THE URBAN STREET COMMONS PROBLEM: SPATIAL REGULATION OF
INFORMAL ECONOMIC UNITS IN ACCRA

A thesis presented to
the faculty of
the College of Arts and Sciences of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Science

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June 2007
This thesis titled
THE URBAN STREET COMMONS PROBLEM: SPATIAL REGULATION OF
INFORMAL ECONOMIC UNITS IN ACCRA

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Abstract

OFORI, BENJAMIN O., M.S., June 2007, Environmental Studies

THE URBAN STREET COMMONS PROBLEM: SPATIAL REGULATION OF
INFORMAL ECONOMIC UNITS IN ACCRA (115 pp.)

Director of Thesis: Ariaster B. Chimeli

The prevalence of informal economic livelihood activities in the public spaces of developing cities is gradually attracting research attention. Over the past decade or two, municipal and metropolitan governments in many developing cities in Africa, Asia and Latin America have been grappling with the urban spatial problem. This involves the urban management challenge of accommodating street vendors and dealing with some environmental externalities associated with their unauthorized occupation and their activities generate in the urban natural and built environment. This piece of work considers some policy alternatives drawn from the experiences of other developing cities that the City of Accra may consider to resolve its spatial problem. The study advocates a strategic approach that offers official policies on the informal economy and street vending and adopts new measures such as the creation of permitted zones, a revision of the concept of existing traditional markets and the creation of satellite markets through public-private partnerships.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

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Acknowledgments

I appreciate the professional guidance, suggestions and feedback of all my thesis committee members. My very special thanks to Dr Ariaster Chimeli for the careful and professional guidance with which he directed this work in a very trying period. I appreciate the help of Efia S. Adabor who proofread the final draft and the support and encouragement of all my friends and colleagues especially, Hagar Intarmah and Beauty Agbavor.
To the Memory of Paul K. Owusu
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<tr>
<td>AMA</td>
<td>Accra Metropolitan Assembly</td>
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<td>BIDs</td>
<td>Business Improvement District</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CBD</td>
<td>Central Business District</td>
<td></td>
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<td>CID</td>
<td>City Improvement District</td>
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<td>CUIPS</td>
<td>Columbia University International Planning Studio</td>
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<td>GAMA</td>
<td>Greater Accra Metropolitan Area</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>GIPC</td>
<td>Ghana Investment Promotion Center</td>
<td></td>
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<td>GSS</td>
<td>Ghana Statistical Service</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HBE</td>
<td>Home Based Enterprises</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labor Organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIA</td>
<td>Kick against Indiscipline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTC</td>
<td>Metropolitan Trading Company</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>Nairobi City Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Program</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSA</td>
<td>Statistics South Africa</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SSA</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAI</td>
<td>War against Indiscipline</td>
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 POPULATION AND URBAN TRENDS

Urban population growth rates worldwide have been rapid and by 2003, 48 percent of the world’s people lived in urban areas. In the estimation of the United Nations, this number will exceed the 50 percent mark by 2007 (UNDESA 2004). The absolute number of city dwellers will expectedly outstrip the rural population by 2030 (Leautier and Mehta 2006:77). The least urbanized of all global regions, Sub-Saharan Africa’s (SSA) sheer speed of urbanization poses critical challenges. With the region’s annual urban growth rates of between 3.3 and 3.7 percent, its city-based populations are and will continue to be one of the highest in the world, adding some 400 million people the continent’s urban population through the next 25 years (UN-Habitat 2004: 116).

