

# Why Evictions Do Not Deter Street Traders: Case Study in Accra, Ghana

William F. Steel<sup>1</sup>,  
Torbi D. Ujoranyi<sup>2</sup>  
George Owusu<sup>3</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Like many major cities in developing countries, Accra faces increasing congestion of vehicles, pedestrians and traders around its central business district. Repeated attempts to evict street traders have proven unsustainable. Using Accra as a case study, this paper investigates the disconnect between urban authorities' concept of centralized city planning, the rapidly expanding informal economy, and the scope for alternative approaches to accommodate informal workers. Samples of street traders from two markets with high and low risk of evictions are compared to understand their motivations and how evictions affect their choice of location, livelihoods, and willingness to invest in fixed locations. The study finds that, while some risk-averse traders may relocate to outlying markets, many return because profits are higher in the congested areas. One implication is that growing urban centres need improved planning and consultative models to accommodate informal self-employment consistent with both regulatory requirements and workers' needs.

**Keywords: Ghana, Hawkers, Informal economy, Integrated urban planning, Public space**

<sup>1</sup> Adjunct Professor, Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research, University of Ghana P.O. Box 74, Legon, Accra, Ghana. His email address is as follows: [wsteel@alumni.williams.edu](mailto:wsteel@alumni.williams.edu)

<sup>2</sup> Social Performance Manager, Christian Community Microfinance Ltd., Accra, Ghana. His email address is as follows: [ujoranyi2@yahoo.com](mailto:ujoranyi2@yahoo.com)

<sup>3</sup> Associate Professor, Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research, University of Ghana P.O. Box 74, Legon, Accra, Ghana and Head, Department of Geography, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, Ghana. His email addresses: [gowusu@ug.edu.gh](mailto:gowusu@ug.edu.gh); [geowusu@yahoo.com](mailto:geowusu@yahoo.com)

## **INTRODUCTION**

Since the colonial era, the ‘conventional approach of creating Central Business Districts (CBDs) with concentrated work/business functions at a central point often results in congestion problems’ (Adanu, 2004). Most African cities inherited colonial spatial planning where the rich and poor are separated, with the poorer residents on the periphery of city centers (Skinner, 2008b). The uni-centric nature of Accra makes the CBD a preferred destination for both consumers and rural-urban migrants looking for work – mostly informal self-employment, especially trading (Thompson, 2009). Street traders locate in strategic areas where there is heavy human and vehicular traffic, resulting in tension over competing uses of public space and a policy dilemma with respect to the appropriate balance between public safety, customer convenience, and livelihoods of poorer urban residents. The focus of Accra’s urban authorities on formalizing the use of public spaces has led to recurrent evictions of traders from central market areas, with little lasting success. This article investigates the sources and implications of such conflict and what alternative approaches might be available to planners in emerging urban centres.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The core issues are the growing importance of the informal economy in developing countries and access to urban public space, which can be defined as all physical spaces and social relations that use such spaces within the non-private realm of the city, including pavements, parks and vacant spaces (Bhowmik, 2010). In developing countries, urban public space becomes a valuable resource for the urban working poor to earn their livelihood. Among the many varieties of informal activity in the CBD, street traders have attracted particular attention due to their visibility and numerical strength (Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah, 2008).

### **Growth of the Urban Informal Economy**

Rapid population growth and rural-urban migration in most developing countries in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have resulted in urban concentration (over half the population of the developing world, even in Sub-Saharan Africa) and dominance of informal employment (Smith, 2003; Chen, 2006). Globalization appears to have contributed both to the structural persistence of informal employment and the interdependence of formal and informal economies. Many formal businesses, from shops to telecommunications companies, depend on informal operators to reach their clientele (Kotoh, 2008). In Ghana, the informal share of the workforce has continued to rise from 83.9% in 2000 to 86.2% in 2010 (GSS, 2013).

Informal street traders alone, about two-thirds of them women, account for about 10 to 20 per cent of total employment in African cities, providing an important source of livelihood with low barriers to entry (WIEGO 2012). It has also been argued that street trading plays an important role in the smooth running of the urban economy, especially in terms of the supply of goods and services (Bromley, 1998). A study in Malaysia viewed hawkers ‘as effective and efficient agents in the distribution of goods and services through their linkage with the formal sector.... to keep the cost of living in the city low...and widen consumer choice’ (Hassan, 2003). In other words, street trading can be viewed not only as contributing to the welfare of those involved but also as having positive impact on the wider urban society: ‘Ghana’s economic future depends significantly on what [small] traders are up to’ (Hart, 2008: 4).

