

Study on development model and governance strategy of informal phenomenon in typical countries of sub-Saharan Africa

From the perspective of the Belt and Road Initiative

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Abstract

Informality is a typical feature of sub-Saharan African countries. It not only provides income and living conditions for low-income groups, but also restricts the sustainable development of national economy and living environment to a large extent. Under the concept of building a community of shared future for mankind, research on governance around informality is of great significance for reconfiguring the development environment of contemporary countries and cities in sub-Saharan Africa. According to the differences in the main causes of informal development in sub-Saharan African countries, this paper selects four typical countries, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe, to analyze the development process and main characteristics of informal development. Finally, based on the perspective of the "Belt and Road" Initiative, this paper puts forward corresponding governance strategies for the informality of sub-Saharan Africa from three aspects: the joint construction of overseas industrial parks between China and Africa, the planning cooperation between China and Africa, and the private assistance provided by China to Africa, so as to deepen China-Africa cooperative relations and promote the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

Keywords

Sub-saharan Africa, informality, Bel tand Road, urban governance

1. Introduction

Under the joint action of rapid urbanization, economic globalization and other factors, urban informal phenomenon, mainly represented by informal housing and informal economic activities, has emerged globally, which is particularly prominent in various countries in sub-Saharan Africa along the "Belt and Road". It has developed rapidly under the background of neoliberal urban policy intervention and the slowdown of "regularization mode". Compared with the limited employment opportunities and high living costs of formal cities, "urban informality" can greatly reduce the daily life burden of people, especially low-income groups. However, due to the "informal city" in the invisibility of informal settlements and informal economic activity and disordered sex is stronger, and "neighbourhood" all the way along the most developing countries urban planning guidance level to keep pace with irregularity "out of control" of the city development and variation, the functions of the government and the public demand, there are a large number does not match relationship between It is easy to cause a series of problems such as poverty, pollution, crowding and disease.

As early as August 2016, the New Urban Agenda adopted at the Habitat III Conference in Quito, Ecuador, emphasized the need to eliminate all forms of poverty, ensure sustainable and inclusive urban economies, and promote safe, sound, inclusive and secure environments in cities and human settlements. Irregularity phenomenon of important status in China has gained recognition ^[1], China also has all kinds of informal space for urban and social phenomenon in the related governance practices ^[2-3], but in sub-saharan African countries, the existence of common slums, open-air market, the phenomenon of street vendors and other informal development foreground is not optimistic. On the one hand, in the context of urban expansion, land supply is in short supply and official institutions are obsessed with "formality", making informal settlements and other informal Spaces in these countries face strong resistance from "formal institutions" ^[4-5]. On the other hand, unregulated informal economic activities breed illegal behaviors such as tax evasion, tax avoidance, money laundering and drug trafficking ^[6]. Some scholars at home and abroad have to Nairobi ^[7], Accra ^[8], Lagos ^[9] metropolitan irregularity sub-saharan African countries such as the management strategy has carried on the theoretical study, the local city government also has carried on the positive exploration and practice, but local caused by "informal" social problem continues even worse. Under the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind, the importance and necessity of the research on informal governance in these areas are increasingly prominent, and it is urgent to attract extensive attention from all walks of life.

China has long been a cooperative partner of African countries. With the continuous deepening of the Belt and Road Initiative, China's aid policies and systems to African countries are gradually improving. The Common Vision for China-Africa Cooperation 2035 (hereinafter referred to as the Vision) was adopted at the Eighth Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) held in Dakar, Senegal in late November 2021. In particular, the Vision states that China and Africa should continue to exchange experience on job creation and poverty reduction in various forms, and China supports Africa in improving its capacity for poverty alleviation, improving livelihood facilities such as education, water supply and electricity, and upgrading urbanization to achieve inclusive growth. The promulgation of the Vision provides policy support and points the way forward for China and Africa to jointly address the various problems caused by informality. Based on this, this paper summarizes typical countries and urban informal development patterns and status quo in sub-Saharan Africa, and puts forward corresponding strategic suggestions for China and Africa to jointly alleviate "informal urban disease" and improve urban living environment and employment environment from the perspective of the "Belt and Road" Initiative.

