



SCHOOL OF  
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UNIVERSITY of KWAZULU-NATAL

# **Street Trade in Africa: A Review**

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Working Paper No. 51

April 2008

ISBN 978-1-86840-662-3

## Acknowledgements

This research was initiated and supported by the global research - policy network Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising. Thanks are also due to Professor Francie Lund for very insightful comments and Judith Shier for literature searches and editing.



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## INTRODUCTION

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Despite the advances in modern retailing, millions of people throughout the world still make their living partly or wholly through selling goods on the streets. This is particularly the case in Africa. A vibrant array of traders selling everything from fruit and vegetables, to clothes, traditional medicine and even furniture is what characterises African cities. This paper, rather ambitiously, aims to outline broad trends about these activities in Africa. It hopes to assess what is known about this phenomenon in the continent and how it has been understood over time, with a view to assist in framing future research.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first section considers the theoretical lenses employed in analysing street trading in the academic literature. It starts by considering how street trade is dealt with in the debates of the 1970's and 1980's arguing that these debates still have resonance today. It then reflects on the conceptual tools increasingly being used – livelihoods and social exclusion and the implications of post-modern ways of understanding informality. The second section reviews street trade statistics. These are contextualised in urbanisation, migration and economic development trends. The little data that is available about street traders is reviewed. The evidence suggests that the surge in numbers of street traders, partly caused by economic restructuring processes, is likely to continue. The third section concentrates on trends in policy, planning and governance. Research on the issue suggests that state responses to street trading form a continuum from violent sustained evictions on the one side, to a more inclusive approach on the other. Having reviewed the empirical evidence, cross-cutting themes are identified that are either important in understanding processes of inclusion and exclusion of street traders and/or factors to consider in future research and advocacy. What is clear from Section 3 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. The fourth section thus concentrates on trends in street trader organisation.

This paper was commissioned by the research and advocacy network Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising (WIEGO). It draws on a review<sup>1</sup> of existing literature framed by WIEGO's concerns with statistics, urban policies, global markets and organisation and

representation<sup>2</sup>. As will be detailed below, there have been substantial studies on street trading in West Africa (Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast and Ghana); Central Africa (the Democratic Republic of Congo); Sub-Saharan Africa (Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Lesotho) and East Africa (Tanzania, Kenya). This leaves substantial regions in the continent un- and under-explored. The most striking gap is the absence of research on North Africa but also no research was found on street trading in Africa's 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.

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## **STREET TRADE – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND CONCEPTUAL TOOLS**

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Keith Hart's original anthropological work in Accra, Ghana during which the term 'informal sector' was first coined, made much reference to small scale distribution (1973:71-3). He justifies a disproportionate focus on this due to 'its significance in urban economic life' (1973:72). His work drew international attention to the phenomenon challenging the notion of urban 'unemployed and underemployed' in cities like Accra constituting 'a passive exploited majority' with informal activities having little autonomous capacity to generate growth in the incomes of the urban poor (1973:61). His detailed description and analysis of the multiple economic activities of the urban poor and the important part they played in supplying many of the essential services in Accra, constituted a serious challenge to the way development economists had previously approached employment issues in the developing world. He (1973:82) poses questions like 'Do we want to shift the emphasis of income opportunities in the direction of formal employment for its own sake or only to reduce participation in socially disapproved of informal activities and those in informal occupations whose marginal productivity is too low?' This forced a revision of previous approaches to employment policy.<sup>3</sup>

The International Labour Organisation employment mission to Kenya popularised the idea of an informal sector. The mission's report acknowledges street trade as an important component of the informal sector but does emphasise that the visibility of street activities tends to lead to the neglect of other segments of the informal sector like manufacturing (a point that is often made). The team particularly picked up on the regulation of

informal traders. They, for example, found 35 types of licences listed in Nairobi's hawkers and street traders' regulations . Noting that this has the effect of creating monopoly profits for licence holders and discouraging investment by other informal traders, one of their core policy suggestions is a simplification of the licensing system. It is policy prescriptions like these that led to a flurry of critique during the next two decades. Bromley (1978:1036) for example commenting on the speed at which the notion of the informal sector was adopted by the ILO and other international development institutes argues that the notion 'offered the possibility of 'helping the poor without any major threat to the rich', a potential compromise between pressures for the redistribution of income and wealth and the desire for stability on the part of the economic and political elite'.