The term ‘informal sector’ originated from an attempt to describe how people earned their livelihoods in Accra in the early 1970s (Hart, 1973). Although some associate ‘informality’ with ‘illegality,’ an estimated 70-80 per cent of the non-agricultural workforce is engaged in ‘informal’ activities which are legal, even if they are not registered or not located in compliance with urban zoning (Baah 2007). Indeed, in Ghana, it is perfectly legal to do business in one’s own name without formal registration, so there is little barrier to entry (Kwankye *et al.*, 2008).

According to Chen (2006), debates on the informal economy often revolve around the relationship between the informal and the formal sectors. Chen distinguishes three schools of thought: dualist, structuralist and legalist. In the dualist view, informal economic activities are totally separate and not linked to the formal sector, and include the poor and unemployed. The structuralist views the informal sector as subordinate to the formal sector: in pursuit of profits, formal corporations use the informal economy to erode employment relations and thereby reduce their labor and input costs, while the informal economy depends on the formal economy for sustenance. The legalist views the existence of informal businesses as a rational response by small enterprises to over-regulation by government bureaucracies. In this view, informal enterprises often find it cumbersome, costly and time-consuming to comply with bureaucratic procedures associated with registration of their business in a regulatory framework designed for large firms.

De Soto (1989) argues that the attempt by the state to expand and encompass every aspect of economic activity has led to a degeneration of the relationship between the formal and informal sectors, as the poor find it increasingly difficult to establish businesses that meet the legal requirements. In his view, overregulation may actually contribute to growth of the informal economy, as an opportunity for people to avoid the bureaucratic regulatory system. Given the persistence and importance of the informal economy, the question is whether urban planning can be adapted to accommodate rather than exclude it.

### **Urban Development and Conflict over Public Space**

Four main components of sustainable urban development have been identified in the process of planning for sustainable development of some fifty Swedish municipalities: social, ecological, economic and organizational (Swedish National Board, 2001). Socially, urban planning should give inhabitants a sense of belonging, security, and ability to interact with one another. Ecologically, finite resources should be conserved through mechanisms to limit the spread of substances harmful to the environment. Economically, sustainable cities should put in place structures to ensure that the local economy is differentiated and has the potential of creating employment opportunities for the people (Adanu, 2008). Organizational sustainability seeks to ensure that every individual has the right to take part in the decision-making process of the city. Urban public space is seen as a key physical asset in the livelihood strategies of the urban poor. Social organizations and networks as well as mutual trust are needed to facilitate cooperation for the use of urban public space. Lyons and Snoxell (2005) state that this approach attributes agency to the poor insofar as they can strategize in the use of public space.

In practice, however, development policies in the 1960s and 1970s tended to favor urban concentration and capital-intensive industries and exclude the growing informal economy (Sethuraman, forthcoming). According to the Centre on Housing Rights and Forced Evictions (COHRE, 2008), authoritarian top-down planning and large projects (including hosting

international events) are sources of conflict with disadvantaged sections of society that lack formal tenure rights, and ‘the costs of forced evictions almost always include an increase in poverty.’

The crux of the matter is control over public space. In some cities, licenses are used to exclude informal trading (Lyons and Snoxell, 2005). The fascist government of Benito Mussolini in Italy (1922) was one of the first to recognize the importance of dominating public space, through strictly implemented measures that regulated use and removed encroachers (mostly poor) with force (Brown, 2006). The bye-laws of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) make it illegal to trade on the streets; thus it is a matter of *location*, rather than the activity. Even when the AMA attempted to close off a street for trading, shop owners succeeded in getting a court order to evict the traders – who nevertheless soon returned – though, ironically, the court dismissed a subsequent suit to hold the AMA in contempt because the original order to evict the traders had been carried out (Daily Graphic, 2008).

