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What are the experiences of service workers in urban informal economy workplaces? : a study of informal hairdressing operations in the Johannesburg CBD.

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Abstract

This research study examines the experiences of service workers in the informal economy by exploring informal hairdressing operations within the Johannesburg CBD. Drawing on ethnography at a hairsalon in Braamfontein and semi-structured interviews with hairdressers, customers, hairsalon owners and City of Johannesburg officials, it argues that the emotional and affective labour in this kind of work offers hairdressers an important basis for them to weave meaning into their work. The affective relationships that they create through hairdressing present them with the potential for the self-constitution of their work and lives.