

## Jacob Lutta

University of Dar es Salaam | [jlutta@udsm.ac.tz](mailto:jlutta@udsm.ac.tz)

## Yves Schoonjans

KU Leuven | [yves.schoonjans@kuleuven.be](mailto:yves.schoonjans@kuleuven.be)

### KEYWORDS

informal settlements; sustainable development; urbanisation; spatial features; Tanzania

### ABSTRACT

Due to a massive shortage of housing alternatives, the creation and expansion of informal settlements in the global South have become an instant answer for individuals searching for places to live. Researchers and organisations are stressing the importance of public spaces in informal settlements. This paper uses the method of a case study to understand and assess the typological features of specific streetscapes by identifying their spatial characteristics, attributes, and socio-spatial configurations. The process of permanently claiming and appropriating open spaces in the streets is examined through the Mlakuwa informal settlement neighbourhood in Dar es Salaam. Observations and qualitative data collection were the methods used in this research. The findings show that the space typology is a product of local human activities and connection networks that have been created to support the daily uses and routines, together with the liveliness with which the streetscape functions as a collective space. The contribution of this paper is to create knowledge on the different typological shapes of collective spaces in the Mlakuwa community and how they are linked to their local needs. It will also raise explicit awareness among the community and policymakers. Understanding these shapes will be a step forward in the treatment of streetscapes for the purpose of improving people's future lives.

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# Streetscapes as Collective Spaces in Dar es Salaam's Informal Settlements

## INTRODUCTION

The identity of urban cities is created by the pattern of the streets, which play an important role in the development of urban space Morphology. Streets are characterised by social groups and lifestyles which give a perception of images and perspectives that enhance life in the existing streetscapes.<sup>1</sup> Streets have been seen as “multimodal rights of way designed and operated to create benefits relating to movement, ecosystem, and community.”<sup>2</sup> According to Reeman Rehan (2013), the street can be a fundamental component that helps people experience the environment when they use urban community space.<sup>3</sup> Streets share common attributes in connecting different places within the city.<sup>4</sup> It is inevitable to disregard streets in urban spaces because they fill people’s images of the city’s perception and experiences.<sup>5</sup> The three-dimensional spaces in cities depend on the character and identification of the city’s features, which can be perceived through the role of city streets. The spatial value of urban space

and the space character of the city play a vital role in consolidating important features like environmental, historical, social-cultural, and functional elements that help people’s perception and impression of the urban pattern.<sup>6</sup> A similar idea may be seen in the global north, where the physical reality of street use in urban cities is experienced by human activities that improve the quality of streets.<sup>7</sup> Street lanes and public and private frontage are among the important elements of streets that tend to add not only to urban identity but also to socio-spatial value. Streets have been a part of creating a subset of collective spaces through the provision of physical spatial arrangements for multiple activities as a distinct character of urban settings.<sup>8</sup> Scheerlinck (2016), in his work “Streetscape Territories,” sees street collective spaces as interconnected spaces with varying degrees of common usage that are characterised by diverse physical, cultural, or geographical borders.<sup>9</sup> De Solà Morales invented the phrase “collective spaces,” in

which people gather and engage regardless of whether the facilities are owned publicly or privately.<sup>10</sup> Schoonjans and Zhang (2020) consider collective spaces in relation to how society and neighbourhoods respond to cultural and social elements contributing to spatial configurations, even in the context of informal urbanisation, where streets are not being taken into consideration as a part of the urban development process.<sup>11</sup>

Informal urbanisation cannot escape this discussion. It is one of the most visible challenges in the rapidly urbanising cities of the Global South. Scholars John Turner (1967), Hernandez, and Titheridge (2015), as well as Rocco and van Ballegooyen's Routledge Handbook on Informal Urbanisation (2020), have described informality as a process and activities that exist outside of the policies and standards of contemporary advance planning and have their own meanings and pleasures that contribute to urban growth.<sup>12</sup> In Tanzanian cities, the growth of informal settlements tends to breach existing regulations, such as the Land Management and Home Building Acts.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the heavy urban density of informal settlements puts a strain on the spaces. This, of course, shows the undeniable importance of the streets as a possible collective space for movement, trade, economics, or leisure in informal settlements.