The issue is not whether regulation is in order – the authorities clearly have a responsibility to ensure the security and health of the public – but whether the approach to such regulation adequately accommodates the interests of the workers and can realistically achieve the intended objective. Control over public space by the state or city authorities can be a form of control over the working poor, which de Haan (1998) characterizes as ‘social exclusion’ – ‘a rupture of social bonds ... a process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partly excluded from full participation in the society within which they live.’ The notion of social exclusion has gained popularity in conceptualizing urban poverty in general (Skinner, 2008a).

### **Street Traders: Motivations and Coping Strategies**

Street traders constitute a highly heterogeneous group of self-employed workers (Smart, 1989). Poverty and the lack of alternative employment are the main drivers, and the low barriers to entry in trading make hawking a dominant informal activity (Hassan, 2003). Over a third of street children are engaged in hawking (Anarfi, 1997), some on their own account, others to supplement family income. While men tend to enter street trade at a relatively young age and later move on, women, who constitute the majority, are more likely to enter later in life, especially if they become widowed or head of household (Mitullah, 2003). They are as likely to be long-time residents as migrants. It may be hypothesized that traders from different backgrounds and with different family responsibilities may adopt different strategies for coping with the vulnerabilities inherent in street trading. In particular, the literature on microfinance finds that, ‘because women are less mobile and more fearful about social sanctions, they tend to be more risk-averse than men and more conservative in their choice of investment projects’ (Armendáriz and Morduch, 2010: 218).

Three main classifications of street traders may be identified in terms of location: static, semi static and mobile (Jellinek, 1991). The static ones occupy a fixed market stall or kiosk where they can lock up at the close of work, and pay rent or daily fees. The semi-static traders normally occupy a particular site but dismantle or cart away their goods after hours of business; they also may pay some rent or fee for the space they occupy – even for space on a sidewalk outside city markets. The mobile ones (hawkers) move from place to place in order to catch peak selling opportunities or for ease of escape from the city authorities. While the latter have the advantage of flexibility, they have little scope to invest in their business and grow beyond what they can carry. Since the threat of evictions raises the risks and hence the cost of trading, evictions tend to favor mobility over fixed locations, and hence discourage investment and growth by informal traders.

## **Alternative Models**

In some countries, authorities are taking a more positive view of informal trade as contributing to the economic life of the city and engaging in more collaborative approaches to break the recurrent cycles of eviction and return of hawkers – although this depends heavily on local context and politics. In 2014, the Lima, Peru, City Council passed an Ordinance giving the city government responsibility for including street vendors in economic development, providing them some social protection, and establishing a tripartite oversight Commission with representatives from the municipality, street vendors' organizations, and neighborhoods (Vildoso and Miock, 2014). From 1988 to 2003, Bogotá's mayors implemented one of the most ambitious public space campaigns in Latin America, working with informal vendor unions to relocate them to government-built markets, resulting in improved working conditions...though declining income levels (Donovan, 2008). Through sustained dialogue and public-private partnerships to invest nearly \$7 million of municipal funds and \$60 million of private capital in some 50 shopping centers and markets available to vendors, Peruvian officials were able to relocate some 20,000 street vendors from the Historic Center of Lima (Raredon et al., 2010). In Belo Horizonte, Brazil, 'four shopping malls for vendors have been created by the municipality since 2006 in locations where street vendors used to be concentrated.... right at the heart of the city centre' (WIEGO, 2010).

According to the WIEGO Network (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing), 'inclusive urban planning requires a new vision of cities and the role played by the urban informal economy,' and StreetNet International has launched a campaign to promote 'World Class Cities for All... to contest the notion of a "World Class City" that excludes the working poor' (WIEGO, 2010). According to Lund and Skinner (2004), 'in 1999, the city of Durban in South Africa sought a policy to accommodate the need to support the growth of economic opportunities for all informal workers, especially women,' adopting an integrative approach that included consultation with informal workers, modified structures to accommodate both traders and commuters around the Warwick Junction transportation node, and involved them in maintaining order.

India is one of the few countries that has shifted from an exclusionary stance toward street vendors to an approach of accommodating and regulating, with the adoption of a National Policy on Street Vending in 2004 (revised in 2009) and a Supreme Court ruling requiring legislation for street vending (WIEGO 2012). Manipur's Town Planning provides a rare example of progressive legislation that requires 'provision for four to six shops and ten hawkers for every 1000 persons' in residential areas (Sankaran *et al.*, 2012).