2. Informal development characteristics of typical countries in sub-Saharan Africa

Informality is a common feature of sub-Saharan African cities. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the Economic Commission for Africa have stated that the informal economy and informal daily life practices "are the dominant economy and way of life in most sub-Saharan African cities". Affected by factors such as sub-Saharan Africa's high population growth rate and rural-to-urban migration, as well as the limited capacity of the state to manage urban growth since independence, most people in cities live in informal settlements and are employed in informal settlements. way of subsistence. By sorting out the development profiles of 49 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, this paper selects four typical countries, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe, according to the main differences in the main reasons for informal development in each country, to analyze the African countries and their typical cities. The characteristics of formal development are analyzed, and the basic situation of the four case countries is shown in Table 1.

Country Name	Typical City	Typical Urban Population	State/City Status of Informality Development	Main Reasons for Promoting Informality
Ghana	Accra	4.20 million (2020)	90% of employment in Ghana is considered informal employment 33% of Accra Metropolitan Area residents live in slums	The number of living facilities and jobs in the city cannot keep up with the rate of urbanization
Kenya	Nairobi	4.40 million (2019)	2.2 million Nairobi residents work in the informal economy - Slums account for only 6% of Nairobi's total residential land area, but house at least 50% of the population, with Kibera, the largest slum in Kenya, estimated to have a population of between 170,000 and 1 million	Western colonial and planning systems have a profound impact
South Africa	Johannesburg	5.64 million (2019)	29% of Johannesburg residents live in informal settlements - Johannesburg is a typical "immigrant city", and the buildings in the inner city are basically rented out to low-income groups and illegal immigrants, so abandoned buildings, informal economy and crime have become a feature of inner city life	Immigration and segregation
Zimbabwe	Harare	1.87 million (2019)	- About 60% of urban residents in Zimbabwe live in informal settlements, most of whom live in extremely poor conditions - Zimbabwe is suffering from urban poverty, unemployment and insecurity for vulnerable groups	Its own development is limited, and the overall economic level of the country lags behind

Tabel 1. Basic information on informal development in typical countries and cities. Source: Organized by author.

2.1. Ghana

Ghana is the sub-Saharan African country that has received the earliest and most attention from relevant research. As early as 1973, American economic anthropologist Hart conducted groundbreaking fieldwork related to informal economic activity in Ghana. Through research on the economic activities of Frafras, an immigrant group in northern Ghana, Hart found that the occurrence of informal economic activities in Ghana at that time was closely related to factors such as rising prices, insufficient wages, and insufficient supply in the urban labor market, of which the latter was the main factor. He also believes that these informal economic activities have certain autonomy and can promote the income growth of urban and rural low-income groups^[10]. After the 1980s, affected by the wave of immigration, the urbanization rate of Ghana increased from 31% to 57% in three decades (Figure 1). The growth of the urban population exceeded that of the rural population by 4.4%, and the total urban population has never been less than 4 million. increased to nearly 14 million^[11]. Under the impact of the rapid expansion of the urban population, Ghana's public and formal private sectors have been unable to create the required number of employment opportunities, which further stimulated the rapid expansion of employment in the informal economy.

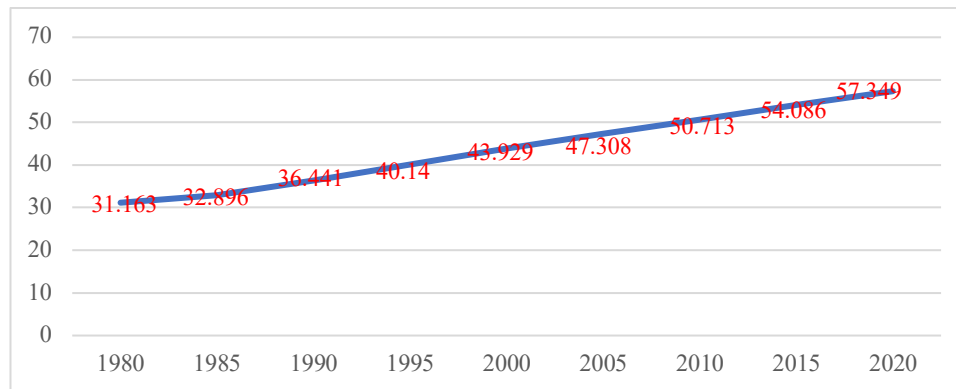


Figure 1. Growth trend of urbanization rate in Ghana from 1980 to 2020 Data(Unit:%). Source: World Bank

