

Images of African Informal Settlements: Exploring Contested Experiences of Place, Gender, and Development in West Point, Liberia

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2012

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The aim of this thesis is to address the knowledge gap about community planning and development in a Liberian informal settlement community called West Point. Through a comparison of resident perceptions of their community and Liberian state perceptions, this thesis seeks to highlight the importance of engaging in a deeper level of inquiry with the residents of informal settlements in order to develop sustainable and appropriate solutions to community problems. The thesis also details differences in the lived experiences of women and men in West Point, and explains how common external perceptions of slum communities mask problems of gender relations in informal settlements. It uses in-depth semi structured interviews with residents of West Point and Liberian government officials to demonstrate how an improved understanding of the livelihood patterns and priorities of residents could positively influence the way the Liberian national and municipal governments and development organizations respond to community challenges.