Nevertheless, an integrated approach requires a continuous, consultative process with commitment and competence on the sides of both the authorities and trade associations. Despite having adopted a progressive informal economy policy in 2000 and spent considerable resources to construct facilities for traders around the Warwick Junction transport node, Durban's revamped City Council resumed evictions and police actions against traders after 2004 – perhaps associated with a desire to 'develop' the area in preparation for the 2010 World Cup (Skinner, 2008a).

Associations that represent or include self-employed workers can play a critical role. In cases such as Durban where (at least initially) 'traders have been incorporated into urban plans, traders are comparatively well organized' (Skinner 2008b). In Dar es Salaam, some 240 self-help groups are

represented by an ‘umbrella organization – 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’ (Nnkya, 2006). In general, however, Skinner (2008b) asserts that the evidence ‘suggests that many traders are not affiliated to any organization at all. Where trader organizations do exist, they focus on one or more of three concerns – financial services, lobbying and advocacy, particularly at a local level and on product-specific issues. The role of trade unions appears to be increasingly important.’ Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that associations have their vulnerabilities and weaknesses, and may not be able to negotiate on behalf of all traders (Lyons and Brown, 2007)

### **Recent Experience in Ghana**

In Ghana, some District Assemblies have been developing an alternative approach to dealing with informal enterprises that they do not want in the CBD – though more with respect to activities that are considered polluting or noisy, such as vehicle repair, metalworking and carpentry, rather than street trading. In Bekwai in the Ashanti Region, a forced relocation exercise was subsequently ameliorated by improving the infrastructure (including electricity) at the relocation site and establishing a Business Advisory Centre, Rural Technology Facility, and other services (MEL, 2011). The Local and Regional Economic Development programme funded by the German Development Cooperation agency (GIZ) is supporting this approach of establishing well-serviced light industrial sites on the outskirts of cities, with prior consultations and preparation of sites rather than an ad hoc approach (e.g., in Bechem in the Brong-Ahafo Region).

The major Municipalities of Accra and Kumasi, however, have remained preoccupied with removing traders from the streets and the areas around markets located in the CBD. In April 2011, the AMA deployed some 200 city guards and police with cameras to evict and eventually prosecute traders in designated locations, and even threatened to take action against consumers who buy from hawkers (AMA, 2011; Peace FM, 2011). The failure to plan for informal commerce – and the preference of authorities for international sporting events over self-employment – is exemplified in the construction of a (little-used) field hockey stadium in a prime area of Accra’s CBD next to a major transport station. This would have been an ideal location for a major market structure for the many traders and food sellers who continue to service patrons of the lorry park, despite efforts of the AMA to evict them at least since 1997 (GhanaWeb, 1997).

Street traders in Accra have over the years adopted various strategies aimed at avoiding arrest, most recently in response to the special task force established by the AMA to enforce its bye-laws. According to Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah (2008), the street traders are always on the run, or engage in the sale of lighter goods for greater mobility in case of arrests. Some have adopted spatial strategies by relocating to other places where they can continue with their trading without harassment from the city authorities. But they found that many traders remain reluctant to move to the AMA’s designated sites outside the CBD for fear of inadequate clientele and reduction in volume of sales, especially when allocation of sites is uncertain and non-transparent, or provisions are inadequate to ensure that all move at the same time. Thus, continuous congestion and the cycle of threats and attendant arrests have become part of the operational difficulties of street trading in Accra (Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah, 2008).

In general, national governments have taken little direct role because ‘informal activities like street trading are generally seen as an urban management issue rather than as an economic development concern’ (Skinner, 2008b). In Ghana, however, especially in election years, the national

government has sometimes intervened to postpone or at least moderate the severity of eviction exercises that might cost votes or cause disruption. According to MEL (2011), such pressure, as well as public outcry about the ‘decongestion’ exercise being carried out by AMA in 2006, led the AMA to construct a Pedestrian Shopping Mall (‘Hawker’s Market’) near Nkrumah Circle (MEL, 2011). However, it had little impact, largely due to poor consultation and design: it is not readily accessible to customers; it lacks secure storage space; electricity and cooked food are prohibited (to avoid fires; but making it less attractive to customers); allocation was seen as arbitrary and political; and the number of stalls (4000) was completely inadequate relative to the number of traders the AMA wished to relocate. While the authorities take the view that hawkers refuse to comply when such space is made available, the view of the street sellers was that the stalls were too few and were allocated to those with influence – and that some of those hawking outside the Hawker’s Market reportedly do so on behalf of the holders of stalls, because the poor design attracts few customers to come inside.