Unlike other world regions, SSA’s urbanization is experiencing rapid expansion in population without the attendant industrial and economic growth (Rakodi 2005). Consequently, the requisite economy needed to generate private and public resources for housing, infrastructure and urban employment at the appropriate scales is lacking. The private sector has not developed enough to create the employment opportunities for the teeming masses of the jobless. High urban unemployment is further compounded by waves of rural-urban migration and the loss of government jobs through privatization and structural adjustment (Myers 2005). The cumulative result has been the growth of informal enterprises as urban populations in cities pursue various alternatives to eke out a living, thus spreading ‘informality’ to work and many aspects of urban life (Myers 2005). Once overlooked in
national statistics, there is now a growing recognition of the informal economy as an important component of the urban and national economy, employing more than 80 percent of the workforce in Ghana and 40 percent in the Accra metropolis (GSS 2002). Informal trading activity is a major feature of informal employment in the city of Accra and its growth in recent times has been associated with a corresponding spatial importance in terms of location of informal traders. Vendors’ quest for commercial space in Accra has led to the occupation of public space with particular prominence in the central city. The unauthorized occupation of public space e.g. the streets and the negative impacts of informal vendors on urban natural and built environment e.g. littering pose important policy challenges for city management in Accra thus, recently attracting policy attention. The city of Accra faces a ‘spatial problem’ of making commercial space for informal traders, reclaiming of illegally occupied public space and solving some environmental problems associated with street vendors.

The location and environmental problems that this study attempts to investigate are part of a much broader and complex problem. These include a wide array of issues such as structural changes in the macro economy, economic growth and job creation, equity in the distribution of income, functional urban planning and management of the natural and built environment, education and job-skills training for the youth, especially for women etc. A long-run solution to the spatial problem in Accra that this thesis investigates may call for the addressing of these essential factors and perhaps many others at a strategic level. However, the thesis focuses on the short to medium term alternatives needed urgently to address the spatial problem. Further, the alternatives suggested may also form an essential part of a longer-term strategy.
The medium to long-term approaches that this thesis recommends in the concluding chapters include a strategic policy approach, which includes the development of policies for both the informal economy and street vending and the creation of permitted trading zones. Further, the thesis advises the need for fresh thinking in the existing approach to traditional markets in the city including upgrading of facilities and expansion to make commercial space available to many street vendors. The private sector could also be engaged in strategic partnerships with the city authority in Accra in the upgrading of existing markets and the establishment of other major and satellite markets in the city to ease pressure on the central city and other major locations.

The recommendations outlined derive from the results of comparative analysis of similar problems in some seven developing cities. However, path-dependent developmental trends and evolved institutions differ among the various cities. Without delving into much depth of the path dependency concept, let us suffice it to say that the concept underscores the importance of history on the dynamics of societal preferences and institutional development i.e. ‘history matters.’ Different cities may be on different paths or trajectories of development and thus, the transfer of evolved institutions and regulatory systems from one context may not yield expected results in another context. Similarly, as is common to comparative studies, it is important to acknowledge the essence of contextual variation. The thesis therefore, suggests these policy recommendations with a conscious invitation to caution and advises the adapting of these novel policy approaches to suit the contexts of the city of Accra.
1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

A key feature of the informal economy of Accra is the location or venues where these activities transpire. These venues may be categorized into those that occur in homes and neighborhoods and others that take place in street pavements and such other related areas especially in the central city and affiliate areas.

1.2.1 The Home and Neighborhood

House-based enterprises (HBEs) as well as small enterprises located in residential neighborhoods are common to both affluent and low-income neighborhoods in Accra. They are however, more common in low-income neighborhoods where about 60 percent of the population live and where the homes double as places of work for most people, especially women (Boadi & others 2005; Yankson 2000b). These enterprises engage in diverse enterprise activities including food processing, food preparation and sale, and petty trading, etc. (Yankson 2000a; Cohen 2000). The enterprise units usually locate along major thoroughfares, in road reservations, and in areas reserved for other purposes within the built environment (Pellow 1998 in Grant and Yankson 2003). They also may be housed in small kiosks lining both formal roadways and dirt paths that crisscross these areas (CUIPS 2003: 97). Others operate in open courtyards of compound houses\(^1\) or in temporary workshops attached to houses while others usually squat on public or privately owned land (Grant & Yankson 2003; Yankson 1999). These low-income, low-rental, high-density areas, suffer deplorable environmental and sanitation infrastructure and services. For instance, low-

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\(^1\) Compound houses refer to the informal housing regime in low-income neighbourhoods where there are usually multiple tenants sharing a courtyard and other basic facilities such as toilets and baths i.e. if provided at all and where environmental and sanitation conditions are usually in a deplorable state.
income homes and neighborhoods in areas, such as Nima, Zabon Zongo and James Town lack basic amenities such as sanitation, drainage, proper road accesses and effective waste disposal systems (Grant & Yankson 2003; Yankson 2000; Songsore & McGranahan 1993).

