

Bridging weak links of solid waste management in informal settlements

Many cities in the global South suffer from vast inadequacies and deficiencies in their solid waste management. In the city of Kisumu in Kenya, waste management is fragmented and insufficient with most household waste remaining uncollected. Solid waste enters and leaves public space through an intricate web of connected, mostly informal, actions. This article scrutinizes waste management of informal settlements, based on the case of Kisumu, to identify weak links in waste management chains and find neighborhood responses to bridge these gaps. Systems theory and action net theory support our analysis to understand the actions, actors, and processes associated with waste and its management. We use qualitative data from fieldwork and hands on engagement in waste management in Kisumu. Our main conclusion is that new waste initiatives should build on existing waste management practices already being performed within informal settlements by waste scavengers, waste pickers, waste entrepreneurs, and community-based organizations.