Although Ghana’s markets have many associations, often organized by commodity, they generally cannot negotiate successfully with municipal authorities on broad issues unless they have a strong umbrella association. Although AMA did negotiate with some associations regarding the Hawker’s Market, those left out felt no obligation to abide by any agreements. In Kumasi, various product associations have formed an umbrella Market Traders Association, which has a representative on the Kumasi Municipal Authority’s General Assembly and was able to challenge a market fee increase in court (King, 2006). The Ghana Trades Union Congress has embraced informal workers and associations for many years. It has formed StreetNet Ghana as an alliance of market and street traders, and speaks out to defend traders’ rights when eviction exercises take place (Skinner, 2008b; Daily Guide, 2011).

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

The key question raised by the literature is why the recurrent evictions of traders by municipal authorities appear to have little sustained impact in reducing congestion in the areas being targeted, and what alternative approaches might work better. The implicit assumption of the authorities is that traders can be deterred from operating in the CBD and other crowded areas by periodically seizing their goods, smashing their kiosks, and arresting or chasing them away. This study investigates what motivates traders’ choice of location and type of trading (static, semi-static or mobile), and what alternatives they see as preferable and that might improve the success of relocation measures. The empirical focus is on the perspectives of the traders. Specific hypotheses investigated were:

1. Evictions have an adverse effect on traders’ livelihoods;
2. Traders in high-eviction areas are more likely to be mobile, those in low-eviction area are more likely to be static;
3. Traders who are risk-averse (e.g., women) are more likely to locate in markets where evictions have not taken place;
4. Congested market areas that are frequently targeted for eviction exercises have higher profits that attract evicted traders back, rather than relocating to a lower-risk, lower-return market;
5. Traders would be willing to relocate with suitable incentives, structures and opportunities.

## **Methodology and Sample**

Accra is typical of major African cities that were designed around a CBD model but whose population explosion has severely strained the carrying capacity of the centralized infrastructure, resulting in intensive street trading around transportation nodes. To test the hypotheses, two markets in the Ablekuma Central sub-metro (one of thirteen sub-metros, with about 200,000 population) of the AMA were purposively selected that have and have not been targeted for eviction exercises: Kaneshie, located next to a transportation node on the edge of the CBD and a regular target of eviction exercises; and Sukura, which is less central and has not been targeted. Kaneshie has a larger market structure and surrounding commercial area, and is more densely populated both with traders and foot traffic. Both markets are overcrowded in that traders have spilled out onto the sidewalks and areas surrounding the market itself; hence the sample area was defined to include the streets with heavy commercial activity surrounding the specifically constructed market. Kaneshie is targeted for 'decongestion' exercise in part because the spillover encroaches on a major traffic artery and a pedestrian bridge. Although both markets offer a wide variety of consumer goods and foodstuffs, Kaneshie also has services and dealers associated with vehicles and transport, as well as more formal fuel stations, supermarkets, pharmacies and other formal shops.

Given the lack of any systematic data to use as a sampling frame for street traders (especially itinerant ones), purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to select 30 traders in each market for structured interviews using a questionnaire which was prepared and pre-tested for this purpose. Although the sample size was constrained by resources, 30 observations for each market were selected as adequate to conduct a  $\chi^2$  test for significant difference in responses between the two locations. Key informant interviews were conducted with sub-metro officials and with city guards (unformed officials of the AMA and sub-metropolitan assembly responsible for keeping hawkers away from unauthorized public spaces). These officials assisted in identifying initial respondents who were typical of the types of traders found in that location, and these in turn were used to identify others until a sample of 30 was reached. This 'snowball' approach and the limited sample size mean that the results are not strictly statistically representative, and should be taken as illustrative rather than generalizable.