Informal settlements that accompany the informal economy in the context of pre-urbanization are also the result of the urbanization process in Ghana. Han Sunsheng and other scholars have found through research that the urbanization rate of Ghana shows a very uneven development in its various administrative regions areas reaching 60.6%, while places such as Volta have not yet achieved urbanization^[12]. This uneven urbanization development model has brought enormous pressure on infrastructure construction and housing supply in Ghana's major cities. At present, the government authorities in many cities in Ghana, such as Accra and Kumasi, have been unable to provide adequate housing that citizens can afford. In this situation, a large number of residents can only rely on informal settlements to meet their most basic living needs. According to UN-Habitat statistics, there are about 78 informal settlements in Accra, the capital of Ghana; the second largest city, Kumasi, has about 28 informal settlements, and about 80% of the new residential buildings in the city have no Approved by relevant departments^[13].

In the future, Ghana will continue to urbanize so rapidly that one in two citizens lives in informal settlements or works informally. Rwanda, Malawi, Mozambique and so on are the sub-Saharan African countries where urban informality is rapidly expanding due to the imbalance between supply and demand of urban facilities and jobs.

2.2. Kenya

The rapid development of informality in Kenya is closely related to the colonial rule of Western countries. Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, known as the "Little Paris of East Africa", hides a huge informal system behind its bright city. Since the establishment of the city in 1896, Nairobi's top-down formal urban planning and bottom-up informal urban development have been in a state of mutual competition. Nairobi has implemented relatively little urban planning in history. In 1927, South African planner Jim Jameson carried out a preliminary planning concept for the city of Nairobi; in 1948, Nairobi's "Colonial Capital Plan" determined the development framework of the city; in 1972 The "Metropolitan Development Plan" 2008 also only stayed at the level of conceptual planning ^[7]. Among them, the "colonial capital plan" has "white space" for areas outside Nairobi's CBD, which just makes these areas become the containers for the formation of informal settlements, and gathers a large number of low-income residents.

Even in the rare planning process, the government has long adopted an attitude of non-recognition of informal settlements, and slums such as Kibera have long been excluded from the urban planning of Nairobi. It is difficult to complete the transition from informal settlements to formal cities. In addition, governments often encroach on informal settlements without resettlement and compensation in urban sprawl. Since the last century, Kibera has been forcibly requisitioned land for the expansion of golfclubs, the construction of airport roads, and the adjustment of railways without any compensation^[14]. Residents who have lost their homes in informal settlements lack the means of production and the economic base to obtain formal living conditions, so they can only continue to choose to live in new informal settlements, forming a vicious circle. In addition, the Foreign Jurisdiction Act, the East African Lands Order-in-Council, and the Crown Lands Ordinance were promulgated by the British government during the colonial period, etc. The law made a large number of black people lose their original land and forced them to enter the cities to make a living. These landless blacks could only choose to live in places relatively close to the big cities. This is also one of the main reasons for the expansion of informal settlements such as the Kibera slum.

Currently, about 75% of Nairobi's new population is absorbed by informal settlements. According to statistics, about 2.2 million Nairobi residents work in the informal economy, and at least 50% of Nairobi's population lives in slums that account for 6% of Nairobi's total residential land area, the largest slum, Kibera and the second The large slum of Masere has a population of more than 500,000, most of whom earn less than \$1 a day. A United Nations report described Nairobi's informal settlements as "one of the densest, unsanitary and unsafe slums in the world".

2.3. South Africa

South Africa is the most globalized and economically developed country in sub-Saharan Africa. In terms of employment and contribution to GDP, South Africa's informal economy is relatively small compared to other sub-Saharan African countries, however. Its informal sector is the only opportunity for many South Africans to find employment and escape poverty^[15]. South Africa's unemployment rate of 28.74% is also the highest in the world. Furthermore, the socioeconomic and political remnants of apartheid remain deeply rooted in the country's urban system, leading to an increasingly fragmented urban landscape and a growing disparity between urban and rural areas. Participants in the informal economy in South Africa and settlers in informal settlements are dominated by international migrants, a phenomenon that is most typical in Johannesburg, the "city of migrants".

