-9). The services provided include an additional enclosed flush toilet, running water, a prepaid electricity meter for up to three backyard families, and one additional refuse bin (Grady et al., 2019, pp. 6-9).

The ministry responsible for housing (i.e., the Ministry of Lands and Water Affairs and the Department of Housing) should formulate a recognised formal policy for backyard renting in Mogoditshane. This will serve to legitimise the role of backyard renting in the housing supply system and also dedicate funding instruments to support the sector. Three major aspects could be included in the policy to improve housing affordability in Mogoditshane, namely reforming land use regulations to allow smaller plot sizes and more compact housing; expanding housing subsidies for the lowest-income households; and relaxing some of the building requirements, specifically adapting them for lower-income earners, as regulatory frameworks

impact various groups differently (Payne & Majale, 2012). As noted by Payne and Majale (2012) and Payne (2001), significant costs, both monetary and non-monetary, are associated with complying with regulatory frameworks. Uniform regulatory charges impose an unjustified burden on the poor, which results in more resistance than compliance with regulations.

The Department of Town and Country Planning can develop local plans that recognise the specific needs and aspirations of the low-income urban population in Mogoditshane. Efforts should be made to relax, simplify, and streamline laws and regulatory procedures to reduce their complexity, costs, and restrictive conditions associated with formalisation.

Furthermore, local government authorities, i.e., city/town councils, should set out to educate the people in Mogoditshane regarding building regulations and the planning process to create awareness and emphasise their importance. Guidelines, templates, and handbooks about better building practices could be developed in both local and official languages and provided at no cost to landowners in the community. These could be accompanied by information sheets about the process of submitting building plans and the benefits of obtaining land use approval.

The above will help to formalise and eliminate some of the socio-economic and environmental issues related to inadequate housing. According to Duminy (2011), modern planning is preoccupied with the unrealistic image of an officially organised and regulated city or town, which leads to despair for those who are living in condemned informal settlements. Backyard rental policy should therefore primarily recognise and embrace the backyard phenomenon. Furthermore, it should ensure that rental housing in designated areas remains affordable for low-income earners over the long term, with Mogoditshane being one such place where backyard renting is already prevalent.

### **Residents and Landlords**

The residents and landlords of Mogoditshane should be fully involved in the process of formulating regulations to enhance inclusivity through consultations with policymakers. This practice will enable the inhabitants of Mogoditshane to express their local needs, which will enable the responsible entities to understand issues as they exist on the ground. In turn, this will assist officials in developing effective solutions based on accurate real-time data and concerns. This notion is supported by Kalabamu (2018, p. 56) and Douglas (2013), who explain that inclusivity and the related calls for the right to the city are predicated on the direct participation of urban inhabitants in all decisions that affect the production of urban space.

### **Conclusion**

This research aimed to explore the extent to which Botswana's settlement planning policies are inclusive and to determine whether urban planning legislation and the regulatory framework contribute to the emergence of informal settlements and backyard room renting in Mogoditshane, Greater Gaborone, Botswana. The research findings revealed numerous factors that drive backyard room renting in Mogoditshane. Based on the qualitative analysis adopted in this study during data collection, it can be concluded that there is indeed housing informality manifesting in the form of backyard rentals, also known as rooming, in Mogoditshane.

There is a general assertion among built environment experts, including urban and town planners, that Botswana's planning legislation and regulatory framework are elitist and exclusionary. This suggests that the planning policies primarily cater to and favour the upper working class in terms of their requirements while excluding low-income earners. The study established that meeting the building and planning requirements is cumbersome, time-consuming, and very expensive. Consequently, low-income earners cannot afford to build or own houses; instead, they opt for low-income rentals on the outskirts of Gaborone. The high demand for

rented rooms in peri-urban areas such as Mogoditshane has also had a ripple effect on the quality of housing available to the needy population. The standards for these rooms are low, and the majority are constructed without permission from the relevant authorities.

There is also a general lack of enforcement of regulations, which leads residents to feel that non-compliance bears no immediate penalties. It is apparent that the backyard rental phenomenon has become a very lucrative cash-generating business for plot owners in Mogoditshane. Without proper measures to control the situation, Mogoditshane may soon become an informal settlement.

In conclusion, having taken into consideration different factors, it is clear that housing informality exists in Mogoditshane in the form of backyard rentals. The research revealed a need to closely monitor the backyard renting market in Mogoditshane and to develop specific strict management measures before the village transforms into an informal settlement. This can be achieved by addressing the loopholes in the legislation and regulatory framework. Moreover, to achieve this, policymakers need to understand and acknowledge the impact and contribution of planning policies to the proliferation of this informal housing.

This research makes a significant contribution through its in-depth analytical techniques to understanding the extent to which Botswana's urban planning legislation and regulatory framework influence the emergence of informal rented housing in Mogoditshane, Botswana. Although it presents several important arguments, they are not exhaustive, which highlights a crucial gap that necessitates further investigation. The foundation established by this study creates an enabling environment for additional inquiries into other aspects that may have been overlooked. Furthermore, it was noted during the data-collection period that there is a lack of studies on this topic, specifically regarding Botswana and Mogoditshane. This suggests that in order to better understand the implications of

these findings, future research should be conducted to validate this study's results and expand on its conclusions.

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