Moser in the same edition of *World Development*, drawing on Marxist theory, expands Bromley's critique. She challenges the notion of two-sector dualism used by the ILO and others, rather pointing to a continuum of productive activities in the cities of developing countries – with 'complex linkages and dependent relations between production and distribution systems' (1978:1055). She draws on Marx's theory of different modes of production and their mutual articulation adapting Marx's notion of petty commodity production. She argues that the petty commodity sector is 'articulated as *part of* the capitalist mode of production with its development controlled by, and linked to, the capitalist mode' (1978:1057). Petty commodity production is argued to play a number of important roles within the capitalist mode of production – like maintaining low levels of subsistence and the low cost of labour reproduction. Moser (1978:1061) thus notes that 'the "political dimension" of development planning can no longer be ignored'. The policy implications of her analysis are fairly bleak. Although recognising the need for grassroots interventions, she states that it must be recognised that the function of these measures 'is no more than to alleviate some of the worst anomalies not to change the overall structure' which she argues is essentially exploitative. The empirical material used to substantiate her and other neo-Marxist analyses tend to focus on production rather than distribution of products. No explicit mention is made of street trading but the implication her analysis is that they are part of the capitalist distribution process.

Despite the term 'informal sector' stemming from an analysis of African urban economies, the ensuing theoretical debates tended to draw on experiences from Latin America . De Soto continues to be very influential in

policy circles and his research institute - Instituto Libertad y Democracia (ILD) – has been commissioned by a number of African governments. During the 1980's his work primarily focused on Peru and other Latin American contexts. In the *Other Path: The Economic Answer to Terrorism* he devotes a whole chapter to informal trade. He records the numbers of street traders and outlines their high dependency ratios. His researchers posed as informal traders and attempted to negotiate the state system. The chapter outlines the numerous restrictions those involved in these activities face. He (1989:13) demonstrates vendors' ability to rise above these restrictions through calculating that vendors had built or acquired 274 informal markets in Lima which he valued at the time at \$40.9 million. He concludes that legal institutions have ceased to provide the means to govern society stating 'the existing legal system – the red tape, the widespread mistreatment on waiting lines, the bribes, the rudeness – are a Kafkaesque trap which prevent (the informals) and the country's resources from being used efficiently' (1989:243).

In retrospect the literature of the 1970's and 1980's has been categorised into two broad traditions . On the right, the neo-liberal position, which has a very celebratory view of informality, sees it as a process of deregulation from below. The relationship between the formal and informal economies is either not looked at or assumed to be benign. On the left of the spectrum is the structuralist position where informality is seen as a crisis of capitalist development demonstrating the inability of capitalism to absorb the mass of unemployed, with research often detailing the exploitative relationship between the formal and informal economies. The informal economy is seen as largely assisting in capitalist accumulation. Although more recent literature often does not address these debates directly, these differences essentially remain.

Two studies on street trading drawing on empirical work from Africa aim to make a contribution these debates. Both studies draw on both traditions. Natrass for example, considers street trading in Umtata – the capital of the former homeland of South Africa, the Transkei. She draws on both what she calls a reformist (what others might call neo-liberal) and Marxist approach to the informal economy. She identifies the strengths of the former as descriptively powerful but argues that it shows little understanding of the dynamics of the sector. The strength of the Marxist position, she argues, is its ability to understand the informal sectors' economic position and long term growth prospects (1987:861). She presents an integrative approach and

using survey and interview data from street traders she demonstrates the strength of drawing from both traditions.

Lonrenço-Lindell ) in her study of trade in Guinea-Bissau reframes these debates in terms of where state-society relations and informal economic activities cross paths. She reframes the neo-liberal position on informality as societal ‘disengagement’ from the state and formal market channels. Drawing on the works of structuralists like Castells and Portes she poses an opposing approach as one of ‘engagement’ in which capital is using informality in its strategies to protect profits often with the complicity of the state. She uses her rich analysis of trade in Bissau to argue for combining different elements of both approaches stating that the politics of informalisation in Bissau has involved instances of both engagement and disengagement. She (2004:85) states:

On the one hand, some components of the disengagement perspective lend credit to the struggles and achievements of popular groups. On the other hand the informalisation perspective gives us the tools to understand current changes and developments in informal economies, including the role of the state and international actors.

Empirical evidence suggests that both positions can reflect reality. Given the heterogeneity of the informal economy it depends on which group is being assessed. Both positions have their strengths. In understanding street vending, on the one hand DeSoto and his colleagues draw attention to the workings of the state and provide an interesting method for assessing the impact this has on those working informally. The structuralists, on the other hand draw our attention to fact that those working informally cannot be considered in isolation but must be seen in terms of their position within the wider economy.

These debates on the nature of the informal economy are increasingly implicit in the bulk of literature on street trading in Africa. A concept that is now frequently referred to is that of livelihoods. Although the livelihoods approach was first developed in analysing rural poverty, there is an increasing tendency for the approach to be applied to urban poverty. Recent key articles on street trading in Africa as well as edited volumes on the subject either use this as their primary framing concept or draw on it . Rakodi (2002:3) defines a livelihood as comprising ‘the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living’. Five forms of assets are identified – financial, human,

natural, physical and social. Many authors identify access to public space as a key physical asset in the livelihood strategies of the urban poor . The features of social organisation – the networks, norms and trust that facilitate cooperation for mutual benefit, or Putman’s idea of social capital is particularly interrogated. Lyons and Snoxwell (2005b:1303) state ‘this approach attributes agency to the poor (in as far as they can strategise) and emphasises their dual dependency on multiple activities and multiple assets, especially social capital, for survival’. The street trading case material does tend to pick up on the positive aspects of social capital (see for example Lyons and Snoxell 2005a), with less attention been paid to the numerous critiques of the concept . Not only is the concept identified as unclear - (Fine (1999:5) argues ‘many things to many people’) - but that it over romanticises associational life, paying little attention to the conflict and power dynamics within it. Further insufficient attention is paid to the structural constraints to improved livelihoods that street traders face.

