

11 Street trading in Africa

Demographic trends, planning and trader organisation

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Street trading is a core component of the informal economy across the African continent. This chapter critically analyses what is known about this phenomenon. First urbanisation, migration and economic development trends are reviewed and the available data on street traders reflected. The evidence suggests that there has been a surge in the numbers of street traders, partly caused by structural adjustment processes and this is and will continue to be exacerbated by the 2008/2009 global financial crisis. Section 2 critically analyses trends in policy, planning and governance. Research on the issue suggests that state responses to street trading form a continuum from violent sustained evictions to an inclusive approach, but that an inclusive approach is rare. What is clear from this, is that the processes of incorporation or exclusion of street traders is part of everyday political struggle. The ways in which street traders are organised, articulate their concerns and wield power, is therefore critical. Section 3 thus focuses on trends in street traders' organisations. Although there are promising examples of street trader organisation, existing evidence suggests that many traders are not part of organisations. The conclusion makes the case for including street traders into urban planning.

In his discussion in this volume on the use value of the notion of the 'informal sector / economy' forty years on, Keith Hart notes that the term allows academics and bureaucrats to incorporate the teeming street life into abstract models 'without having to know what people are really doing'. He states 'we need to know how formal bureaucracy works in practice and, even more important, what social forms have emerged to organise the informal economy'. This chapter hopes to go some way in responding to his call.

This chapter draws largely on existing literature. As will be detailed below, there have been studies on street trading in West Africa (Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast and Ghana); Central Africa (the Democratic Republic of Congo); Southern Africa (Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Lesotho) and East Africa (Tanzania, Kenya). The most striking gap is the absence of research on North Africa. Also no research was found on street trading in Africa's second biggest economy, Nigeria. The literature search was confined to research written in English and there is thus a bias towards Anglophone experiences. The broad trends identified need to be qualified by these biases.

Street trader trends over time

In Africa the informal sector as a whole is estimated to account for 60 per cent of all urban jobs and over 90 per cent of all new urban jobs. After home-working, street trading is estimated to account for the largest share of these jobs. (Charmes, 2000). Trends in street trading over time are integrally linked to urbanisation, migration and economic development processes. Therefore before reflecting on what data there is, each of these will be considered in turn.

As Mitullah (1991:16) notes urbanisation in African countries is a relatively recent phenomenon except for West Africa and some coastal East African towns. Table 11.1 below presents urbanisation figures in 1995 and 2008 as well as projected urban growth rates for 2005–10.

Despite the fact that, for the first time in history, in 2008 one in every two people lived in urban areas, overall urbanisation in Africa is lower than in Asia and in Latin America and the Caribbean. However what is clear from the table is that there are significant regional differences within Africa. North and Southern Africa are highly urbanised in contrast, for example, to East Africa. In the space of thirteen years – a relatively short period in demographic time – the percentage of the total population that is urban has increased by 5 per cent. Again there are regional differences with increases in urbanisation rates being particularly pronounced in Middle, East and West Africa. The final column of the table uses current figures to project the urban growth rate. These predictions suggest that urbanisation processes in Africa will proceed faster than in other continents. Due to low barriers to entry, newcomers to the city often opt for street trading as a way of surviving. These figures seem to suggest that the current congestion on the streets is likely to intensify.

A further dimension of urbanisation processes that swells the number of street traders is international migration. As Landau (2007:61) points out

Table 11.1 Percentage of total urban population

	1995	2008	Urban growth rate 2005–10
Latin America and the Caribbean	74	79	1.7
Asia	35	41	2.5
Africa	34	39	3.3
Eastern Africa	22	23	3.9
Middle Africa	33	42	4.3
Northern Africa	46	51	2.4
Southern Africa	48	58	1.5
Western Africa	37	43	3.8

Source: United Nations, 1997, United Nations, 2007, United Nations, 2008

'international migration is an inexorable response to regional economic inequalities'. Not only are there significant inequalities between African countries, but Africa has long been the site of a number of political crises and civil wars. Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia and Eritrea have generated high levels of forced migration. More recently issues in the Darfur Region as well as Zimbabwe are generating flows of migration both within Africa and elsewhere. In a continent where there is large scale unemployment and under-employment, the trend is for migration legislation to be designed to protect locals from competition for jobs. Foreign migrants, like their rural counterparts, often have no choice but to work in segments of the economy where barriers to entry and set up costs are low. Street trading is thus what many foreign migrants opt to do. Another group of foreigners involved in street trading are cross border traders. Again this is an activity that has been going on for some time. Lourenço-Lindell (2004:87) points out that Dyulas – West African, cross border traders – have been active for centuries and that for many villages they are the primary source of supplies. Cross border traders either supply domestic street traders or sell their goods directly (see Peberdy, 2000 for one of the few surveys of this group).