The sample of 60 traders was predominantly young, with 73 per cent aged 15-40 years. The majority overall (66 per cent) and in both markets had left school after Junior High School; only 14 per cent had only primary or no education (Table 1). Traders in Kaneshie market were more likely to have gone past secondary school (29 per cent) than those in Sukura (13 per cent), who were relatively more likely to have no more than primary education; these differences, however, are not statistically significant. The sample was almost evenly divided between men (53 per cent) and women (47 per cent). The majority (57 per cent) of respondents in Kaneshie market were from Accra and its neighbouring regions; long-distance migrants were found only in Sukura market.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Impact of Evictions and Harassment**

Respondents confirmed the presumed difference in vulnerability to evictions: 90 per cent of Kaneshie market had experienced evictions there, whereas only 46 per cent of Sukura traders had, and these had happened in other markets, leading them to relocate to Sukura. When asked for the main problem they encountered trading in their market, 100 per cent of Kaneshie respondents cited

harassment, eviction/arrest, confiscation of goods or demolition of structures as a major problem, as against only 39 per cent of Sukura respondents (mainly confiscation of goods; none cited eviction; Table 2). Typical of traders' views is that statement that: 'city authorities hindered their businesses by chasing traders from streets and sometimes physically assaulting them' (Anyidoho, 2013: 23). In contrast, 71 per cent of Sukura traders said they did not encounter any problems – a statistically significant difference.

**Table 1: Distribution of Sample by Education, Gender, Origin and Market  
(percentage of respondents)**

	Kaneshie	Sukura	Total
<b>Level of Education</b>			
None/Primary	7.1	20.0	13.8
Junior High School	64.3	66.7	65.5
Secondary/Tertiary	28.6	13.3	20.7
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0
Men	63.3	43.3	53.3
Women	36.7	56.7	46.7
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Region of Origin</b>			
Accra, Central, Eastern	56.7	36.7	46.7
Western, Ashanti, Volta	43.3	40.0	41.7
Brong-Ahafo, Northern, Upper East or West	0.0	23.3	11.7
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Type of location (fixed/mobile)</b>			
Static (shop, kiosk)	10.0	60.0	35.0
Semi-static (fixed but stock removed daily)	16.7	26.7	21.7
Itinerant/hawking	73.3	13.3	43.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>60</i>

*Source:* Survey data 2010. Two Kaneshie respondents failed to provide education level. Details may fail to add to totals because of rounding.

Traders who had been evicted or otherwise affected by AMA 'decongestion' exercises stated that their livelihoods and families had been adversely affected. This concern is echoed in other studies of street traders: 'Demolitions lose us customers. When this happens...it is difficult maintaining the household and even more difficult to pay school fees for children' (Anyidoho, 2013: 30). A third (33 per cent) of respondents said that feeding their family became a problem, and nearly as many (28 per cent) stated that they could no longer afford to pay the school fees of their wards. In addition, a quarter (23 per cent) of respondents said that they had to suspend sending remittances to their parents after decongestion exercises, and another 15 per cent had difficulties paying their rent. Thus, hypothesis #1 is confirmed.

**Table 2: Problems Encountered by Traders by Location of Market  
(percentage of respondents)**

Main problems encountered by traders	Location of Market		Total
	Kaneshie	Sukura	
Harassment from the city guards	50.0	7.1	29.3
Confiscation of goods	13.7	17.9	15.5
Frequent eviction and arrests by the police	26.7	0.0	13.8
Demolition of structures	10.0	3.6	6.9
Did not encounter any problem	0.0	71.4	34.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<i>Number of respondents</i>	30	28	58
Notes: $\chi^2=39.03$ ; $df=4$ ; $p\text{-value}=0.00$ significant			

*Source:* Field survey data 2010.

The impact of frequent evictions on traders' willingness to invest in a fixed location is indicated by the much greater (statistically significant at  $p=0.01$ ) proportion of traders in the more risky Kaneshie market who are itinerant (73 percent; Table 1) compared to the high proportion (60 percent) of Sukura traders in shops or stalls. This difference exceeds what could be explained by the relative scarcity of market stalls and reflects the statement of a typical Kaneshie trader: 'I make good money here but I cannot put up any permanent structure because the AMA task force will destroy it when they come around.' Confirmation of hypothesis #2 is also supported by the fact that those Sukura traders who had experienced eviction had done so in other markets and relocated to Sukura.

Women – who are noted in the literature as likely to be more risk-averse – were much more likely to be found in Sukura market (accounting for 56.7 per cent of the traders there) than in the more eviction-prone Kaneshie market (only 36.7 per cent of traders sampled; although this difference is not statistically significant). This evidence provides some support for hypothesis #3.