Since its establishment in 1886, Johannesburg has been following the modernization road planned by the European colonists ^[16]. After the Commonwealth of South Africa became an autonomous territory of the

British Empire in 1910, the white government passed legislation to ensure the occupation of land and resources by whites and to control and exploit Africans. A racist political system and political power dominated by whites have largely contributed to the segregation of the city of Johannesburg, whose urban layout is legally divided: the city center and surrounding areas, i.e., the inner city, become a "white city", Africa People cannot live in cities; most low-income people are forced to illegally relocate to vacant lots in areas like Alexandra, Diepsloot, where informal settlements occur almost overnight appeared between^[17]. Soweto (the abbreviation of South Western Townships) is the largest African settlement town formed due to the apartheid policy. It is located southwest of Johannesburg and covers an area of 200 square kilometers. About 1.2 million black residents have been "expelled" here (Figure 2). The living environment in Soweto is very crowded, the houses are simple, and the residents basically live in self-built tin houses called "matchboxes". The structural safety of housing in Soweto cannot be guaranteed, the basic public service facilities are seriously lacking, and most residents rely on informal employment to make a living (Figure 3).

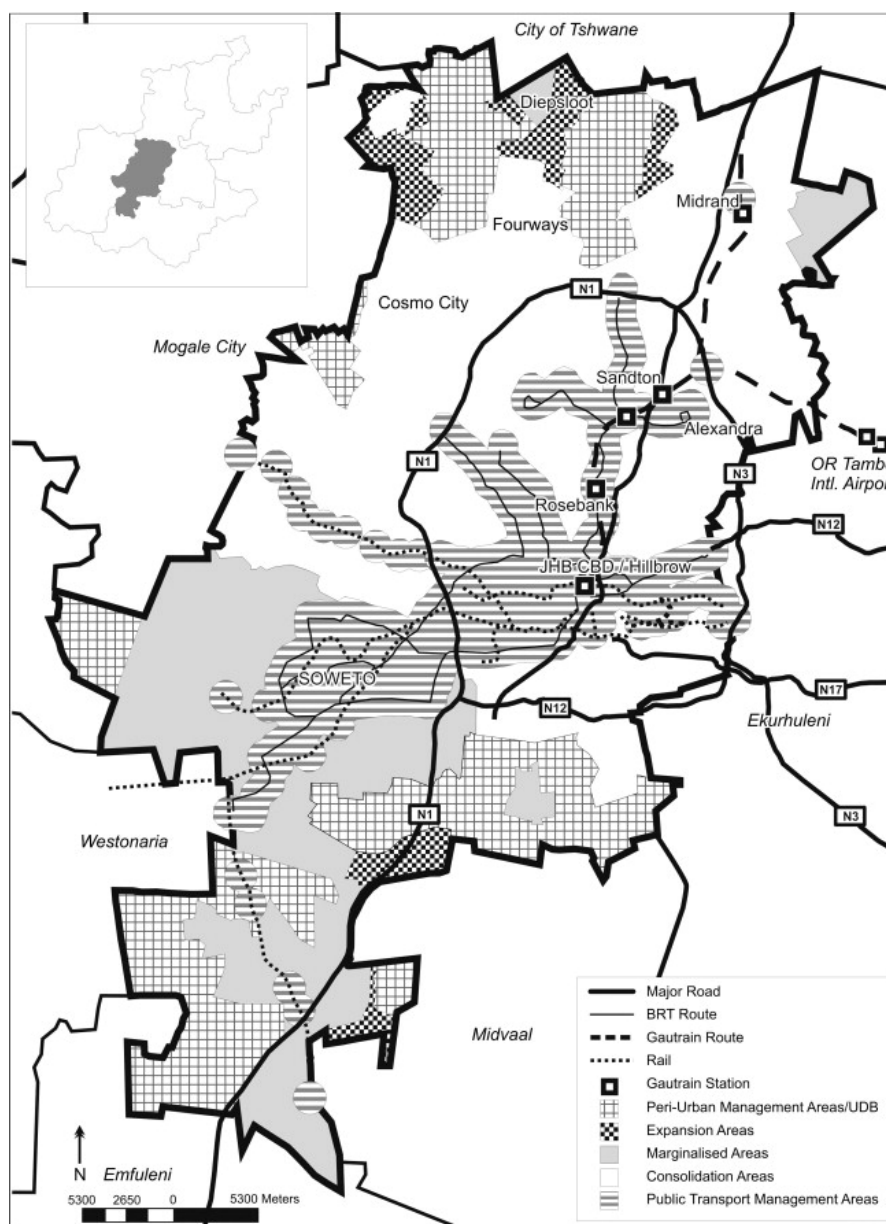


Figure 2. Urban spatial layout of Johannesburg. Source: Reference 17.



Figure 3. Aerial view of Soweto, Johannesburg. Source: <https://www.vcg.com/creative/1351079539>

2.4. Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is one of the least developed countries in the world, with a GDP of only US\$18.051 billion in 2020. Like most African countries, Zimbabwe's accelerating urbanization process has made it difficult for local authorities in cities to introduce appropriate measures to meet the supply of various basic services such as housing. However, the main cause of the proliferation of informality in Zimbabwe is not urbanization, but national poverty.

Since the 1990s, Zimbabwe has suffered from severe inflation, the national economy has declined sharply year after year, and has experienced long-term negative growth. The country has fallen into a serious economic crisis ^[18]. After 2000, Zimbabwe's agricultural production fell sharply, and government authorities initiated "fast-track" land reforms to increase agricultural production and diversify agriculture. However, this radical reform method ignored the farming experience of the people and the current level of agricultural technology, produced the negative effect of a severe decline in agricultural production, and caused Zimbabwe to be severely isolated internationally ^[19]. This isolation further led to massive deindustrialization and high layoffs in Zimbabwe. The collapse of the productive sector of the Zimbabwean economy means that people are not only dealing with a drop in real wage incomes, but also with severe unemployment. It is worth noting that under