A critical factor driving up the numbers of street traders in Africa has been the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) of the 1980s and 1990s. As has been discussed in detail elsewhere (see among others, Iyenda, 2001, Freund, 2007, Lourenço-Lindell, 2004, Tsitsi and Agatha, 2000) the cocktail of privatisation, restructuring of the public sector and the opening up of African economies to foreign goods, led to a dramatic shrinking of the formal economy in Africa. This resulted in a substantial increase in the numbers of those informally employed. SAPs, however, did often encourage a more tolerant attitude to the informal economy, particularly for example in the former (African) socialist states. Lourenço-Lindell (2004) details this for Guinea-Bissau and Nkya (2006) for Tanzania.

Ongoing privatisation and liberalisation efforts on the continent continue to impact on the size, nature and dynamics within the informal economy, in general, and street trading in particular. Consider, for example, the implications of the increase in numbers of those working informally, on gender dynamics. Although often more dominant in terms of numbers, in many countries, women tend to predominate in areas of trade which are less lucrative. With greater competition, there is evidence that either women get displaced or forced into even more marginal areas of trade (see for example Transberg Hansen (2004:72) on street traders in Zambia). The combination of greater competition among informal traders and a shrinking demand for goods due to shrinking economies, has led to individual incomes decreasing.

The implications for informal traders of trade liberalisation are also complex. Liberalisation of African economies has led to an increase of imports with the final point of sale for many of these goods being informal traders. This has become particularly apparent in the case of textiles and

in imports from China to Africa over the last ten years. The greater availability of a diverse range of goods can be positive for informal traders. But trade liberalisation has often had devastating impacts on local industry. Baden and Barber (2005), for example, reflect on the impact of second hand clothes trade on local clothing manufacturing in West Africa. This has not only led to job losses, especially for women, but also a shrinking customer base for informal trade. The overall welfare implications, for this segment of the informal economy, of recent economic policies require further examination.

As the International Labour Organisation's (2002:51) compilation of informal economy statistics outlines, despite the numbers and visibility of street traders there are few good estimates of the number of traders. Many population censuses and labour force surveys do not contain a question on 'place of work' with relevant alternative responses. Over and above this, however, street trade is inherently difficult to measure. As the report notes there is a great variance in the number of street vendors counted depending on the time of day, day of the week, time of month or the season of the year.

Despite these issues the ILO managed to pull together estimates for selected countries. They found that informal traders in the African countries for which data is available contribute between 85 and 99 per cent of total employment in trade and between 46 and 70 per cent of total value added in trade (2002:53). In most African countries, other than North African Muslim countries, women represent at least 50 per cent, if not more, of the total number of traders. In matrilineal societies of West Africa there is a long standing tradition of informal markets largely controlled by women (Charmes, 2000, see Lyons and Snoxell, 2005b: 1308 among others). Adiko and Anoh Kouassi (2003) in their survey of over 1,700 market and street vendors in Ivory Coast for example, found that over 70 per cent of traders were women. Although there are regional differences there appears to be a trend of women selling food products and men selling non-food products, which are often more lucrative.

Although there is no time series data available on this particular worker group the combination of urbanisation, migration and economic development trends suggests that there has been a rapid increase in the numbers of street traders operating on the streets of African cities. Preliminary evidence suggests that this is being and will continue to be exacerbated by global financial crisis. Interviews were conducted with street traders in Nakuru (Kenya), Blantyre (Malawi) and Durban (South Africa) in June and July of 2009 for a broader project assessing the impact of the global financial crisis on the informal economy.² Preliminary findings suggest that the global recession is leading to greater numbers of street traders and pushing existing traders and their families further into impoverishment. The respondents, who were predominantly women, reported that in the first six months of 2009 there was a significant decline in the demand for their goods while the price of

prices of their products for fear of losing customers. Traders also reported an increase in the number of traders on the streets as those retrenched from the formal economy started trading. Many of these new comers are men. This suggests that the economic crisis will result in a reconstitution of the nature of trading and the dynamics within it.

