

Land Tenure (in)formality and Disease Prevalence in Cities: an Exploratory Spatial Analysis of Urban Neighborhoods in Accra.

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SUMMARY

In urban areas, increased disease burdens and the simultaneous manifestation of informal land tenure and poor health outcomes in informal settlements beg the question of whether the (in)formality of tenure and health have a link. This relational puzzle is but a real societal phenomenon rooted in current understandings of informal settlements or neighborhoods as areas with ‘inadequate access to safe water, inadequate access to sanitation and other infrastructure, poor structural quality of housing, overcrowding, and insecure residential status, which portrays informal settlements as areas of not only deprivation and tenure insecurity, but as locations of poor health outcomes and health inequities.

Informal settlements, which are manifestations of informal tenure, have been identified as hotspots for diseases – they carry a high disease burden and promote rapid local spread of communicable diseases. However, despite the seeming interaction between land tenure dynamics and health, health outcomes or patterns are hardly measured in relation to land tenure variables. Whereas a theoretical and conceptual relationship is often speculated between land tenure and health, such a relationship is hardly tested empirically in literature.

Using cluster analysis and bivariate choropleth maps, this paper investigates spatial association between land tenure (in)formality and the prevalence of disease in urban neighborhoods in Ghana by identifying possible patterns and clusters of reported diseases.

The findings are inconclusive on the existence of spatial association between disease clusters and slum presence which are manifestations of informal tenure. This is because patterns of low disease prevalence and high slum presence were observed while on the other hand high disease prevalence with low slum presence were also observed. Seeking explanations for the spatial divide in health

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offers insights for improving health outcomes particularly among disadvantaged groups and reducing health inequalities in cities. This study is therefore a first step towards gathering empirical evidence on land tenure and health links for advancing health-in-all policy approaches in cities. In addition, the study lends relevance to key Sustainable Development Goals including good health and well-being, clean water and sanitation, reduced inequalities and sustainable cities and communities.

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