Streets as urban spaces in cities have always attempted to increase the value and nature of informal urbanisation, which experiences a shortage of public spaces and where streetscapes and paths are alternatively used as collective spaces for social, economic, and cultural settings. Also, in informal settlements, streets are not top-down designed but organically fabricated. The Mlalakuwa informal settlement in Dar es Salaam is here not an exception where urban space developments and distribution of social space can be made by the visible race of the environmental idea, where streets and neighbourhoods have their own radical and social morphology to contribute to the rule of urban growth.<sup>14</sup> Streets provide access to social, economic, and cultural interaction, strengthening community cohesion. As a result, they are an essential and fundamental component of human connectivity in their everyday lives.

This paper, therefore, aims at examining the diverse typological features of Mlalakuwa informal settlement's collective spaces in the streets and how they relate to their local requirements. It also promotes knowledge of using collective spaces among members of Mlalakuwa neighbourhoods. Acknowledging these structures will be a step ahead in the future treatment of streetscapes in informal settlements with the objective of improving community lives.

## METHODS

This paper's information is based on field research done in the Mlalakuwa informal settlement neighbourhood in Dar es Salaam using a case study methodology.<sup>15</sup> One can detect a multitude of collective activities taking place on the streets as a part of the daily lives of most of Mlalakuwa's residents. The study included site observation, a literature

review, and data gathering methods, as well as interviews with collective space users in the streetscapes and with local government authorities. Through observation, those activities were documented in sketches and photographic registration. Documentary outsourcing from earlier research on the settlements was also employed to collect secondary data. However, it was detected that social and economic aspirations seem to be the main driving forces that influence the typological features of streetscapes in informal settlements, allowing for qualities and spatial configurations in the settlement.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

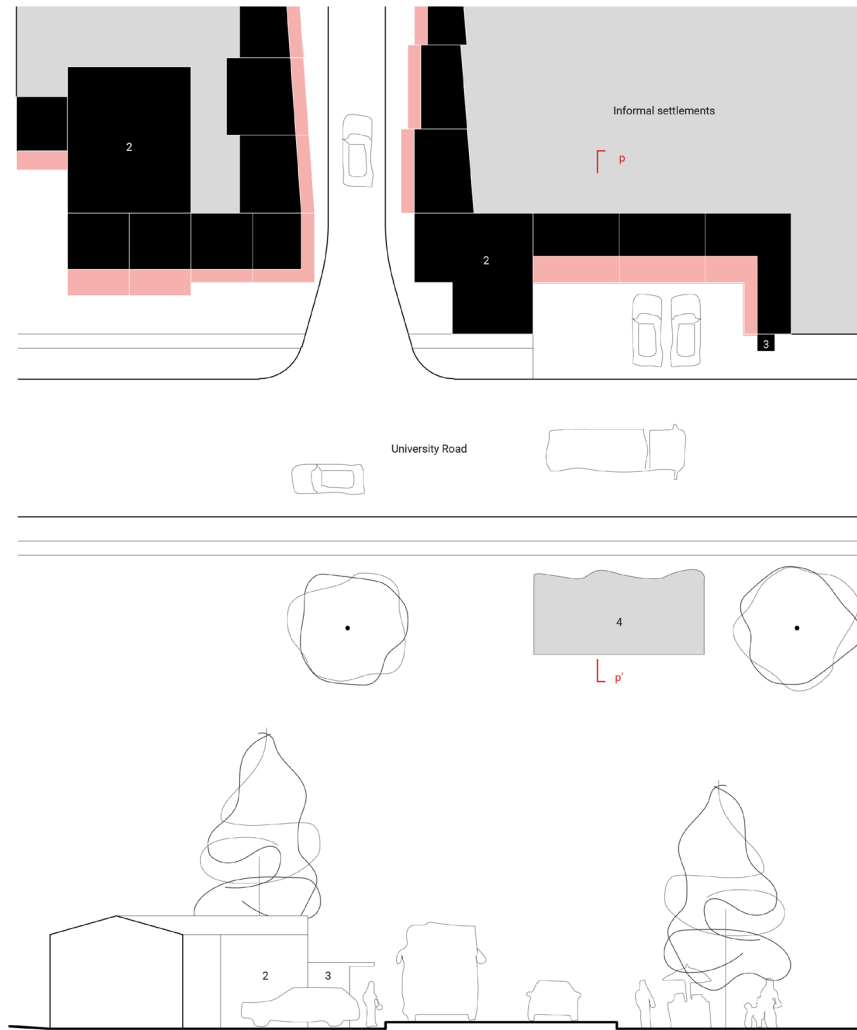
### Formation of Collective Spaces in Streets