A conceptual framework that has not been applied to street trading issues directly, but has gained popularity in conceptualising urban poverty in general, is the notion of social exclusion. Although the idea was developed in France to explain persistent pockets of poverty and is popular in European social policy analysis, as Beall points out the concept has been increasingly applied to developing country contexts. de Haan defines social exclusion in its original formulation as ‘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’ (emphasis added). As de Haan points out the concept is useful in that it focuses on processes and on the mechanisms and institutions that exclude people. In addition Hickey and du Toit argue that social exclusion involves a clear awareness of the multidimensionality of deprivation and draws attention to political and historical aspects of exclusion. They however go on to point out that social exclusion lacks a focus on agency and ‘thus risks portraying the excluded as helpless victims’ (2007:3). Also the implicit assumption is that inclusion is good. Du Toit drawing on case material on farm workers in South Africa notes ‘Poverty results not from people’s *exclusion* from that market but from the ways they are *included*’. To address these problems Du Toit and Hickey (2007) combine analysis of social exclusion with a focus on the terms of inclusion or adverse incorporation. They (2007:i) argue that is framework ‘draws attention to the causal processes that lead poverty to persist and to the politics and political economy of these processes and associated relationships over time’. This echo’s the structuralist position on informality

outlined above but broadens the focus to include not only economic processes but also historical, political and institutional dynamics.

Finally, post-modernism's rejection of the existence of a central hierarchy or organising principle makes it an appealing paradigm for those concerned with informality. This literature celebrates contradiction, ambiguity, diversity, and interconnectedness. Drawing on a post modern tradition, Simone has written prolifically on the issue of African cities and informality. He notes that 'roughly 75 percent of basic needs are provided informally in the majority of African cities and that processes of informalisation are expanding across discrete sectors and domains of urban life'. Rather than characterising this as dysfunctional, he argues that Africans have long made lives 'that work'. In a recent edited volume he emphasises 'the determination of urban Africans to find their own ways'. In discussing the way informal economic activities have previously been understood he (2004:9) identifies 'these studies have not examined the ways in which such economies and activities themselves might act as a platform for the creation of a very different kind of sustainable urban configuration than we have yet generally to know'. His detailed case studies discuss the history, macro-economics and policy frameworks that have led to the informalisation of large portions of everyday life in African cities, but more particularly how residents deal with this. In essence his work suggests that any serious attempt to reinvent African urban centres must acknowledge the specific histories and incorporate existing local knowledge that currently sustains and recreates informal urban economic social systems. These are issues that will be returned to later in this review.

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## **STREET TRADER TRENDS OVER TIME**

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In Africa the informal sector as a whole is estimated to account for 60 percent of all urban jobs and over 90 percent of all new urban jobs. After home-working, street trading is estimated to account for the largest share of these jobs. 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 notes, urbanisation in African countries is a relatively recent phenomenon except for West Africa and some coastal East African towns<sup>4</sup>.

Table 3 below presents urbanisation figures in 1995 and 2007, as well as projected urban growth rates for 2005-2010.

**Table 1: Percentage of total population urban**

	1995	2007	Urban Growth Rate 2005-2010
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>1.7</b>
<b>Asia</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>2.4</b>
<b>Africa</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>3.2</b>
East Africa	22	23	3.7
Middle Africa	33	41	4.1
North Africa	46	52	2.6
Southern Africa	48	57	1.0
West Africa	37	44	3.7

Despite the fact that, for the first time in history, in 2008 one in every two people will be living in urban areas, overall urbanisation in Africa is lower than in Asia and in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is clear from the table, however that there are significant regional differences within Africa. North and Southern Africa are highly urbanised in contrast to, for example, East Africa. Further, there are increases over time. In the space of twelve years – a relatively short period in demographic terms – the percentage of the total population that is urban has increased by 5 percent. Again there are regional differences, with increases in urbanisation figures 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 ‘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 the crises in the Darfur region as well as in 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 citizens 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. Lonrenco-Lindell for example cites the case of the Dyulas – itinerant traders who have been active in West Africa for centuries, moving goods across borders. For many villages they are the primary source of supplies. Peberdy's study, one of the few survey's of cross border traders, suggests that in Southern Africa these traders either supply domestic street traders or sell their goods directly. Given that few foreign migrants are in the recipient countries with appropriate documentation, they are an extremely difficult group to gather statistics on.

