

PREMIO MIGLIOR TESI DI LAUREA

Titling the informal: formalization and land (in) security. the case study of villa 31, Buenos Aires

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Buenos Aires is the city of contrast. The thesis wants to analyze the relationship between the formal city and the informal city, dominated by villas. These settlements are typical of ever-growing cities, which are in continuous and rapid development, where management is almost impossible. Processes of formalization as an effective way to face emergent issues and challenges are analyzed with the ultimate aim of recognizing the importance of formal property titles as a starting point to work with these human settlements. Hence, the thesis analyzes the relationship between diverse components of security of tenure and integration policies for the regularization of informal settlements with a focus on the case of Villa 31 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The investigation states that while social and urban integration policies provide individual security of tenure and improvements to the quality of life, there is a risk they may cause gentrification and further bolster informality, particularly in centrally located and valuable areas. Therefore, this work seeks to explore how the three pillars of tenure, legal, perceived, and de facto, should be approached in Villa 31 to reach an equilibrium that favours social justice and maintains the social function of regularized land.

The dissection of the case study raises three dilemmas; if the delivery of titles ensures tenancy, if regularization programs cause gentrification, and if urban integration policies improve quality of life. Since the initiatives for Villa 31 are still in their implementation phase, they are compared to programs and outcomes of other cases in Latin America. This juxtaposition demonstrates that the ongoing policies of social and urban integration require critical scrutiny regarding their ability to produce an inclusive urban amalgamation. Although the city government's response to informal settlement has looked at upgrading programs to secure tenure, improve housing, install needed infrastructure, and provide public services, such upgrading programs generally focus on addressing current risks to informal-settlement inhabitants; the extent to which these upgrading programs can enhance the resilience of informal settlements and their inhabitants to the effects of climate change will be considered.

The research concludes with a proposed alternative scenario that might lessen the negative ramifications inflicted by growing market forces on the inhabitants of Villa 31, and finally create a bridge between the formal and the informal.