The network of streets and urban roadways has been seen as a foundation of the urban environment that acts as the city's spatial framework. Streets in most informal settlements in Dar es Salaam are packed with various elements in order to compensate for the paucity of collective space that would aid in accommodating the current functions. Therefore, the formation of collective spaces in the streets is a subset of retrieving the need for services that led to the growth of the informal economy. Many streets have been designated as "collective spaces," which are based on the notion of restoring existing underutilised spaces. Street pockets are used by people to overcome the present constraints of places that serve social and economic activities for the neighbourhood's sustainable development. That appeared to have encroached, by creating several collective spaces and appropriating them for different functions.

According to the **Fig. 1**, the most prominent collective spaces for commercial purposes were identified in several streets in the Mlalakuwa informal settlement. The streets at the neighbourhood edges, largely located along sides of the University and Sam Nujoma Roads were prominent for economic as well as social activities for mostly vendors, motorcyclists, taxi drivers, and tricycle operators. However, as you proceed into the interior part of the settlement, you will see more local places collectively used in various streets and alleyways. A wide range of activities were detected in the vicinity of the streets that are left and right along sides. The densification of the urban structure together with the high number of users of each house puts a strain on the need for places outside the houses. More often, streets are used by passengers at bus stops, for hand car washing, for conducting economic activities like small stores for vendors or repair activities. But next to those private uses of the public street, they also become places for socialising and community life. According to the results of the interviews, the majority of the entrepreneurs and motorcyclists have established or plan to establish spaces for vendor stores along the streets and alleyways in the Mlalakuwa neighbourhood to cope with the existing scarcity of spaces for running their social and economic activities. The interview revealed that 11 out of the 19 vendors and other users along sides of the streets who were interviewed had established either temporary structures or open-air activity/shed for economic and social activities.



- Existing spaces developed for commercial purposes built before 2005
- New spaces developed between 2005-2015
- - - New outlook of streets spaces developed between 2015-2022
- Other collective spaces



Section p-p'

- Extended shops from buildings
- 2 Bars
- 3 Extended restaurant
- 4 Open ground flower ground

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1  
Distribution of Collective Spaces in the streets of Mlalakuwa Settlement (graphic re-edition by Beatriz Freitas Gordinho, based on material provided by the authors, 2023).

2  
Encroachment of economic activities at the sides of the main streets in the Mlalakuwa informal settlement (graphic re-edition by Beatriz Freitas Gordinho, based on material provided by the authors, 2023).

3  
(a) A spot for motorcyclists and tax drivers along the sides of University Road Street. (b) Fruit vendor store, flower, and tiles vendors on the side of University Road (author's photograph, 2022).



3

To investigate the collective use of the streetscapes more deeply, three major areas were examined and inspected: the roads as edges of the neighbourhood, the streets in the neighbourhood, and the smaller alleyways. Different tiers of streets were noticed, each with a diverse set of functions, as indicated below.

#### **Encroachment at Main Roads. Extension of Building Structure**

Spaces were developed along major roadways by stretching portions of houses to provide collective spaces for stores, bars, workshops, and restaurants facing the main street. The bulk of individuals from various places seek services from these locations. They have been the prominent areas for connecting people from various adjoining settlements. **Fig. 2** shows the morphology of street spaces being adopted for social and economic activities.