1.2.2 The Central City and other Central Locations
The central city attracts huge concentrations of street vending and other economic enterprises. These usually locate in the pavements and principal streets of the central business district (CBD), in the environs of organized markets e.g. Makola market and in front of shops. Other operators pursue economic ventures in public and quasi-public open spaces such as taxi and trotro stations (i.e. local minivan transit terminals) and their precincts and bus/van terminals. Still, a few others gravitate towards the premises of particular institutions such as schools, hospitals, offices and other workplaces. Among these, the central business district attracts the highest concentration of street enterprises and vending activities akin to that of the home and neighborhood, but of a greater intensity. As street vending units pursue their businesses in these venues, they illegally occupy public space and other unauthorized premises.
1.3 THE PROBLEM

Although the intimate environment of the home and neighborhood exerts the greatest and most immediate influence on the lives, health and well-being of people (Songore and McGranahan 1993), the immediate problem currently attracting the immediate attention of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) is that of street vending in the CBD. This relates to the continuing rise in the concentration of street vending activity on busy intersections, around markets and major transport depots in the CBD of Accra. The ranks of vendors keep swelling with teeming youths selling a variety of wares including food staples, cooked food, household effects, electronic gadgets, imported used clothing and footwear to mention a few. In other instances, as in the case of the Makola Market and Kaneshie Market areas, some of the hitherto registered traders in the organized market leave their stalls to join their counterparts in the streets and pavements and on overhead walkways (Blankson 2006). Specific areas in the CBD where street vendors have turned major roads and pavements into markets include the Kojo Thompson Road traffic light area, Derby Avenue, Kwame Nkrumah Avenue and UTC Road. Figure 1 is the street map of Central Accra showing areas of intense street vending activities demarcated with red borders. The areas around the Makola Market, Tudu and the railway terminal in the CBD (marked with broken borders) are all notable areas of very intense informal trading activity (Public Agenda 2005; The Heritage News 2006).

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FIGURE 1: STREET MAP OF CENTRAL ACCRA

Legend
- Major Informal Trading Destination CBD
- CBD Area with Intense Street Vending
- Area for New Market Site
- Area outside CBD with Street Vendor Activity

Source: Ghanaweb.com www.ghanaweb.com/.../images/centralaccra_map.jpg
Other areas include the Cocobod area, the Brewery gate, the railway terminal, Kantamanto area and the Fire Service Station area. The circular zone (continuous circular border) in Figure 1 is the Kwame Nkrumah Circle area which also has a high concentration of street vending activity and is the area within which a new market facility has been constructed (labeled with red dot). The occupation of the pavements and roads by vendors creates congestion in the central city. Whole streets risk being taken over by hawkers and costly grassed medians in the city are being destroyed. The location of vendors chokes the central city rendering the conduct of business in the area time-consuming as human traffic overwhelms all other activities in the CBD “making it a no go area” (Public Agenda 2005). The picture of congestion in the CBD is captured in the picture below.
“Pedestrians have been pushed off pavements…into the streets at risk to life and limb, while vehicular movement has been reduced to a crawl” (Blankson 2006). The central city congestion even becomes worse during the latter part of December each year and other peak sales seasons, when the entire CBD is literally besieged by stalled human traffic and “things get out of control” as vendors occupy all spaces in pavements and in the roads (The Heritage News 2006).

