

UNPACKING HOUSING WAITING LIST AS A CRITICAL POLICY INSTRUMENT FOR PROPERTY THE LADDER IN BULAWAYO, ZIMBABWE

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Abstract

This paper provides a critical examination into the functioning of a housing waiting list document, a critical instrument for the delivery of affordable housing in Zimbabwe's local municipalities. It argues that the housing waiting list document is opaque and has on one hand, made it difficult for poor families to access public housing, while on the other hand, has also accelerated the delivery of public housing to a certain segment of the society that has political capital. Affordable housing is part of the process of getting poorer households on the first step of the ownership ladder and into the property market. If there are prejudices in the process, it leads to unequal entry into the property market for the poorer segment of the population, hindering their economic progress.

The research brings into the conversation the concept of ungovernability popularised by Roy (2009 and Bénit-Gbaffou (2018) to mean the inability to govern. It makes a case that the way in which the housing waiting list is promulgated, used and stored is one of the reasons why access to affordable housing has remained a challenge in cities of the South. The ungovernability of public housing is a deliberate attempt by local governments to achieve certain ends which include but not limited to build support base for political parties, wealth accumulation and maintain clientel relationships by facilitating their entry into the property market. Thus, the failure to delivery public housing has seen local governments 'meddling through' (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2018), rather than governing the housing sector and providing for the poorer segment of the population.