#### **Encroachment at Main Roads. Open ground Collective Spaces for Motorcyclists, Taxi Drivers, and Flower Vendors**

Other spaces were seen on the two main roads of Sam Nujoma and University Roads, where the road reserve areas have been adapted as collective spaces for motorcyclists, taxi drivers, tricycle riders, and flower vendors to run social and economic activities. **Fig. 3** People are getting together to request that the local government grants them the right to continue their activities. One of the interviewees during

the interview narrated:

We are holding an open space along the sides of the streets that is not ours. We developed this area at our own expense, and it wasn't too expensive. We helped by sourcing wood and building these benches. This is a great location for us to meet with customers on public transit before transporting them to other locations. We know almost everyone in this neighbourhood, which makes it easier for us to do business. It gets exceedingly troublesome during the rainy season since trees cannot cover us from the rain.<sup>16</sup>

#### **Encroachment at Main Roads. Temporary Structures on Road Reserve Areas**

Temporary structures in road reserve zones are another sort of collective space on the main street in the Mlalakuwa neighbourhood. **Fig. 4** These collective spaces are built with precast steel frames, coated with cladding sheets, and covered with canvas PVC sheets. These temporary constructions appear to be near other existing establishments and frequently restrict pedestrian walkways. Occupants of these collaborative areas rent them out to others, primarily street food and fruit vendors. These structures have been a space for people to collectively meet and have services provided by them. Contrary to the principal role of streets in Mlalakuwa, streets have contributed to the value of collective spaces in Mlalakuwa





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where a pedestrian can walk in and have services that are offered elsewhere. This tells us that it is more necessary that the functioning street seems to be actively working than relying on the fundamental aspects of the street. This adds more value to the streets by having a diversity of activities that contribute to the growth of the community's economic and social preponderance.

### Encroachment in Interior Streets

The Mlalakuwa inner streets have been utilised for a variety of purposes since they have been deemed to be essential routes that connect the interior areas of Mlalakuwa from the three main roads of Bagamoyo, Sam Nujoma, and University. It was discovered that they were used by different groups in a collective way. Children, women, and the elderly are drawn to these streets for social interaction and children's activities. Various activities, including children's games, may be seen on the street on a daily basis. **Fig. 5 (a)** and **(b)** Diverse store units on the inner street sell a variety of items, such as street food vending, stationery, and other businesses functioning as collective spaces. It has been discovered that the majority of these shops' consumers are Mlalakuwa residents and students from Ardhi University and the University of Dar es Salaam, which are close to the neighbourhood. In an interview with a Mlalakuwa resident regarding the use of these street

spaces, he responded that:

... in this neighbourhood, there are no open areas. We remain and stay out over the street's collective space while the car passes by, which is risky. Nonetheless, some kids disregard road safety by playing in the streets. We are grateful for the drivers' efforts. They enjoy driving along these streets since they are constantly busy. As you can see, our roadways serve a number of functions. They save for mobility, children's play, and hangout spots. On these streets, we are linked to existing stores and small marketplaces. We generally talk about soccer and other topics connected to our lives. It was formerly a unified façade with just house doors or windows on the front.<sup>17</sup>

### Encroachment at Alleyways

Investigations showed that alleyways functioned as spaces for a variety of purposes, including dishwashing and laundry areas. Other alleys are being linked to household rooms to create semi-collective spaces for gathering where inhabitants may rest or discuss various matters.<sup>18</sup> They are also used for small-scale commercial activities, such as tabletop food stores. As little more than a result, the alley may be seen as both a leisure and commercial place, reinforcing people's everyday adjustments to fulfill fundamental local requirements and community bondage.





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Residents of the Mlalakuwa community indicated their satisfaction with their way of life by identifying the characteristics of the informal activities that shaped their streetscapes and improved their living conditions. As a result, the alley's layout allows for transition and promotes the preponderance of collective spaces with multiple tenants inside alleyways and main streets. **Fig. 6 (a) and (b)** The interdependence of humans, places, and activities allows for the revival of collective spaces in urban spatial growth.

### **Social-Spatial Configurations at Streets in the Mlalakuwa neighbourhood**

The study revealed that collective spaces in streets are structured in a linear manner. Along the streets, there are a number of activities, as mentioned above, that are arranged along the line of street morphology. **Fig. 7** Bus terminals have been observed to be dominant places that attract various small activities to be operated nearby bus stops, which makes them a part of the linear organisation. For example, many vendors' activities, taxi drivers, and motorcyclists were discovered to be connected to bus stops as their collective spaces for picking up passengers from public transport and bringing them to other places in the Mlalakuwa neighbourhood.