The environmental problems however, are not limited to CBD congestion. Beyond the congestion in the central city, the ubiquitous unauthorised structures that have sprung up on the city’s landscape ruin its aesthetic appeal. Further, there are other serious environmental problems. Street vendors by their activities generate a lot of solid waste and there is generally improper disposal of refuse partly because there are limited receptacles for collection and generally, sanitation and drainage infrastructure and services remain a serious challenge. The sight of uncollected garbage and choked gutters has become a daily experience and throughout the city, numerous central waste containers can be seen brimming over with garbage from several days of no collection and 40 percent of solid waste generated in Accra is not collected at all (CUIPS 2003: 191). For instance, a few blocks away from the head office of the Greater Accra Metropolitan Assembly, waste containers brim to the overflow by the Fire Service Station end of the Makola Market. In the vicinity and close proximity of the waste containers, a number of sellers, mainly women, sell their wares in the pavements and parts of the road. Such ware include ready-to-serve meals, vegetables, fresh fish, smoked fish, other local staples like cassava, plantain and ‘gari’ etc. and other non-food wares.
1.3.1 The Search for Policy Resolve

As the city grows and the urban street economy expands, the strain on the already inadequate sanitation and waste management services will intensify the problems generated in the city because of increased demand for suitable sites and the requisite infrastructure and environmental services. This would exacerbate the environmental problems associated with the operation of such informal economic units unless the urban management system responds with the appropriate policy and programs to accommodate them (Yankson 1999). A comprehensive plan for managing and improving sanitation is needed urgently for sound environmental management, improved quality of life and good metropolitan government (CUIPS 2003). Further, such a plan will be useful for the locational stability and growth of the enterprises make it possible to contain the negative environmental effects, which are known to be associated with their operations (Yankson 1999).

City authorities bemoan the non-compliance of operators of street enterprises and hawkers with planning regulations regarding their physical location and accommodation within the built environment. The policy focus has been on reclaiming the public spaces in the central city but policies have not generally paid off. There AMA has a history of intermittent violent enforcement of city byelaws which usually involves evictions, confiscation of wares, and arrest of vendors etc. For instance, in 2003 the Metropolitan authorities evicted all street traders from the central city, an effort that was commended as bold and useful. The central government later reversed eviction (possibly because it was an election year) on the grounds of giving the eviction ‘a human face’ by providing an alternative market for them first – the Odawna Project (The Heritage News 2006).
1.3.2 The New Pedestrian Mall in Accra

The mayor of Accra launched the first phase of the Odawna Project on October 18, 2006 with given notice for the relocation of all mobile hawkers and street vendors from the central city. Upon completion, the mall will expectedly be equipped with facilities such as a warehouse, police station, fire and health posts, a bank and a day care center. The project’s implementation involves registration of vendors and distribution of ID cards and relocation to stalls or sheds in the newly (and on-going) constructed Pedestrian Shopping Mall, supposed to be the first of the kind in west Africa and probably, Africa (Blankson 2006). City authorities hope to accommodate some 3000 vendors in the stalls of the mall plus an additional 1,000 mobile hawkers in an open space within the facility. The city authorities are hopeful that this will solve the spatial accommodation of informal vendors in the central city.

The picture below shows the aerial view of the Pedestrian mall under construction. It is located outside the CBD close to a major open drain indicated with green arrows. The area where the market is located is indicated with a red dot in Figure 1 on page 17.
The project is limited by capacity and costs problems. Considering the huge numbers of street vendors in the central city, it is obvious that the facility cannot accommodate the numbers. As experienced in some cities, capacity constraints have led to some problems including patron-client relationships, corruption in the allocation of spaces, infiltrations etc. The cost element involves a $20 processing fee and a further $220 for allocation of trading space in the sheds or stalls.\textsuperscript{4} It is not clear whether vendors can afford the preliminary access fees. A national per capita income of $450 gives a general idea of the weight of the cost and the affordability of vendors who also belong in the lowest income segments and are generally excluded from accessing formal credit alternatives. Similar affordability problems have led to problems such as the ‘patrone’ and ‘palanca’ syndrome of many Latin American cities e.g. Bogota\textsuperscript{5} or at worst, the object of policy has been defeated in the end with vendors returning to the streets (Donovan 2000).