Policy and planning trends

The co-ordinator of the international alliance of street vending organisations, who has substantial direct experience of city policies and street trading across Africa warns:

There are no policy 'best practises' with street trading. Where there have been windows where better practices emerge, there tends to be a continuity problem. There is a change in the bureaucracy, a big event or an election, and the approach changes . . . With street vending things are particularly fluid.

(Interview, 16/04/07)

Mindful of the dynamism of state responses to street trading, this section reviews policy planning and governance trends.

There is substantial evidence of large scale sustained evictions of street traders. Possibly the largest and most violent eviction of street traders on the continent in the last decade was in Zimbabwe in May 2005 – Operation Murambatsvina.³ Street traders and those living in informal housing were targeted. The UN Habitat mission to Zimbabwe estimated that some 700,000 people in cities across the country lost either their homes, their source of livelihood or both (Tibaijuka, 2005:7). Sites where informal sector workers gathered to market their wares, as well as formal markets, some of which had been in operation for decades, were targeted. Potts (2007: 265) estimates that in Harare alone 75,000 vendors were unable to work from late May, 2005. A local civil society support group described the impact of Operation Murambatsvina on street traders as follows:

The Government, under the auspices of the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises Development, began by arresting 20,000 vendors countrywide, destroying their vending sites, and confiscating their wares. Thousands more escaped arrest, but have lost their livelihoods. This process took one week in the first instance. Harare was among the worst affected cities: police action was brutal and unannounced. . . . Vendors, who have been operating in the same places without complaint or interference for their entire working lives, were confronted with riot squads without any warning, were rounded up, arrested, and watched helplessly while their source of livelihood was destroyed. Within days, bulldozers have moved in to take over . . .

Explaining these events many analysts have pointed to the fact that in 2000 the urban electorate had voted overwhelmingly for the opposition – Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Since Tibaijuka (2005) estimates that one in every five Zimbabweans was affected by Operation Murambatsvina, not only MDC supporters were affected. Political affiliations, though critical, are only one part of the rationale behind these actions. Although not on the scale of Zimbabwe there are other cases of widespread evictions. Transberg Hansen (2004:66–7) in her study of street traders in Zambia notes how in April 1999,

council workers, police and paramilitary in riot gear razed the temporary market structures of Lusaka's city centre, extending the demolition the following night and weeks all across the city, into townships and residential areas . . . In June, similar operations took place on the Copperbelt and in the towns along the line-of-rail.

Transberg Hansen identifies a leadership change in the local authority as a key reason for the evictions. She notes (2004:68) a new mayor and council members had come into office in Lusaka and they were 'bent on cleaning up the capital'. In a Ghanaian context, King (2006) reflects a similar finding. She argues that the new system of decentralisation where there are more frequent changes in local authorities leads to evictions of street traders which is seen as 'a common way to impress the public' (2006:117).

There are a number of historical cases where national governments have established systems of trader repression. In South Africa, the apartheid state's complex web of national and local laws effectively banned street trading. Rogerson and Hart (1989:32) argued that South African urban authorities 'fashioned and refined some of the most sophisticated sets of anti-street trader measures anywhere in the developing world'. This, however, was in a context of high levels of unemployment and poverty so traders continued to attempt to operate. They were consistently harassed and periodically violently removed. Rogerson and Hart (1989:32) point out that until the early 1980s hawkers in South Africa were subject to 'a well-entrenched tradition of repression, persecution and prosecution'. Treatment in socialist states was equally harsh. In Tanzania, Nnkya (2006) relays how in the mid-1970s the Tanzanian government rounded up street traders operating in Dar es Salaam and forcibly removed them to villages on the coast. In 1983 a penal code was enacted that branded all self-employed people as 'unproductive, idle and disorderly' (Nnkya, 2006:82). These actions were justified on the basis that street trading was a subversive activity that challenged socialist principles. Lourenço-Lindell (2004) describes a similar situation in newly independent Guinea-Bissau.