A critical factor in increasing the numbers of street traders in Africa is the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) of the 1980s and 1990s. As has been discussed in detail elsewhere the cocktail of privatisation, restructuring of the public sector and 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 socialist states. Lonrenço-Lindell details this for Guinea-Bissau and Nnkya 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 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 pronounced with the dramatic increase in imports from China to Africa over the last 10 years<sup>5</sup>. 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 , 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 of recent economic policies, for this segment of the informal economy require further interrogation.

The combination of urbanisation, migration and economic development trends suggests that there has been a rapid increase in the number of street traders operating on the streets of African cities. As the International Labour Organisations (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. A number of reasons are cited. First, many population censuses and labour force surveys do not contain a question on ‘place of work’ with relevant alternative responses. 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. It is noted (2002:51):

‘The number of vendors can fluctuate from one season to the next, one day to the next, and even during a single day. This is because some vendors only sell in the morning, afternoon or evening; and others sell only during certain seasons. Some may move from one location to another during the day, appearing to settle at each; while others may change what they sell from one season, month or day to another.’

A further confusion is that the same vendor family or unit may have several different stalls at the same market or in different markets.

Despite these problems the ILO managed to compile estimates for selected countries. Using this data Table 2 below represents street vendors in the African countries for which data was available and Table 3 the size and contribution of informal trade and women traders in informal trade. Unfortunately there is no time series data.

**Table 2: Street Vendors in Selected African Countries**

	Number of	Percentage of the non-	Percentage Women
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	Street Vendors	agricultural labour force	
Tunisia (1997)	125 619	6	2
Benin (1992)	45 591	5	81
Kenya (1999)	416 294	8	33

Source: ILO, 2002:52

**Table 3: Size and Contribution of Informal Sector in Trade and Women Traders in Informal Trade**

	Informal Sector as a Share of:		Female Informal Traders as a Share of:	
	Total Trade Employment	Total Trade Value Added	Total Informal Trade Employment	Total Informal Trade Value Added
Benin	99	70	92	64
Burkina Faso	95	46	66	30
Chad	99	67	62	41
Kenya	85	62	50	27
Mali	98	57	81	46
Tunisia	88	56	8	4

Source: ILO, 2002:53

As is clear from Table 2, informal traders in the African countries for which data is available contribute between 85 and 99 percent of total employment in trade and between 46 and 70 percent of total value added in trade. In most African countries, other than North African Muslim countries, women represent at least 50 percent, 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.<sup>6</sup> Adiko and Anoh Kouassi in their survey of over 1700 market and street vendors in Ivory Coast for example, found that over 70 percent of traders were women. Although there are regional differences there appears to be a tendency for women to sell food products and men to sell non-food products, which is often more lucrative.

While national data on street vending is scarce, city level statistics are even rarer. The sample sizes of national data like labour force surveys in resource-constrained African countries are not, in most cases, large enough to be disaggregated to city level with any level of accuracy. Given the trend of increasing decentralisation of tasks to a local level, it is increasingly important for planning purposes for local authorities to be aware not only of the number of street traders but also their demographics and contribution to local economies. Some cities however have commissioned street trading censuses. For example in 1997 the Durban City Council commissioned a

survey and census of street trading in the Metropolitan area . There is an interesting initiative in Nairobi where a trader organisation, with the help of local academics and support agencies, conducted their own census of numbers of street traders . It is initiatives such as these that need further documentation.

The evidence suggests that there are large numbers of street traders and, in many contexts, a disproportionate number of women. Although there is no time series data urbanisation and economic development trends suggest that their numbers have increased over time and that this will continue. Although individual incomes are often low, cumulatively these activities contribute significantly to gross geographic product.

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## **POLICY, PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE TRENDS**

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The co-ordinator of the international alliance of street vending organisations (Interview 16/04/07) who has substantial direct experience of city policies and street trading across Africa warns:

There are no policy best practices 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.

Mindful of the dynamism of state responses to street trading, this section reviews the empirical evidence. Existing research suggests there is continuum from large scale, sustained evictions of street traders, to sporadic event-driven evictions. Then there are instances of lower level ongoing harassment of traders, and finally some examples where street traders have been integrated into urban plans. This section first reviews the empirical evidence of various state responses to street traders. The evidence suggests a number of cross-cutting themes concerning policy, planning and governance trends. They are either important in understanding processes of inclusion and exclusion of street traders and /or they are factors to consider in future research and advocacy. These are explored in the latter part of this section.

The largest scale, and possibly most violent, eviction of street traders in the continent in the last decade is that of Operation Murambatsvina in Zimbabwe in May 2005. The Government translated the meaning of ‘murambatsvina’ as ‘clean-up’, but the literal Shona translation is ‘getting

rid of the filth'. 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. 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 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 away remains.<sup>7</sup>

In explaining these events many analysts have pointed to the fact that since 2000 the urban electorate had voted overwhelming for the opposition – the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Tibaijuka estimates that one in every five Zimbabweans were affected by Operation Marumbatsvina. Political affiliations, although critical, can thus only be one part of the rationale behind these actions.

