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Strategies for persistence in a suspended planning system: Learning from solid waste practices in refugees camp and urban settings in the context of Lebanon

Multiple studies argue for the dark side of suspending laws and planning regulations due to its misuse as an oppressive tool. There are at least two ways to explore this condition: (a) how the suspension of laws can be a tool that exacerbates uncertainties and (b) how the suspension of laws and planning regulations can be addressed by local practices. My research focuses on both views and is explored within the context of Lebanon. On one hand, the study aims to unpack causes and consequences of the suspension of solid waste laws and planning regulations in the country. On the other hand, it explores strategies adopted by local recycling practices to navigate uncertainties caused by such condition. Four in-depth case studies of solid waste operators were conducted in two settings of uncertainties: refugees' camp and urban contexts. Theoretically, under the suspension of laws, recycling operators experience a legitimacy crisis. My research uses the theoretical framework of strategic legitimacy building under the 'suspension of laws', to understand the operation of recyclers. The main findings suggest recyclers are mobilising various strategies to construct their legitimacy and to respond to society's needs. Despite, top-down solid waste management paralysis, recycling operators have proved their worth in delivering efficient and adaptive services and in presenting alternative solutions for society. The deactivation of laws is found to hold opportunities for local waste operators to negotiate their inclusivity in everyday city making, and to reinforce their position in the recycling business. The theoretical contribution of my research is the exploration of strategic legitimacy building processes under the suspension of laws.