Sporadic evictions of street traders often precede major public events. In Maseru (Lesotho) Setsabi's (2006) lists the many times street traders were evicted. In 1999 when Pope John Paul II visited the city in 1991 when

President Nujoma from Namibia came on a state visit and street traders were threatened with eviction when President Mandela came in 1995. In this last case the street traders diverted the action by agreeing to clean the streets. In Zimbabwe, Potts (2007:270) notes that street traders were removed just before Harare hosted the Non-Aligned Movement conference in 1984. There are already cases of street traders being removed in South Africa ahead of the 2010 Football World Cup (www.streetnet.org). Bromley (2000) in his review of street trading, drawing on over two and a half decades of related research and international policy, confirms this as an international trend. He (2000:12) notes 'Aggressive policing (of street traders) is particularly notable just before major public and tourist events, on the assumption that orderly streets improve the image of the city to visitors'.

Ongoing and low level harassment of informal traders is pervasive across African cities. Lourenço-Lindell (2004) outlines that in Bissau, although a more permissive approach has been adopted since the SAP of 1986, municipal agents have essentially remained hostile to them. In surveys street traders cite that they are frequently bribed, complaining of the 'oppressiveness and arbitrariness of public agents' (2004:94–5). Of the 355 street traders interviewed in Abidjan in Adiko and Anoh Kouassi's study, 69 per cent feared being chased off their current site (2003:55). A group that is particularly vulnerable to this are foreign street traders. Hunter and Skinner's (2003) survey of foreign street traders operating in Durban (South Africa), for example, found that they frequently reported that police elicited bribes. Few of these foreigners have proper documentation, nor do they have access to bank accounts and are thus easy targets. Kamunyori (2007:33) reports that in Nairobi the council inspectors make several times their monthly salaries on bribing street traders. She records the monthly salary of these so called 'askaris' as approximately US\$50. This points to a more systemic problem – until local officials in African cities are better paid, this kind of corruption will be difficult to root out.

City development and urban planning paradigms are critical to understanding these trends. Kamunyori (2007:11) points out there is a tension between modernisation of African cities and what are often perceived as 'non modern' activities like street trading. This issue of how street traders are perceived reoccurs. In the case of violent removal of street traders in Zambia, Transberg Hansen (2004:70) points out that these actions were condoned by national government who argued that the presence of street traders was discouraging international investors. Further, as previously noted, street traders are often removed prior to international events as part of city 'beautification' processes. As Bromley (2000:12) argues there is a widely held view that street trading is 'a manifestation of both poverty and underdevelopment' thus 'its disappearance is viewed as progress'.

This is connected to the focus in urban studies, policy and practice on 'world class' cities. Beaverstock *et al.*, (2002) is a classic text in this literature. They establish a roster of world cities. In their analysis mention is made of

only one African city – Johannesburg. Robinson (2002:563) contends that the notion of 'world' or 'global' cities has the effect of 'dropping most cities in the world from vision'. The position and functioning of cities in the world economy thus becomes the dominant factor in urban economic development planning. The implicit economic development policy prescriptions are that international investment should be pursued above all else. Informal activities, like street vending, in this paradigm, are seen as undesirable and their contribution to local economies is not recognised. Robinson (2002:531) argues that the notion of world class cities imposes 'substantial limitations on imagining or planning the futures of cities'. This is particularly the case in the developing world.

Urban planning traditions play an important role in shaping local authority responses to these issues. Freund (2007:156) argues, in his reflections on post colonial African cities, that planning ordinances and decrees often show little real variation from colonial patterns. This lies at the heart of more nuanced analyses of the rationale behind Operation Murambatsvina. Potts (2007) details how colonial approaches extended on into the post colonial period. She demonstrates that there was a long history of anti-informality sentiments in both national and local government. She (2007:267–8) notes that although street traders were present, they were 'very contained and on a minor scale *in comparison with* the bustle and competitive selling of goods and services so typical of cities from Luanda to Kinshasa to Lagos to Dakar'. She argues (2007:283) that the 'adherence to the ideology of planned and orderly cities remained a core belief for many'. This combined with anger against the urban electorate was a fertile field for those who always desired urban 'order' to gain ground. In many other countries colonial laws remain in place. Transberg Hansen (2004:63) in the case of Zambia for example states 'post colonial regulations on markets, trading licensing, town and country planning and public health restricted trading ... to established markets'. Kamunyori (2007:10) points out that in Nairobi, although street trading is legal according to the city by-laws, colonial era legislation (The General Nuisance by-law) is used to supersede this provision. The General Nuisance by-law allows city officials to arrest any individual that they deem to be 'creating a "general nuisance" in public spaces'.