Although not on the scale of the Zimbabwean operation, there are other cases of widespread evictions. Transberg Hansen 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 to 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 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 point out that until the early 1980’s 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 1970’s 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. Lonrenço-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 lists the many times street traders were removed – in 1988 when Pope John Paul II visited the city, in 1991 when President Nujoma from Namibia came on a state visit; and notes that 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 in 1984. There are already cases of street traders being removed in South Africa ahead of the 2010 Soccer World Cup ([www.streetnet.org](http://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. Lonrenço-Lindell 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 percent feared being chased off their current site . A group that is particularly vulnerable to this are foreign street traders. Hunter and Skinner’s 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 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.

There are however, examples where street traders have been accommodated. In Dar es Salaam, Tanzania by the early 1990’s street traders had been issued licenses and were allowed to operate. Nnkya (2006:88) states that ‘street trading in the CBD is well managed and trader associations have good relations with the city authorities’. Nnkya identifies the 1992 Sustainable Dar es Salaam Project (SDP) as a turning point from the state’s previous approach of trader repression. This project, a collaboration between United Nations agencies and the state, identified petty trading as a key issue. By the mid-1990’s, as a direct consequence of the SDP, a Working Group on Managing Informal Micro-Trade was established. This group identified constraints street traders faced and made numerous recommendations. An example of their interventions was the development of 24 types of steel shelves for street traders to display their goods. This was a design solution that addressed health concerns of authorities particularly with food traders but also facilitated the cleaning of public space. Standardising tables can also lead to a more orderly aesthetic. Another 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. This was particularly the case in the more lucrative trading sites in the CBD. In comparison to many other cities in African overall, he argues, Dar es Salaam has created an enabling environment for street traders.

Another case that has been cited as a better practise in the management of street trading is Durban, South Africa. In last years of apartheid the South African government adopted a more tolerant approach to the informal economy. During the transition to democracy the 1991 Business Act was promulgated. This legislation disallowed local authorities from restricting street trading. This led to a dramatic increase in these activities in all South African cities and towns. Although during the 1990's a range of legislative measures were introduced that allowed regulation, local authorities were forced to grapple with the new reality of street traders. Although there has been recent harassment of traders in Durban, there was a period when Durban's approach was identified as progressive. A particularly innovative approach has been adopted in the inner-city district that contains the main transport node – the Warwick Junction. On an average day the area is estimated to accommodate 460,000 commuters, and at least 5,000 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 1000 traditional medicine traders were accommodated in a new market and corn-on-the-cob sellers and those cooking and selling the Zulu delicacy, boiled cows heads, were provided with 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 acknowledged the informal economy as an important component of the city's economy and, drawing on some of the lessons learned from the Warwick Junction Project, suggested a number of management and support interventions. This was an attempt to standardise a progressive approach across the city. Like Dar es Salaam, the approach developed suggests inclusive approaches to design, planning and management of public space for street traders are possible.

### **Persistence of colonial approaches to urban planning**

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. Potts (2007) identifies this as a key factor in understanding the causes for Operation Murambatsvina. She 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 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’ (2007:267-8). She argues (2007:283) that the ‘adherence to the ideology of planned and orderly cities remained a core belief for many’. This combined with political leaders 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’. Kamunyor points out that in Nairobi, although street trading is legal according to the city by-laws, a colonial era by-law, 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’.

### **Spatial planning, infrastructure, licences and taxes**

Urban spatial planning – metropolitan-wide but also at a neighbourhood level – has an important role to play in inhibiting or supporting street traders. Most African cities inherit colonial spatial planning where the rich and poor are separated with the poorer residents on periphery of city centres. This has implications for street traders who largely live in poorer parts of the city. Further urban design choices made in colonial times, like the width of streets and pavements, continue at times to limit current urban design solutions. At a neighbourhood level transport and land use planning are critical. Those concerned with processes of inclusion and exclusion of traders need to ask to what extent are traders accommodated in areas of high congestion, like transport nodes and places where there are middle class consumers; are there flyovers built over poor areas, and how is land zoned?

Facilities created for street traders indicate the extent to which they are incorporated into urban plans. Street traders need shelter from the elements, places to store their goods and ablution facilities. In many of the countries for which there is information there seems to be an approach in which off road markets are built to house traders. Although street traders are often desperate for facilities, too often local authorities pay scant attention to the importance of foot traffic in locating these markets. Transberg Hansen outlines how the local authority in Lusaka built a city market which opened in 1997 and, for the reasons outlined above, many years later remains empty. There is much more of a tradition of markets in West Africa. Lyons and Snoxell (2005b) in their study of markets in Dakar, Senegal and Accra, Ghana point to more successful municipal efforts to provide and manage market space.