### **Collective Space Typology in the Streets**

Two distinct typologies of collective spaces on the streets were uncovered: The first typology is linked to important functional features such as shopfront structure and between building structures, creating a specific streetscape. **Fig. 8 (a) and (b)** The second type of collective space is the open ground beneath trees in alleyways and on the sides of roadways, such as bus stops, motorbike stops, taxi stops, and tricycle riders' locations. **Fig. 9** Various societal operations were discovered in these places, and it appears that each collective space typology is governed by a distinct set of activities. Collective spaces on Mlalakuwa's streets appear to be the basic unit of urban space through which individuals perceive their surroundings. One of the street users described the usage of collective space in the streets as follows:

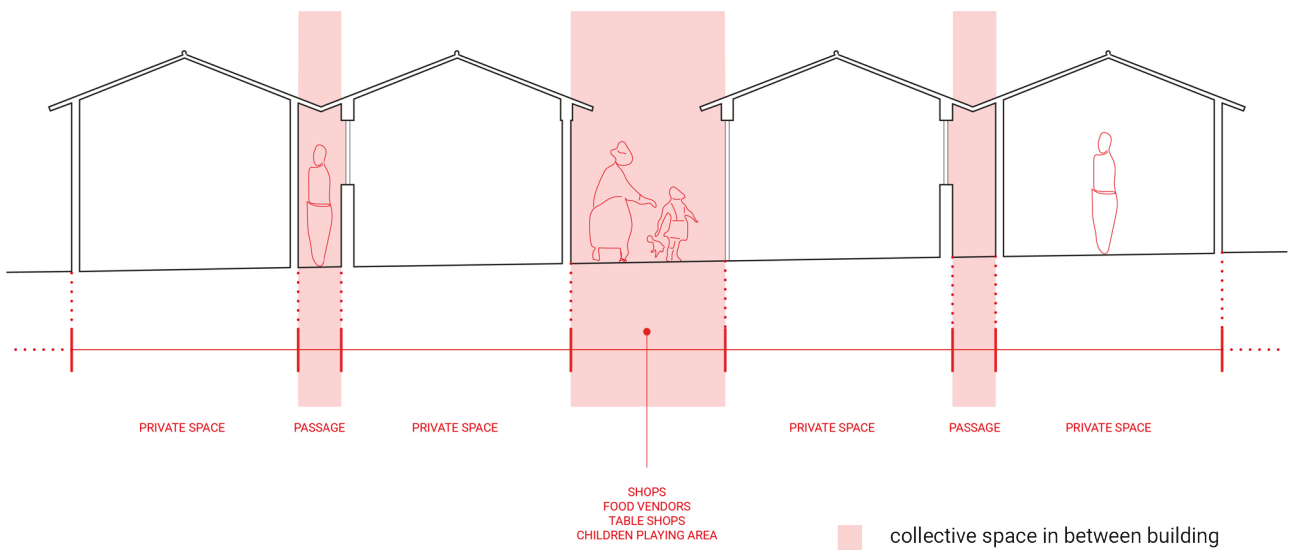
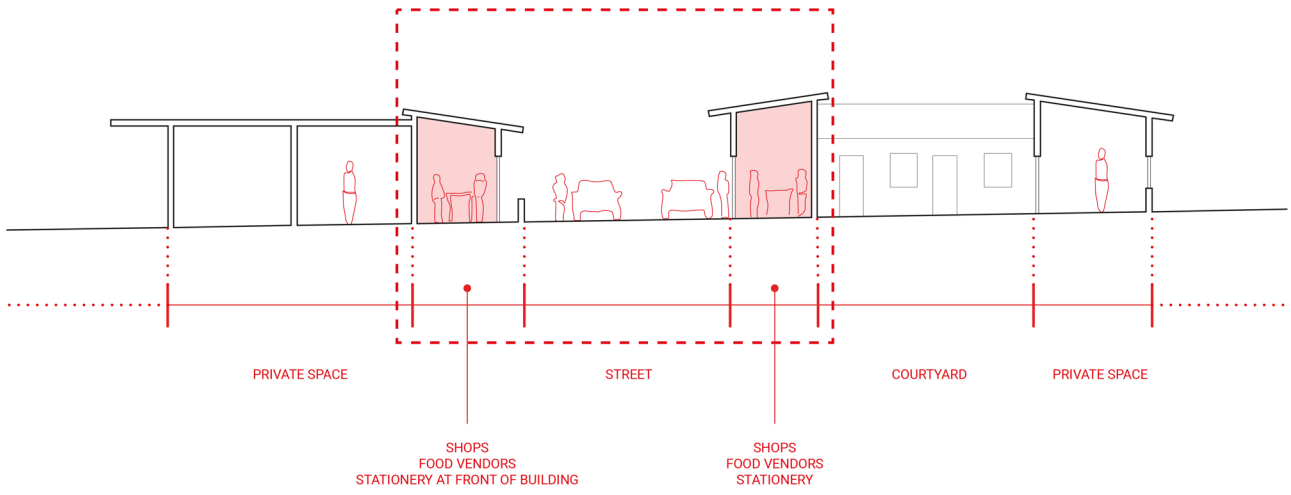
Mlalakuwa's streets encompass the building borders and space uses and define each open area available to our community. Despite their basic role of providing space for mobility and access, they also appear to promote a range of uses and activities, as seen by the abundance of vendors functioning spontaneously along the streets. Streets are thus dynamic over time to support sustainable development, economic activity, and cultural value.<sup>19</sup>