There are however (albeit very few) examples where street traders have been accommodated. In Dar es Salaam, Tanzania by the early 1990s street traders had been issued licenses and were allowed to operate. Nnkya (2006:88) states that 'street trading in the central business district (CBD) is well managed and trader associations have good relations with the city authorities'. Nnkya (2006) identifies the 1992 Sustainable Dar es Salaam Project (SDP) as a turning point from the state's previous approach to trader repression. This project, a collaboration between United Nations agencies and the state, identified petty trading as a key issue. By the mid-1990s, as a direct consequence of the SDP, a Working Group on Managing Informal Micro Trade was established. This group identified

faced and made numerous recommendations. A consequence of the SDP was the Guidelines for Petty Trade adopted by the City Commission in 1997 which set out the framework for managing street trade. Nnkya does however point out that there are implementation inconsistencies – with management being haphazard in parts – and that while some are included, others (most notably women traders) are not, particularly in the more lucrative trading sites in the CBD. In comparison to many other cities in Africa overall, he argues, Dar es Salaam has created an enabling environment for street traders.

Adopting new approaches to urban planning are common to the more inclusionary practices cited above. In Tanzania the 1992 Sustainable Dar es Salaam project stemmed from an invitation by the state to the United Nations Development Programme to review the Dar es Salaam Master Plan. As Nnkya (2006:83) notes, instead the UN staff persuaded the city council to pursue a new approach to planning, based on participatory or collaborative principles.

The other case that has been cited as better practice in the management of street trading is Durban, South Africa. Although there has been recent harassment of traders in Durban, there was a period where Durban's approach was identified as particularly progressive, especially in respect of the policy adopted in the inner-city district that contains the main transport node – the Warwick Junction (for a detailed analysis see Dobson and Skinner, 2009). On a busy day the area is estimated to accommodate 460,000 commuters, and at least 8,000 street traders. In 1996 the city council launched an area based urban renewal initiative. In careful consultation with traders, trader infrastructure was established. For example nearly 1,000 traditional medicine traders were accommodated in a new market and corn-on-the-cob sellers and those cooking and selling the Zulu delicacy, bovine heads, were provided tailor-made facilities. Through this, the Project piloted an economically informed, sector by sector approach to supporting street traders. In parallel with infrastructure development there was a focus on improving management of the area. The area-based team established a number of operations teams to deal with issues as diverse as curbside cleaning, ablution facilities, child care facilities and pavement sleeping. In 2001 the local authority in the city – the eThekweni Municipality – adopted an Informal Economy Policy. This policy acknowledges the informal economy as an important component of the city's economy and, drawing on some of the lessons learnt from the Warwick Junction Project, suggests a number of management and support interventions. This was an attempt to standardise a progressive approach across the city. Since 2007, Durban adopted a much more conservative stance to street trading issues and in 2009 announced plans to build a shopping mall in the centre of Warwick Junction confirming Horn's contention.

Dobson and Skinner's analysis of the Warwick Junction Project suggest that participation was central to the project's approach. A street trader leader described the council's staff approach as affording 'informal traders the opportunity to participate on a sustained and continuous basis in negotiations

about their needs and priorities . . . in a low-key way, often on an issue-by-issue basis' (Horn, 2004:211). Dobson and Skinner (2009) argue that consultation dissipated conflict, facilitated interventions genuinely informed by user needs and led to users having a sense of ownership of the area. This, in turn, led to high levels of volunteerism that resolved a number of urban management issues like crime and cleaning. These are good examples of what Healey (1998) would describe as planning by multi-stakeholder collaboration and planning by negotiation and contract. The dynamism of street vending lends itself to this style of management. Sandercock's (1998:30) arguments although reflecting largely on contexts in the north are applicable to the challenges of planning in developing country contexts. She argues for the need to develop a new kind of multicultural literacy which she explains as follows:

An essential part of that literacy is familiarity with the multiple histories of urban communities, especially as those histories intersect with struggles over space and place claiming, with planning policies and resistances to them, with traditions of indigenous planning and with questions of belonging and identity and acceptance of difference.