Other structural issues exist, which border on the geography of the site. The market lies in a flood-prone zone with a history of catastrophic flood sessions. Only recently, in the second week of May 2007, heavy tropical storms left in their wake a flooded market with the destruction and washing away of wares worth several millions of cedis as large open drains overflowed their banks. These limiting factors and others have implications for the success of the Pedestrian Mall in addressing the spatial question. The spatial problem comprises the underlying problems of accommodating the increasing numbers of street vendors in

\textsuperscript{4} Mobile hawkers will pay half these fees.
\textsuperscript{5} These were arrangements through which powerful and richer traders used their political clout to obtain space for vendors. Alternatively, they obtained space and sponsored and contracted vendors to sell their merchandise for them.
unauthorized public spaces in the city. It also includes measures to control the environmental externalities associated with street vending activities many of which are due to the absence of effective environmental services such as litter/waste bins and regular collection systems.

1.4 STUDY OBJECTIVE & QUESTIONS

The objective of the proposed research is to explore governance policy alternatives available to city management in the city of Accra in finding a solution to the spatial problem facing it. This includes the accommodation problem as well as the environmental externalities. The following two research questions are posed.

- What has been the trend of managing similar problems in other developing cities e.g. as Nairobi, Mumbai and Durban etc. and what lessons can the city authorities learn from their experiences?

1.5 HYPOTHESIS

Responsive official methods such as relocation of vendors from areas of vendor concentration will only be a temporary relief and will not solve the congestion and related problems nor will it resolve the underlying questions of environmental and public health risks posed by informal economic units across the city.
1.5 METHOD

The method used involved a general survey of city case examples drawn from seven selected developing cities. Five of the cities were from Africa: Nairobi, Lagos, Durban, Mexico City and Cape Town. The others were Mexico City in Latin America and Mumbai from Asia. The criteria used in selecting the cities were the fact the selected cities had existing information on the informal economy in general and street vending in particular, and the fact that they represent a heterogeneous sample with different institutional settings from which relevant lessons might be learned. In either case, the study examined the underlying problems of street vendor concentrations in unauthorized space and the range of policy measures adopted to solve the problems. For convenience of discussion, summary discussion is made thematically and key examples highlighted for illustration purposes. Further, the policies and regulatory measures adopted in different cities were examined in the context of Accra with suggestions for policy options for Accra to resolve its spatial problem.


1.6 USEFULNESS OF THE STUDY

Generally, discussions on informal economic enterprise come in three dimensions: the activity focus, people focus and habitat focus (Amin and Others1996). While there is a wealth of information on the economics of the informal sector (‘activity’) and the mainly marginalized urban poor workers (‘people’), relatively little has been documented on the places of work (‘habitat’) of informal economic units in developing cities. However, the literature on this component of the discourse is growing. A number of authors have already done some work on the location of informal activity in some cities. For example Brown’s (2006) edited work, ‘Contested Space: Street Trading, Public Space, and Livelihoods in Developing Cities’ presents a collection of articles on a number of cities including Nepal, Kumasi, and Dares Salaam etc. Bhowmik (2005; 2004) has done some work on Mumbai; Cross (1995; 1998) has examined the phenomenon in Mexico City; Suharto (2004) studied the phenomenon in Bandung; Mitullah (2003) did a five-city study including Nairobi and Kumasi; and Donovan (2000) studied Bogotá.

Although Yankson (2000) and Perera and Amin (1996) have done some work the problem of accommodating informal enterprises in Accra, their focused mainly on home-based and neighborhood-based enterprises as well as those on the fringes of the city. This study therefore adds to this component of the literature of the informal economy in Accra by
focusing on the spatial problem relative to street vendors on Accra’s urban landscape. It therefore complements the work of other scholars studying the phenomenon in developing cities especially in sub-Saharan Africa and fills the gap left by earlier work done on the City of Accra. It will be particularly relevant to metropolitan and sub-metropolitan assemblies in Accra and to urban development agencies both public and private. Further, it will serve as a useful reference for students of urban planning and international development as well as field practitioners.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The major limitation of this study is its limited reference to numbers. This owes to the problem of inadequate information on the urban informal economy in general and street trading in particular. The story of the urban informal economy therefore, is told best by its descriptive imagery rather than by facts and numbers. Further, the city cases examined mainly highlight salient elements relevant to the scope of this research. For instance, a given city may concurrently run a number of policy measures, all of which will be impractical to explore within the limited resources of the study. To forestall this problem, the discussion proceeds thematically and relevant examples are indicated. Where necessary, a particular regulatory policy of a given city is highlighted for illustration purposes. Further, the spatial problem being examined fall into two domains, the home and neighborhood and central city and affiliate areas. However, the area of relevance is the central city and affiliate areas, since the former is already treated in the literature on informal economic units in Accra e.g. Yankson (2000a).
1.8 ORGANIZATION OF THESIS