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6  
 (a) Collective space for children to play in an alley. (b) A Collective space for social-economic and laundry activities at alley (author's photograph, 2022).

7  
 Linear Streets Spatial configuration (graphic re-edition by Beatriz Freitas Gordinho, based on material provided by the authors, 2023).



8

8  
Spatial typology at the (a) shopfront and (b) in between buildings respectively (graphic re-edition by Beatriz Freitas Gordinho, based on material provided by the authors, 2023).

9

A typical collective space on the roadsides (author's photograph, 2022).





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This suggests that streets in Mlalakuwa are social places influenced by a variety of activities and frequently governed or established by a variety of views with the goal of supporting human livelihoods in the community. Knowing the different portions of a street provides a flexible way for people to have a sense of diversified knowledge about creating street space morphology which accelerates human preponderance.

## CONCLUSION

This article makes the case for a street as a container for a series of diverse but very important collective spaces in an informal neighbourhood and for community building operating in various ways. The city's success is characterised by strong street connectivity and infrastructural facilities, which enhance sustainable development and an efficient standard of living. In other words, streets create connectivity and permeability in the city. This is also the case for informal settlements, although street design is much more of a bottom-up process.

Streets in informal settlements can be perceived in a variety of ways. People are battling for space, as seen in many informal communities. As a result, streets become part of the community's struggle for space, with many of them altered to serve as collective spaces for social, economic,

and cultural activities. More effective strategies are needed for development actors to take positive actions and view the emerging collective spaces in the streets as another chance for them to create a more sustainable urban future. UN-Habitat (2013) highlights the significance and priority of street collective spaces since they provide a fundamental element for humans to practice. The presence of a diversity of activities and other services in informal settlements improves productivity and adds to the neighbourhood's quality of life. Bottom-up creation is a strong factor in their success because it is directly linked to local needs and expectations. But at the same time, due to their nature as irregularities, there is a danger if they are not taken into consideration. Their informal character can be threatened by sudden needs, the privatisation of certain groups, or sudden top-down changes without understanding the local logic. Finding the right balance is important in the urbanisation process. The UN-Habitat report "Streets as Tools for Urban Transformation in Slums: A Street-Led Approach to Citywide Slum Upgrading." (2012) depicts the interesting and important process of how streets are an important part of community development. Several streets can be redesigned to encourage users, and it is believed that the quality of life in the informal settlements has improved even more through having healthy but also socially sustainable streets.<sup>20</sup>