the dual influence of land reform and inflation at that time, Zimbabwe's unemployment rate was as high as 84%. In order to avoid families falling into poverty, Zimbabwean urban residents are forced to organize or participate in informal economic activities in the city to obtain income and diversify their livelihoods ^[20]. But despite this, a survey of citizens in Masvingo City, Zimbabwe, by Average et al., found that 33% people still do not accept informality. In addition, under the influence of the severe economic situation in Zimbabwe for nearly 20 years, the number of informal settlements has surged. Informal settlements in Zimbabwe basically face severe water shortages and poor sanitation. In recent years, more than 6,000 people have died from cholera and other infectious diseases in urban areas of Zimbabwe.

Overall, informality is one of the main challenges facing sub-Saharan African countries such as Zimbabwe. It can be said that appropriate and effective coping strategies around informality, especially the planning

and management of the informal economy, are of great significance for reconfiguring the human settlements and urban scenes in contemporary Africa.

3. Informal governance strategies in sub-Saharan African countries from the perspective of the Belt and Road Initiative

Informal phenomenon to some extent, restricted the sub-saharan countries industry economy and the sustainable development of the living environment, intensify the development of urban poverty population agglomeration and regional differentiation. It's now very worth thinking about how to take the appropriate governance policies to guide informal phenomenon in sub-saharan African countries to "normalization" transformation development. Some scholars have advocated "complete demolition" to eradicate informal settlements and "forced regulation" of informal economic activities. However, in the development environment of sub-Saharan African countries, we need to fully recognize the positive role of urban informality: Informal settlements can provide housing and living places for the urban poor under the condition of limited government capacity, and provide human support for urban economic development. Informal economic activities provide jobs for the urban poor. Therefore, strengthening "soft development" and weakening "hard governance", starting from the level of providing regular jobs and improving employment and living environment, is the "right way" for urban informal governance.

With the deepening of the "Belt and Road" Initiative, China's production capacity cooperation projects, China's plans and China's assistance to "go global" are gradually accelerating, which have played a great driving role in improving the living environment of informal settlements and solving the problem of "difficult employment". Therefore, based on the perspective of the "Belt and Road" Initiative, this paper puts forward corresponding informal governance strategies from three aspects: the joint construction of overseas industrial parks between China and Africa, the planning cooperation between China and Africa, and China's private assistance to Africa.