Trends in organising among street traders

Traders who have been incorporated into urban plans, tend to be well organised. Nnkya (2006) identifies this as a factor in Dar es Salaam. He (2006:84) points out that by 1997, about 240 self-help groups representing 16,000 members had been formed, 'enabling traders collectively to address problems and access services'. There is an umbrella organisation – the Association of Small Scale Businesses – which 'acts as a lobbyist and pressure group and is involved in the selection of public space for business activities'.⁵ In Durban, street traders were well organised during the redevelopment of the Warwick Junction area. Traders were organised into product groups and block committees (Dobson and Skinner, 2009). The Self Employed Women's Union (a sister to the much larger Self Employed Women's Association in India), was also very active in the area (Devenish and Skinner, 2006). In both cases this meant that there were negotiating partners for local authorities.

Unfortunately, existing information on street trader organisation is patchy. The research that is available suggests that many traders are not affiliated to any organisation at all. Where trader organisations do exist, they focus on one or more of three concerns – financial services, lobbying and advocacy particularly at a local level and product specific issues. The role of trade unions appears to be increasingly important. Concerns about the internal organisational dynamics have also been raised. Each of these issues is considered in turn with a focus where possible on regional trends.

There is some evidence that organisation densities among street traders are low. Lund's (1998:33–4) re-analysis of data in South Africa, for example, found that in the two large surveys of street traders that had been conducted,

in Johannesburg 15 per cent of traders reported to belong to an association, while in Durban 12 per cent of the men and 16 per cent of the women traders were members of associations. Alilo and Mitullah's (2000) interviews with over 300 street traders operating in four different Kenyan cities found that 67 per cent had no knowledge of associations that addressed street vending issues (2000:18). More recently in Nairobi there has been the formation of the Nairobi Informal Sector Confederation (NISCOF). According to Kamunyori (2007:14–15) NISCOF was registered in 2005 and as of 2007 had 23 member associations representing approximately 15,000 individual traders. Although this is a positive development, Lyons and Snoxell (2005b:1078) suggest there may be as many as 500,000 street traders operating in the city. NISCOF thus represents 3 per cent of the total number of traders.

There is evidence of a high prevalence of rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCA's). As is the case in other parts of the world, these members deposit a mutually agreed sum with the group at regular intervals. Each member has a turn to receive the total money collected. Some ROSCA's also provide loans to their members. As Lyons and Snoxell (2005a:1089) note this guarantees the periodic availability of a capital sum, through peer pressure to save. Of the 124 traders interviewed in Nairobi in Lyons and Snoxell's (2005b:1089) study, 58 per cent were part of a ROSCA. They conducted a similar study in two markets in Ghana and found that 49 per cent of 144 traders interviewed were members of a savings group (2005a:1312).⁶ Although not quoting exact figures, Alila and Mitullah (2000: 11) and Tsitsi and Agatha (2000: 10) find a similar situation in Kenya and Zimbabwe respectively. All of these studies note that there is a particularly high prevalence of membership of savings groups among women. In the face of poor access to banking services, these systems of financial services and support play an important role.

In 2005 War on Want (2006) in collaboration with the Workers' Education Association of Zambia conducted research explicitly focused on the organising and advocacy strategies of informal economy associations in Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia. Interviews were conducted with 62 organisations, the majority of which were street or market trader organisations. This research concluded that the majority of organisations were established in specific markets or trading areas and have been dealing with urgent issues arising in these locations, such as harassment from the police and solving disputes and conflicts among vendors. The relationship between organisations and the state was examined and the researchers conclude that street trader organisations largely had confrontational relations with local government (WoW, 2006:31–2). Lund and Skinner's (1999) study of 22 organisations of street traders in five cities in South Africa found that many of them focused on negotiating with local authorities. They were however not formally structured and tended to be vocal when issues arose but often difficult to find in between. These trends were confirmed in more recent studies (Thulare, 2004, Motala, 2002).

Evidence suggests that traders are comparatively well organised in West Africa. King (2006) for example, reflecting on the situation in Kumasi Ghana, found that trader organisations were well established and widely respected. She notes that the Market Traders Association – an umbrella group of various product associations, has a representative on the Kumasi Municipal Authority's General Assembly. This association launched a successful challenge in court when the local authority threatened to increase market fees by 300 per cent (King, 2006:108–9). The Ghana Trade Union Congress (GTUC) has had an informal sector desk for many years. In February 2003 the GTUC initiated a national alliance of market and street traders – the StreetNet Ghana Alliance. As of 2006 they had 19 trader associations with a total of 5,810 individuals (War on Want, 2006:36). Adiko and Anoh Kouassi's (2003) study in the Ivory Coast found that organisational membership was high among traders – varying between 36 per cent and 42 per cent of interviewees depending on their location.⁷ Traders were members of a range of organisations including unions, co-operatives and ROSCAs.