The case study evidence seems to suggest that licences can be used as an inclusionary or exclusionary tool. Licensing street trading gives them the right to operate. If traders are to have a securer livelihood and invest both in their economic activities and their trading areas, security of tenure is critical. Licensing and site allocation are key components in better management of public spaces. The critical issue however is how many licences as a proportion of the total number of traders are issued. Lyons and Snoxell (2005a:1078) suggest that in Nairobi, Kenya that there were 7000 licences and formal sites even though it was estimated that there 500 000 street traders operating in the city. Given that in many African countries demand is constrained, there is a direct trade off between the numbers of licenses and sites allocated and individual earnings of traders. There are very few examples of cities doing careful calculations of the carrying capacity of streets.

A related issue is the how much traders pay for access to public space. In many contexts, particularly in West African countries, fees charged to street and market traders are a key revenue stream for the local and in some cases even the national state. Adiko and Anoh Kouassi's survey in the Ivory Coast outlines the numerous taxes and fees traders are subject to. In Ghana King finds that a significant proportion of total metropolitan revenue in Kumasi comes from trader fees. In East Africa while traders are being accused of being tax evaders in Tanzania (Nnkya, 2006:89), traders in Nairobi have used tax as a bargaining tool. The Nairobi Informal Sector Consultative Forum has argued that street vendors would be willing to pay

taxes in return for guaranteed services (or at least the right to demand them). This has been an important factor in establishing more cooperative relations between traders, formal business and municipal authorities in this city.

### **Collaborative or participatory approaches to urban planning**

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 the UN staff instead persuaded the city council to pursue a new approach to planning, based on participatory or collaborative principles. The preliminary results from a project documenting the lessons learned from the Warwick Junction in South Africa suggest that participation was central to the project's success. 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'. Dobson and Skinner 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 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 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.

### **The perceptions of the role street traders play**

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 recurs. 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 were 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 under-development’ thus ‘its disappearance is viewed as progress’.

This is connected to the focus in urban studies, policy and practice on ‘world class’ cities. Beaverstock, Taylor and Smith 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. As Robinson outlines 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.

Shifting these perceptions remains a critical challenge. Research that calculates the contribution that street traders make to the economies of cities is an important first step. This would speak to economic development planners. Further, documentation of those cases where cities have included street traders in urban plans, creatively resolved conflicts between different users of public space and developed approaches that have resulted in improved street trader management may help to introduce new possibilities in the minds particularly of spatial planners and urban managers. This would go some way to addressing Robinson’s concern about the current limits on how we imagine cities. Finally, both research, but also literature and art that celebrate the diversity and vibrant dynamic that street traders introduce into cities would also go some way to changing perceptions among the general public. This is part of the contribution that Simone and other urban scholars who draw on post modernism are currently making.

### **The nature of the state**

A final area that warrants critical reflection is the nature of government bureaucracies and the implications of this for street traders. An issue a

number of researchers have raised is the role of national versus local government. As Lyons and Snoxell (2005b:1302) note, national governments largely ignore street trading issues with the responsibility of dealing with informal trade falling largely on urban managers. This relates to the problem that informal activities like street trading are generally seen as an urban management issue rather than as an economic development concern. Bromley concurs that national governments are seldom concerned with street traders and adds 'street vendors are usually perceived as a problem and occasionally as a potential, but they are rarely high in the governmental list of priorities'. This is reinforced by recent international initiatives. Little space, for example, is devoted to economic management of the informal economy in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. National governments however remain critical role players. On one hand, the large scale evictions of street traders cited above were at least condoned, if not motivated, by national government. On the other hand, in the examples of inclusion of street traders, changes at a national level in either policy or legislation have played a key role. This level of government must remain a critical site for analysis and advocacy.

At a local level further analysis of the implications for street traders of the nature and structure of bureaucracies is needed. Bromley suggests Lipsky's idea of street-level bureaucracy is particularly pertinent in understanding how street vendors are regulated. He explains this as follows:

The key point is that there is a wide gulf between the broad aims and directives of senior administrators and politicians, and the ways policies can actually be worked out on the street. Regulating street vendors...requires interactions between dozens of local officials and literally thousands of vendors, with enormous potential for misunderstandings, avoidance and deception. The inspectors, police and extension workers who perform such functions are usually at the bottom of the administrative hierarchy, and regulating and promoting street vending is one of the lowest-status and most difficult tasks that they have to perform. (Bromley, 2000:17)

This certainly helps to explain the inconsistencies that traders report experiencing. None of the existing studies of street trading in African contexts however pick up on these issues. Analysis of bureaucratic processes in cases of inclusive planning is particularly needed.

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## TRENDS IN ORGANISING AMONG STREET TRADERS

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There is an increasing focus in urban studies on the notion of urban governance in which local government is understood to be more than just an administrative function and instead one part of a relational interaction with other organised constituencies and interest groups acting in the city . This draws attention to collective action among street traders. Further, where traders have been incorporated into urban plans, traders are comparatively 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’<sup>8</sup>. In Durban street traders were well organised during the redevelopment of the Warwick Junction area. Traders were organised into product groups and block committees (Interview with an official working in the area 12/11/07). 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 . In both cases this meant that there were negotiating partners for local authorities. In this penultimate section, trends in organising street traders are reviewed.