3.1. Build China-Africa cooperative overseas industrial parks

In the current industrialization and urbanization strategies of African countries, industrial parks are endowed with great significance and are often regarded as flagship projects for future priority development to create jobs and promote economic and industrial transformation and upgrading, which plays a strong driving role in guiding local residents to participate in "regularized" employment. According to incomplete statistics, up to now, China has co-built more than 20 cooperation parks in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, South Africa, Congo (DRC), Djibouti, Nigeria and other countries south of the Sahara.

In addition, some China's overseas industrial parks, considering the convenience of absorbing labor and other factors, are specially selected in the urban fringe areas where a large number of informal settlements gather, such as China Huajian International Light Industry City in Ethiopia and Maluku Special Economic Zone in Kinshasa, etc. In the residential areas in the urban fringe areas of sub-Saharan African countries, especially the informal settlements, people generally present the characteristics of low wage level and even serious unemployment. Take Kinshasa as an example, the proportion of workers working in the urban fringe areas with an average monthly net income of \$400 or more is less than 1%, far lower than 49% in the urban core areas. Therefore, informal settlements in urban fringe areas provide a large number of low-cost labor resources for industrial parks, while industrial parks provide employment opportunities for residents with heavy informal settlements and attract unemployed people, forming a two-way pattern of mutual promotion.

The overseas industrial parks jointly built by China and Africa have solved the employment problem of most local residents. Part of the cooperative parks have planned and built corresponding residential facilities and solved the housing problems of employees. For example, the Eastern Industrial Park in Ethiopia is planned to form six types of planning layout, including residential land, commercial land, industrial storage land, road land, municipal public facilities land and green land (Figure 4). In addition, the Eastern Industrial Park has built several standardized employee dormitories with complete public service facilities, which will gradually replace the informal residences of poor employees in the surrounding areas.

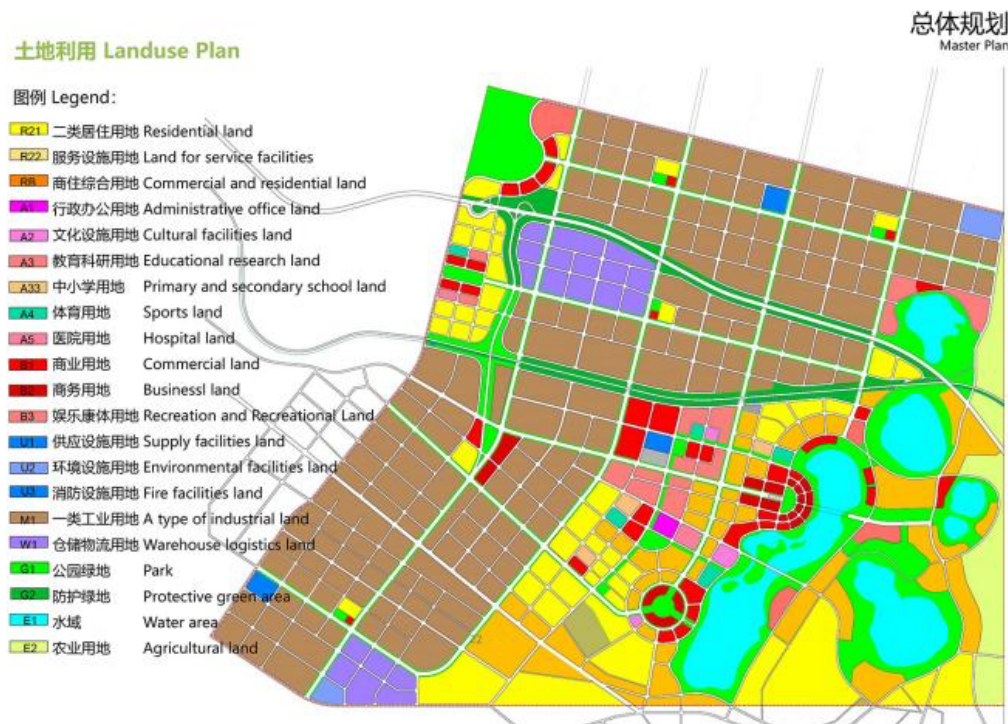


Figure 4. Master land Use plan of the Eastern Industrial Park, Ethiopia. Source: <http://www.e-eiz.com/planning.php>