The research pays less attention to collective action that directly supports the business of trading. Lund and Skinner's (1999) found that a number of street trader organisations in South Africa are primarily focused around the bulk purchase of goods. War on Want found a number of product-specific trader organisations in Ghana, Malawi and Zambia. They give the example of an organisation of wholesalers that supplies street traders – a banana sellers' association. Their primary aim is to ensure regular and adequate supply of products and to negotiate the terms of trade with the primary suppliers. Although this is not explored in any detail, Adiko and Anoh Kouassi's (2003) study in the Ivory Coast suggests co-operatives have been formed among traders.

Given the decreasing numbers of those formally employed in Africa, there is evidence of trade unions, particularly the national federations, paying increasing attention to organising among the informally employed. These initiatives either entail direct organising efforts, encouraging appropriate affiliates to organise or supporting or expanding on existing organising efforts. In May 2002 the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) launched an informal sector desk which is tasked with directly organising, among other groups, street traders (Tsitsi and Agatha, 2000:12).⁸ The Malawi Congress of Trade Unions assisted in the formation of the Malawi Union for the Informal Sector. This union has street traders among its members. As previously noted the Ghana Trade Union Congress has been very actively involved in encouraging its affiliates to organise in the informal economy. The Mozambique trade union federation (OTM) played an important role in forming the Association of Informal Sector Operators and Workers (ASSOTSI). ASSOTSI has 26 branch committees within 59 markets in Maputo and in 2005 claimed membership of over 40,000 (War on Want, 2005:43). The War on Want research does, however, find that there are often tensions between the national federations and informal worker organisations

Concerns are raised in this literature about two aspects of internal organisational dynamics – how organisations are constituted and women's roles. The War on Want study (2005:30) found that trader associations 'often show low levels of participation and leadership accountability'. For example of the 20 trader organisations interviewed in the Ghana study, nine reported that their method of choosing leadership was by appointment rather than elections (War on Want, 2006:95–6). Lund and Skinner (1999) raised a concern about organisations not being formally constituted. At the time of their study there was only one organisation – the Self Employed Women's Union⁹ – that had functioning democratic structures and regular elections.

Although members are often predominantly women, the leaders of street trader organisations are often men. This was found in studies of street trader organisations in Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique (War on Want, 2006) and in South Africa (Lund and Skinner, 1999). For example, in Malawi of the 16 organisations interviewed, only one had a majority of women in leadership positions (War on Want, 2006:97–8). Lyons and Snoxell's (2005:1082) study of markets in Nairobi found that both market committees were compromised entirely of men and that no women had ever been an official. The opposite however held true in Ghana where of the 33 organisations interviewed 22 had a majority of women in leadership positions. Women seem to play a much more dominant role in leadership positions in markets in the matrilineal societies of West Africa. However, again there are exceptions particularly in predominantly Muslim states. In Senegal the Mouride Brotherhood largely controls trading activities and is politically very powerful.

StreetNet International, an alliance of street trader organisations, since its launch in 2002 is an increasingly important player in street trader organising on the continent. Membership-based organisations directly organising street and market traders, are entitled to affiliate to StreetNet. They currently have members not only in Africa but also in Latin America and Asia. One of StreetNet's primary aims is to build the capacity of street trader organisations so as to strengthen their organising and advocacy efforts. This is done through providing direct leadership training, exchange visits which allow sharing of experiences among traders and documenting and disseminating better practices. Another area of activity is assisting with the expansion of organising efforts to the national level. StreetNet was instrumental in the establishment of both the Alliance for Zambia Informal Economy Associations and the formation of the national alliance of trader organisations in Ghana. These kinds of organisations will help traders to play a more influential role in policy particularly at national level. At an international level StreetNet advocates for the rights of street traders within international bodies like the International Labour Organisation but also the international trade union federations. Currently their primary campaign is at the moment is the World Class Cities Campaign. This aims to challenge the notion of 'world class' cities and the trend to remove traders when cities host international

events. The campaign has started in South Africa in response to the 2010 football World Cup (www.streetnet.org.za).

The research on street trader organisations thus suggests that many traders are not members of organisations. Given the importance of collective action to inclusive planning, this constitutes a challenge both to existing organisations and trade unions but also to local authorities. Concerns have been raised about the internal dynamics within organisations and who is represented in organisations. Bromley (2000:14) claims street trader associations 'typically represent older, established and licensed traders'. The research reviewed here suggests that women should be added to this list.