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 re-analysis of data in South Africa, for example, found that in the two large surveys of street traders that had been conducted, 15 percent belonged to an association in Johannesburg, while in Durban 12 percent of the men and 16 percent of the women traders were members of associations. Alila and Mitullah’s interviews with over 300 street traders operating in four different Kenyan cities found that 67 percent 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 (2005a:1078) suggest there may be as many as 500 000 street traders operating in the city. NISCOF thus represents 3 percent of the total number of traders.

In 2005 War on Want 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 dealt 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 were examined and the researchers conclude that street trader organisations largely had confrontational relations with local government. (War on Want 2006:31-2). Lund and Skinner's 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 .

There is evidence to suggest 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 percent. (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 nineteen trader associations with a total of 5,810 individual members. (War on Want, 2006:36). The Adiko and Anoh Kouassi (2003) study in the Ivory Coast found that organisational membership was high among traders – varying between 36 percent and 42 percent of interviewees depending on their

location<sup>9</sup>. 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. In Lund and Skinner's (1999) study they find that for a number of street trader organisations in South Africa's primary focus is bulk purchase of goods. War on Want find a number of product specific trader organisations in Ghana, Malawi and Zambia. They give the example of a banana sellers' association<sup>10</sup> whose primary aim is to ensure regular and adequate supply of their wares and to renegotiate terms of trade with the main suppliers. Although this is not explored in any detail, the Adiko and Anoh Kouassi (2003) study in the Ivory Coast suggests co-operatives have been formed among traders. This area remains a research gap.

There is evidence of a high prevalence of rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAs)<sup>11</sup>. As is the case in other parts of the world, through 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 ROSCAs also provide loans to their members. As Lyon 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 Lyon and Snoxell's (2005a:1089) study, 58 percent were part of a ROSCA. They conducted a similar study in two markets in Ghana and found that 49 percent of 144 traders interviewed were members of a savings group (2005b: 1312)<sup>12</sup>. Although not quoting exact figures Alila and Mitullah and Tsitsi and Agatha find a similar situation in Kenya and Zimbabwe respectively. All of these studies note that there is 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. There is also evidence of funeral benefits being offered.

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 Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Union (ZCTU) launched an informal sector desk which is tasked with directly organising, among other groups, street traders<sup>13</sup>. 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<sup>14</sup> (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 the role of women. The War on Want (2005:30) found that trader associations ‘often show low level of participation and leadership accountability’. For example of the 20 trader organisations interviewed in Ghana study, nine reported that their method of choosing leadership was by appointment rather than elections (War on Want, 2006:95-96). Lund and Skinner’s (1999) study 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 Union<sup>15</sup> – 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 (2005a:1082) study of markets in Nairobi found that both market committees were comprised 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 majority 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 very politically powerful.

StreetNet International, an alliance of street trader organisations has been an increasingly important player in street trader organising on the continent

since its launch in 2002. Membership-based organisations directly organising street and market traders are entitled to affiliate to StreetNet. They currently have members in Africa, Latin America and Asia. One of StreetNet's primary foci 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 formations will help traders to play a more influential role in policy particularly at national level. At an international level StreetNet advocate for the rights of street traders not only within international bodies like the International Labour Organisation but also the international trade union federations. Their primary campaign since 2006 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 Soccer World Cup. ([www.streetnet.org.za](http://www.streetnet.org.za))

In conclusion the research on street trader organisation 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. Further work is needed on how the state can create an environment conducive to the development of organisations and ensure that collective bargaining forums are not restricted to organisation leaders.<sup>16</sup> 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. This suggests future research needs to explore who is included and who is excluded in current organisational formations.

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## **CONCLUSION AND PRIORITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

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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 dependents. 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. 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. Economically, although the individual incomes are often low, cumulatively these activities' contribution to local economies and to local revenue collection is considerable. 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. What is being argued for is innovative approaches to policy, planning, urban design and management that maximise the gains from these activities.

Throughout this review research gaps have been identified. In concluding, priority policy and advocacy research gaps are identified and/or reinforced.

First, as already noted in the section on street trader statistics, until the numbers of street traders and their contribution to the economy is regularly quantified at a national and local level, it is unlikely that negative perceptions of street traders will change. In cases where a more developmental approach has been adopted, statistics have often played an important role. Kamunyori (2007) for example partly attributes the change of approach in Kenya to the multiple local surveys and the 2005 National Economic survey. The latter survey found that for every one job created in the formal sector 1000 jobs were created in the informal sector and calculated that the informal sector contributed 18.4 percent of GDP.<sup>17</sup> These kinds of statistics are important not only for adjusting perceptions but also for informing planning responses.