The work is presented in six chapters, of which this section is the first. The second chapter introduces the reader to the city of Accra. The third chapter explores existing work in two separate but converging areas: the informal economy and public space. The public space segment also explores the concepts of public goods and externalities. The fourth chapter explores the experience of seven cities in resolving similar spatial problems in their respective contexts. The discussion proceeds thematically and key examples in relevant cities are given prominent coverage. The fifth chapter takes a general overview of the relevant city experiences from the perspective of Accra and sets the tone for policy alternatives for the city of Accra. The final chapter outlines the strategic policy directions, and possible innovative approaches that Accra may learn from some of the cities under study.
CHAPTER 2: INTRODUCING THE CITY OF ACCRA

2.1 BASIC GEOGRAPHY

The city of Accra is Ghana’s capital city situated along the Atlantic Ocean. Figure 2 below shows the location of Accra in Ghana and the insert shows Ghana’s location in Africa.

FIGURE 2: LOCATION OF ACCRA IN GHANA

The Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GMA) is the largest urban agglomeration in Ghana. Its three component administrative districts are illustrated in Table 1 of which the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (57 percent) is the largest Grant and Yankson 1999: 1).
TABLE 1: ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICTS OF GMA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Percent of Total Area</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA)</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tema Municipal Assembly (TMA)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ga District Assembly (GDA)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The AMA is also the most completely urbanized of all the three administrative districts and largely constitutes the city of Accra. As shown in Figure 3 below, the city of Accra is bounded on the south, north, east and west respectively by the Gulf of Guinea (the Atlantic Ocean), the University of Ghana, the Tema port township and the Korle lagoon (Grant and Yankson 2003).

FIGURE 3: THE CITY OF ACCRA

Source: Grant and Yankson (1999: 66)
The jurisdiction of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) has a population of 2.9 million and the city of Accra itself has a population of 1.7 million. The Greater Accra region is about 86 percent urban and is the only region that is overwhelmingly urban. It has 2.5 million urban residents as against 0.4 million rural (GSS 2002: 3). The entire region has a rate of growth twice the national average at 4.4 percent, making it one of the fastest growing cities in West Africa. (GSS 2002 in CUIPS: 45). The rate of growth of population is extremely high by national or world standards. Natural growth rate accounts for 2.8 to 3.2 percent leaving the remainder to in-migration, as Accra is a prime administrative, educational, industrial and commercial center. The city and the region attract people from all over Ghana as well as from the surrounding countries of Cote d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Togo and Benin. Migration to the region is a result of rural poverty and lack of employment opportunities in the hinterland and expectations of improved lifestyle in the city. The current level of migration to the metropolitan area stands at 25,000 per year (GSS 2002). Accra and its region is not surprisingly the most densely populated with about 895 persons per square kilometer (ibid).

2.2 HISTORY, PLANNING AND URBAN POLICY

Local experts link the establishment of Accra with its development as a coastal fishing port in the late 16th Century. A number of European forts were built in modern-day Accra during the 17 century: Ussher Fort by the Dutch in 1605, Christiansborg Castle by the Swedes in 1657 and James Fort by the British in 1673 (Grant and Yankson 2003: 66). However, the relocation of the colonial headquarters to Accra in the 1877 is the single most

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1 Information in this subsection is mainly sourced from Grant and Yankson (2003).
important event leading to Accra’s rise as an urban center. The colonial machinery in Accra brought with it a large number of merchants leading to a concentration of economic and political power.