Conclusion

There are a number of reasons why an inclusive approach to street trading is desirable. Pragmatically, demographic and economic trends indicate that these activities are on the increase, thus street trading is a reality that is unlikely to go away. From a developmental perspective street traders are often responsible for large numbers of dependants. There are also a disproportionate number of women working as street traders. Research demonstrates that women are more likely than men to spend their income on the household needs (Levin *et al.*, 1999 demonstrate this for vendors particularly). From a planning perspective, street traders provide urban residents and particularly the urban poor, with goods and services in appropriate quantities and forms, and at times of day and in parts of the city that contribute to the functioning of cities. Although the individual incomes are often low, these activities' cumulative contribution to local economies and to local revenue collection are not insignificant. Inclusive planning however does not imply unbridled street trading. Local authorities need to balance the interests of many different stakeholders using public space. Traders themselves report not wanting to work in badly managed environments. Further, as previously noted, given limited consumer demand there is a direct trade off between the number of traders and individual incomes earned. Innovative approaches to policy, planning, urban design and management can maximise the gains from these activities.

Notes

- 1 This paper is a reworked and shorter version of a paper published in an edited volume entitled 'Street Vendors in the Global Urban Economy' published by Routledge, New Delhi.
- 2 This research is being done by the global research policy network Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising or WIEGO.
- 3 While Government translated this to mean 'Operation clean-up', the more literal Shona translation of 'murambatsvina' is 'getting rid of the filth' (Potts, 2007).
- 4 Source: http://sokwanele.com/articles/sokwanele/opmuramb_overview_18june_2005.html

- 5 Unfortunately he does not detail how the organisation is constituted nor how representative these organisations are, particularly of poorer and women traders.
- 6 Lyons and Snoxell (2005a) also surveyed a similar number of traders in two markets in Senegal and found only 17 per cent were members of a savings group. The majority of these traders were men. This reinforces again the importance of avoiding any blanket generalisations.
- 7 It should be noted that a number of traders were reluctant to report on their organisational membership.
- 8 The ZCTU is aligned to the opposition in Zimbabwe. Given the current repression of the opposition it is difficult to get any recent information about, for example, how many informal worker members the ZCTU has organised.
- 9 This organisation has since closed.

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Africa and the 'second new economy'

How can Africa benefit from ICTs for a sustainable socio-economic development?

Nicolas Pejout

Introduction

After J.H. Boeke (1953) and A. Lewis (1954), in 2003, former President Thabo Mbeki submits the idea of *two economies* co-existing in South Africa: a *first-world economy* (first economy) and a *third-world economy* (second economy). The first one is 'an advanced, sophisticated economy, based on skilled labour, which is becoming more globally competitive'. The second one is 'a mainly informal, marginalised, unskilled economy, populated by the unemployed and those unemployable in the formal sector' (Mbeki, 2003a; Mbeki, 2003b). The relationship between these two economies varies between disconnection and a trickle-down effect.

Simultaneously, since the 1990s and 2000s, the ICT-based *new economy* (NE) has been growing exponentially, but not for everyone. Although there is diversity of *new economies* (Boyer, 2004; Amable, 2005), one major trend is that the NE is fostering a socio-economic dualisation, particularly the polarisation of the labour market (Brender and Pisani, 2004; Milkman and Dwyer, 2002; Artus, 2000; Wright and Dwyer, 2003). One explanation is the skill-biased technological progress that is at the heart of the NE.

How can the *second economy* and the *new economy* be reconciled? How can Africa, that is mainly characterised by the *second economy*, get into the *new economy* given its assets and weaknesses? Answering this question is key for designing a socio-economic scenario that positions the NE as a tool to foster a sustainable growth and, above all, a self-sustainable social contract. The NE is a *total social fact* (Mauss, 1927). As such, it is *embedded* (Polanyi, 1944) in a both specific and diverse socio-economic and institutional context that represents both a set of constraints and opportunities.

In our view, Africa (at least some African countries) can (and some are already doing so) develop a *second new economy* that combines the *best of both worlds* to set ICT-intensive industries that are the heart of the NE as key engines of socio-economic development to achieve GDP growth, job creation and skills enhancement. For that, one strategy (or one tactic, cf. De Certeau,