3.2. Build China-Africa cooperative overseas industrial parks

The urban planning of sub-Saharan African countries generally has the following characteristics: first, the urban spatial planning only stays at the conceptual level; second, there is no corresponding elastic space; third, the social and economic development is not considered; fourth, the lack of development plan; fifth, the serious lack of planning and management policies. On the one hand, these imperfect planning schemes tend to exacerbate social differences such as the gap between the rich and the poor and expand the scale of informal economic activities. On the other hand, poorly managed urban sprawl provides opportunities for the development of informal settlements, which, if not improved living conditions, will exacerbate problems such as environmental pollution and disease.

Contemporary Chinese planning theory and planning practice is a fusion of Chinese and western traditional planning thought, integrate the western modern urban and rural planning thought method and the living environment of domestic theory raised by Mr Wu Liangyong, "city people" theory raised by Mr Liang Henian, and other classic theory, become the world's most inclusive and practice guiding planning system, which has a strong guiding significance for the urban planning of sub-Saharan African countries ^[21]. At present, Chinese planning has gone overseas in practical projects, theoretical technology

and other fields, and "rooted" in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, gradually establishing the international image of China's urban and rural planning industry, and the power of discourse in African countries has also been substantially improved. For example, China Academy of Urban Planning and Design and others have compiled the master plan, control detailed plan and industrial park plan of Luanda, the capital of Angola, which emphasizes the harmonious relationship between people and respects the combination of local wisdom and multi-culture^[22]. Ethiopia, Madagascar and other countries have actively learned from China's experience to draw up development plans and made good progress in poverty reduction, transformation and development, and social and public relations development (Figure 5). With the intervention of China's planning, the growth of informal phenomena in sub-Saharan African countries may be effectively controlled, and the living environment of informal settlements will be further improved.



Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Growth and Transformation Plan II (GTP II)
(2015/16-2019/20)

Volume I: Main Text

National Planning Commission
May, 2016
Addis Ababa

Figure 5. Five-year Development Plan of Ethiopia (2015-2019). Source: Official website of the National Government of Ethiopia

3.3. Build China-Africa cooperative overseas industrial parks

Marked by the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2000, China's aid to Africa entered a new stage, and an institutionalized policy of China's aid to Africa was gradually formed. In addition to economic assistance and infrastructure construction assistance, China's private aid to Africa has also come into the public eye. Non-governmental assistance is conducive to improving the living conditions of local residents from the perspective of the bottom up, and can also promote the construction of people-to-people exchanges under the Belt and Road Initiative to a certain extent. On the one hand, with the help of the government, relevant associations and institutions, it is suggested to promote China's practices in urban governance, planning and management, such as urban waste sorting, and improve the sanitary environment in informal settlements, while spreading advanced "Chinese experience". On the other hand, it may be considered to use the strength of overseas Chinese Association organizations to provide medical and health, epidemic prevention and control assistance to relevant countries to reduce the infection rate of people in informal settlements. In addition, domestic universities can cooperate with relevant universities in sub-Saharan Africa to carry out cooperative research on urban informal

governance, such as the governance of informal settlements and the development and planning of industrial parks around informal settlements, so as to indirectly improve the employment level and quality of life of local residents through the intervention of teaching and research institutions. This measure is also in line with the "Shared Vision 2035" for China-Africa cooperation, which emphasizes the "consolidation and deepening of health cooperation" and "remarkable achievements in poverty reduction cooperation".

4. Conclusion

Informality is a major feature of sub-Saharan African countries and a common phenomenon in developing countries. Although there are differences in the main internal causes of informal development in different countries, the results are characterized by poor living environment and high unemployment rate, which are incompatible with modern urban civilization, hindering the sustainable development of economy and living environment to a certain extent. Informality in sub-Saharan Africa will continue for a long time to come. Under the Belt and Road Initiative, China's position in the world's urban system is constantly improving. Therefore, encourage China planning, technical standards and boldly "going out", such as China aid to sub-saharan African countries, in particular, to promote its irregularity to normality will play a positive role in guiding, also can to a certain extent, to strengthen china-africa friendly relations and cooperation, promote the construction of "human destiny community".

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