Second, the issue of the economic dynamics of street trading is under-explored. It has been argued elsewhere that given the heterogeneity of the informal economy, policy analysis and documentation should be sectoral. The same argument holds true for street traders. Although there are

problems like harassment by the city officials that all traders face, there also product/trade specific issues that warrant attention. Traditional medicine traders, for example, face dwindling supplies due to indigenous forests being over exploited, while supply of second hand clothes is dependent on national tariff regimes. A developmental approach entails exploring these sector specific constraints. <sup>18</sup>

Third, the implications of the increased penetration of formal retailers, for informal livelihoods, needs to be explored. No studies were found on the impact of formal shopping centre developments on informal retail in the surrounding areas. Greater understanding of the overall welfare implications of these on low income consumers is critical. Where there are cases where informal traders have been incorporated into these developments, these need to be documented. A dimension of this is that South African and foreign formal retailers are increasingly establishing themselves throughout Africa. Again little is known about what this means for informal traders.

Fourth, although import trends between China and Africa are monitored, little is known about the specifics of where informal traders fit into the distribution chain of Chinese goods. Again the overall welfare implications of this trade on street traders and low income consumers remain unclear. This is important data for informing trade and tariff negotiations.

Fifth, the issue of legal reform has been neglected. Policies often suggest support interventions like micro-finance and training, however if traders do not have security of tenure these interventions can be irrelevant or even destructive. Legal reform and litigation strategies on how best to secure the right to operate and improve working conditions, need to be further explored.

Sixth, in the previous two sections research gaps have been identified regarding urban planning and street trader organisation. Keith Hart reinforces the existence of these gaps noting:

We need to know how formal bureaucracy works in practice and, even more important, what social forms have emerged to organise the informal economy... We must examine the institutional particulars sustaining the practices that now exist outside of the law.

Finally Bromley (2000:22) reminds us:

Pressures on the authorities come from numerous different vendor groups, from a wide range of special interests, and from all sides of the political spectrum. Official responses are diverse, spasmodic, and often contradictory, and their effectiveness is severely constrained by the highly-visible and constantly fluctuating nature of the population involved, and by the operational limitations of a street-level bureaucracy. Policy interventions often have unforeseen consequences, and are rarely implemented consistently. Grand visions and linear causal models are inappropriate, and instead our understanding is likely to be enriched through consideration of interconnections, conflicts, complexity theory and system effects.

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## ENDNOTES

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1. I would like to thank Judith Shier for conducting the original literature search, in which she found over 40 articles on the issue.
2. This review also does not address the substantial literature on support services for the informal economy – microfinance, business development services and training. With entire journals – like the Small Business Development Review among others and substantial coverage in development journals – dedicated to these issues, it was felt that justice has been done to these issues elsewhere. In this literature street trading is seldom dealt with separately but as one segment of the informal economy.
3. More recently Hart (2004:14) has criticised how the notion of the informal sector ‘allowed academics and bureaucrats to incorporate the teeming street life of exotic cities into their abstract models without having to confront the specificity of what people were really up to’.
4. She notes that some East African towns had populations of more than 20 000 as early as the fifteenth century.
5. At the World Economic Forum annual conference on Africa, Africa - China two way trade was said to have increased by 40 percent in 2006, to US\$55.5 billion. This is estimated to increase to over US\$100 billion by 2020. (Mail and Guardian, Online 15 June, 2007).

6. There has been a long history of women's involvement in trade in Africa. Mitullah (1991:14) for example points out the sale of foodstuff by women dates back to traditional African societies, where it was normal for women to sell surplus food crops. She goes onto argue that this pattern was hardly disturbed by colonial interventions.
7. Source:  
[http://sokwanele.com/articles/sokwanele/opmuramb\\_overview\\_18june2005.html](http://sokwanele.com/articles/sokwanele/opmuramb_overview_18june2005.html).
8. Unfortunately he does not detail how the organisation is constituted nor how representative these organisations are, particularly of poorer and women traders.
9. It should be noted that a number of traders were reluctant to report on their organisational membership.
10. This is an organisation of wholesalers that supply traders.
11. These are called tontines in francophone West Africa, susus in other parts of West and East Africa and stokvels in Southern Africa.
12. Lyons and Snoxell (2005b) also surveyed a similar number of traders in two markets in Senegal and found only 17 percent were member of a savings group. The majority of these traders were men. This reinforces again the importance of avoiding any blanket generalisations.
13. 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.
14. They do point out however that just under 5000 of these are paid up members.
15. This organisation has since closed.
16. StreetNet has started this process. In March 2007 they hosted a meeting in Senegal on collective bargaining and laws and litigation strategies. This meeting was attended by organisations from 14 countries and

documented a range of strategies which informal economy organisations can employ to assist their members.

17. Given that the National Rainbow Coalition was partly voted in due to their commitment to job creation, the informal sector was placed at the centre of their national economic recovery plan.
18. There are however good examples of value chain analyses which that include an analysis of where informal retail fits in. See for example analysis of urban food supply in West and Southern Africa and

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## **REFERENCES**

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