#### **Motivation for Location and Return after Eviction**

Given the adverse impact of eviction and other forms of harassment on the livelihoods and stability of traders, why do they continue to operate in a location such as Kaneshie? Most respondents (73 per cent) said their primary motivation was high profits, which required an assured customer base; they were much more likely to locate in Kaneshie market (64 per cent) than Sukura (36 per cent; Table 3). Conversely, those whose primary concern was not being harassed by city guards were far more likely to choose Sukura (88 per cent) than Kaneshie (13 per cent). The association of different motivations with different market locations is statistically significant. These results support hypotheses #3 and #4.

In order to further investigate this finding that traders in Kaneshie market were attracted by high profits and the number of customers there, they were asked why they return after being evicted. The results confirmed that high profits and sales are the principal attraction for 71 per cent of respondents (Table 4). Hence they are willing to risk periodic loss through confiscation of their goods, arrest, or payments to officials in order to maintain access to the high-return customer base

of the congested market. They minimize this risk by remaining itinerant rather than investing in a fixed location, for maximum mobility when city guards are coming. Indeed, the traders refer to the city guards who engage in eviction exercises as *aabaeei* ('they are coming!').

**Table 3: Primary Motivation for Choice of Location by Market  
(percentage of respondents)**

Primary motivation	Location of Market		Total	Number
	Kaneshie	Sukura		
High profits, assured customer base	63.6	36.4	<b>100.0</b>	44
Not bothered by city guards	12.5	87.5	<b>100.0</b>	16
<i>Number of respondents</i>	30	30		60
Notes: $\chi^2=23.87$ ; df=2; p-value=0.01 significant				

Source: Field survey data 2010.

**Table 4: Reasons Why Traders Return to Same Location after Eviction  
(percentage of respondents)**

Type of location (fixed/mobile)	Frequency	Percent
Profits are huge, so difficult to stay away	14	36.8
Make a lot of sales there	13	34.2
No way to survive apart from this business	6	1.8
Owners of store asked me to sell in front	5	13.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field survey data 2010.

Furthermore, the traders feel entitled to the use of public space because of payments they make to city officials. Whether these payments are municipal taxes, local fees or outright bribes is unclear. Two-thirds of respondents said that they make regular payments to city authorities (mainly sub-metro officials and city guards), somewhat more in Kaneshie (71 per cent) than Sukura (61 per cent). Yet the AMA insists that it does not take taxes from hawkers because hawking on the street is against its bye-laws. At best, the traders are caught between local sub-metro officials who may be more permissive because of a revenue objective and the central AMA officials who periodically launch eviction campaigns. Whereas in the past such campaigns might occur years apart, since Ghana's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2007, a steady stream of international events and an AMA Head intent on achieving 'millennium city' status have resulted in eviction exercises several times a year, at least in highly visible and congested areas such as Kaneshie market.

### Alternatives

When asked what alternative they would propose to make eviction exercises unnecessary, a majority (70 per cent) of respondents suggested building new markets in locations that could be readily accessed by customers. They expressed their willingness to pay taxes or fees for the use of such public space. About a quarter emphasized the need for the government to create more employment opportunities for youth.

The Kaneshie market structure built in the 1970s just outside the CBD actually represented sound planning; it was some years before it was fully utilized. But despite the continuing rapid expansion

of the city since then, few major market structures have been built as new residential areas and major intersections have sprung up farther and farther away from town. Yet traders would welcome a more decentralized approach, confirming hypothesis #5: only 27 per cent said that they would not move to another market; the same percentage stated that they would move without qualification; while the remaining 47 per cent said they would move if the cost was reasonable or they could get the same level of sales.

The example of the Mallam market, located on the western end of Accra and far from the CBD attests that a decentralized approach to trading in city can work. This market was constructed in the late 1990s with the aim of easing congestion and the pressure of vehicular and other economic activities in the CBD. Like Kaneshie, occupation was initially low, but accelerated with urban growth and when decongestion exercises intensified in Accra central. Today, the Mallam market is fully occupied with brisk trading and other economic activities taking place. Thus there is some evidence in practice as well as in the survey responses that advance planning can help address congestion when accompanied by positive incentives – in particular, accessibility to customers. But examples of consultation between authorities and trade associations to minimize conflict are rare.