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- <sup>15</sup> Bill Gillham, *Case Study Research Methods* (London: Bloomsbury Academy, 2000); Robert Yin, *Case study research: Design and methods* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2009).
- <sup>16</sup> Interviews were conducted in July 2020, with a Motorcycle rider (34 years) who is conducting his business in the Mlalakuwa area. He started his business two years ago. He is now living in the Makongo area, it takes him five to seven minutes to ride from his home to Mlalakuwa.
- <sup>17</sup> An interview was conducted in August, 2020, with a Mlalakuwa resident (38 years old) who is the owner of the shop in one of the streets in the Mlalakuwa area. He has been living at Mlalakuwa since 2013 after shifting from his home village-Kilimanjaro to Dar es Salaam searching for a new life.
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- <sup>19</sup> An interview was held in May 2021 with one of the collective space users near Lufungira bus stop.
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# I paesaggi stradali come spazi collettivi negli insediamenti informali di Dar es Salaam

Jacob Lutta

Yves Schoonjans

## PAROLE CHIAVE

insediamenti informali; sviluppo sostenibile; urbanizzazione; caratteristiche territoriali; Tanzania

## ABSTRACT

*A causa della massiccia carenza di alternative abitative, la creazione e l'espansione di insediamenti informali nel Sud del mondo sono diventate una risposta immediata per gli individui in cerca di un posto dove vivere. Ricercatori e organizzazioni sottolineano l'importanza degli spazi pubblici negli insediamenti informali. Il presente saggio utilizza il metodo dello studio di caso per comprendere e valutare le caratteristiche tipologiche di specifici paesaggi stradali, identificandone le caratteristiche spaziali, gli attributi e le configurazioni socio-spaziali. Il processo di rivendicazione e appropriazione permanente degli spazi aperti nelle strade viene esaminato attraverso l'insediamento informale del quartiere di Mlalakuwa a Dar es Salaam. I metodi utilizzati in questa ricerca sono stati l'osservazione e la raccolta di dati qualitativi. I risultati mostrano che la tipologia dello spazio è il prodotto delle attività umane locali e delle reti di connessione che sono state create per supportare gli usi e le routine quotidiani, insieme alla vivacità con cui il paesaggio stradale funziona come spazio collettivo. Il contributo di questo saggio è quello di creare conoscenza sulle diverse forme tipologiche degli spazi collettivi nella comunità di Mlalakuwa e su come queste siano legate alle loro esigenze locali. Inoltre, esso aumenterà la chiara consapevolezza della comunità e dei politici. La comprensione di queste forme sarà un passo avanti nel trattamento dei paesaggi stradali allo scopo di migliorare la vita futura delle persone.*

## Jacob Lutta

University of Dar es Salaam

[jlutta@udsm.ac.tz](mailto:jlutta@udsm.ac.tz)

Jacob Lutta è attualmente impegnato nel gruppo di ricerca dottorale Urban Projects, Collective Spaces, and Local Identities presso la KU Leuven-St. LUCA Ghent nell'ambito della borsa di studio KU Leuven Global Minds. La sua ricerca mira a comprendere e valutare l'interstitialità di Mlalakuwa e i suoi cambiamenti spaziali.

*Jacob Lutta is currently engaged in the Urban Projects, Collective Spaces, and Local Identities Doctoral research group at KU Leuven-St. LUCA Ghent under the KU Leuven Global Minds scholarship. His research seeks to understand and evaluate the Mlalakuwa interstitiality and its spatial changes.*

## Yves Schoonjans

KU Leuven | [yves.schoonjans@kuleuven.be](mailto:yves.schoonjans@kuleuven.be)

Yves Schoonjans è Professore Ordinario e preside della Facoltà di Architettura della KU Leuven. Il suo principale obiettivo di ricerca è l'appropriazione e la relazione tra forma e significato da parte di diversi attori nel campo della Progettazione Urbana, degli Spazi Collettivi e delle Identità Locali.

*Prof. dr. Yves Schoonjans, is full professor and dean of the Faculty of Architecture, KU Leuven. His main research-focus lies on the appropriation and the relation between form and meaning by different actors in the field of Urban Design, Collective Spaces and Local Identities.*