There is some indication that Ghanaian authorities are beginning to think more strategically about how better to incorporate the informal economy into urban planning. A draft ‘National Strategy and Action Plan for Informal Enterprises’ advocates increased support for local districts to ‘set up more industrial zones and markets with infrastructure and facilities suitable for informal enterprises’ and mandates assemblies ‘to develop better methods of supporting and engaging local associations in planning, taxing and carrying out relocation exercises’ (MESW, 2012). Nevertheless, ‘the local authorities often do not adequately involve the [traders] and their associations in the planning and construction of markets and industrial zones, which in many cases leads to operators rejecting the facilities,’ (MEL, 2011: 10), and unfortunate experiences with how spaces are allocated have made many traders skeptical of government: ‘they will say they are building a market, but when it’s finally done, people with more money would have taken it over and those who originally wrote their names are left out’ (Anyidoho, 2013: 23).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The failure to continue building markets in pace with expansion of the city and the influx of job-seekers who end up in informal self-employment appears to stem from the continued preoccupation of city authorities with the outmoded uni-centric CBD model of urban development and their control-oriented approach, which dates back to the colonial days. In fact, urban management regulations in Ghana are based on the antiquated Town and Country Planning Ordinance (Cap 84) passed in 1945. While this ordinance may have been adequate in the 1940s and under low urban growth rates, it is unrealistic under the current conditions of rapid urbanization and urban growth as well as the increasing high demand for physical space within and around Accra (Owusu 2008).

Unable to deal with the challenges of managing public space within the city of Accra, city authorities have employed the simplistic policy of eviction of traders as a means to deal with the increasing congestion in the city. This is not to argue in favor of congestion, but rather for seeking alternatives to the CBD model, ranging from a more decentralized, nodal approach to urbanization and consultative processes rather than authoritarian control. It may be, however, that such an approach can be more readily applied in emerging urban centers than in highly congested urban centers such as Accra and Kuala Lumpur (Hassan, 2003), where planning has not kept pace with

growth and street traders are reluctant to relocate to areas designated by authorities that are not strategically located in terms of both customers and nearby affordable living space.

The research presented in this study shows that, while such evictions do take a toll on traders and motivate some to seek more secure market locations, they are ineffective in deterring most traders from returning to the 'congested' markets and streets because of the greater customer base and profits there. They impose economic costs on the traders with little sustained benefit in the form of enhanced use of public space. Furthermore, the risk of harassment makes traders more likely to remain itinerant and less likely to undertake productivity-enhancing investment, thus limiting the contribution of informal activities to incomes and growth.

Nevertheless, there are some positive signs of a shift toward policies that are more attuned to the current reality that street trading and other informal activities constitute a major source of livelihoods and contribution to the functioning of growing urban centers. The adoption of a National Strategy and Action Plan for Informal Enterprises, as in India, might help shift attitudes of municipal authorities and increase the resources available for construction of new market areas and designated places to sell to passengers in vehicles outside the CBD as an incentive for more traders to move there. Some of the smaller District Assemblies have adopted such an approach with respect to certain artisanal trades by developing services sites on the edge of town; investigation of their strategies and how the informal workers responded to incentives would be a useful topic for further research. In the heavily congested Metropolitan areas, the first step would appear to be amendment of restrictive by-laws to recognize the right of access of informal street vendors to public places, while introducing reasonable measures and consultative procedures to regulate (rather than ban and evict) them.

From the standpoint of municipal authorities, taking a more consultative approach to urban planning would require more effective umbrella associations that can represent the heterogeneous informal economy. Even within the retail trade sector, associations of shop owners may be in conflict with street vendor associations, as has happened in Accra. Hence it is important to have consultative mechanisms in which informal associations can participate and to strengthen their ability to coordinate among themselves and advocate on behalf of their mutual interests.

#### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

While the findings are consistent with expectations and with those of a subsequent study of street traders in Accra (Anyidoho, 2013), it must be noted that the sample size was small, confined to only two markets, and not statistically representative. Thus the findings should be taken only as illustrative of the conditions and motivations of street vendors in Accra, and not necessarily generalizable to other (especially smaller) municipalities without verification through further research.

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