The earlier periods of the city’s growth witnessed the emergence of a well-defined European Central business District (CBD) that provided commercial functions e.g. trade, banking, storage and distribution. Zoning and building codes were strictly enforced to maintain an orderly European character and ambiance in this district. Concurrently, there were traditional markets that existed in nearby districts called ‘native town’ however, the colonial government neglected urban planning in the native town district. This led to a “crowded, cluttered, congested environment with poor structures and unhealthy conditions.” (Grant and Yankson 2003: 67). The little separation between native residential and petty commercial trade activities resulted in a bazaar-like atmosphere in native town. This area attracted local and rural migrants and was physically separated from the European styled CBD by an open green area.

At independence, the former European CBD was at once de-Europeanized and nationalized, politically and economically. The elimination of legislation that had formerly discouraged native enterprises led to a rapid growth in the number of those companies. There was expansion of markets in the CBD, especially the Makola market as many small businesses moved into the area. The Makola market grew to encircle the CBD, increasing the acute congestion in the city center that had developed from colonial policy. The situation has increased over time despite efforts to promote the Kaneshie Market. As the market area
expanded, the boundaries between the native district with its market areas and petty trade functions began to blur. The government, however, continued its neglect of the central market district, earmarking little funding for maintenance or improvement of the non-European CBD markets. The growth of the Makola market and its prominence in informal trade has grown overtime projecting the central city as a center of lucrative trading opportunity. Overtime, the booming trade opportunities have also attracted intense vending activities in the surrounds of the market and in the pavements and streets.

2.3 THE URBAN ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment levels are high in Accra and about 40 percent of the population is employed in the informal sector (Grant and Yankson: 70). The rapid growth of the informal economy dates back to the early 1970s when rapid population growth and urbanization, sluggish economic growth, a high rate of unemployment, and a decline in formal job opportunities spurred a fast growth in informal economic activity (Yankson 2000). Accra saw the most rapid sustained expansion after the economic liberalization and structural adjustment program of the (SAP) of 1983. The most visible impacts included the dramatic rise in new foreign businesses in Accra, which currently headquarters some 655 foreign companies (Grant 2001 in Grant and Yankson 2003: 69). The foreign companies provide employment for about 55,000 workers (GIPC 2002 in Grant and Yankson 2003: 69).

In the informal economy, there was the ubiquitous springing up of micro enterprises particularly, in homes and residential neighborhoods, along the major thoroughfares, and in public circulation areas and other public spaces within the built environment. A good number
of informal enterprises operate in the open courtyards of compound houses or from temporary workshops attached to houses. There is also an increase in the number of street traders on busy intersections, around markets and major transport depots especially, in the CBD of the city. Most of the new entrants to the city’s labor market without the requisite skills and capital to set up their own enterprises take to street trading activities to eke out a living. Even many schoolchildren hawk diverse goods in the streets and public circulation areas of the city to supplement family income. For example, it is a common sight to see young girls, at the bottom of the hawking hierarchy, sell low-priced plastic bags of water. Over the past two decades or more, informal trading activities in unauthorized spaces have drawn the attention of city authorities especially in the CBD. The accommodation of informal economic units on the city’s landscape presents city authorities with an enormous challenge.

Not much serious attention policy attention has been given to address the problem comprehensively. Despite a positive change in the attitude of government and city authorities towards the informal sector, Accra’s informal economic units are yet to be adequately accommodated within the urban built environment. Their development has not been promoted, nor have their negative effects on the environment reduced (Yankson 2000). The failure of urban and metropolitan planning and management systems have led to haphazard and scattered locational pattern of informal economic units within the urban built environment (ibid). Planning has mainly focused on the formal economic sector, neglecting problems of physically accommodating informal economic units within the built environment and providing the necessary supporting infrastructure and services. The problems of the
central city: crowding, congestion, inadequate infrastructure, environmental and other hazards, currently constitute the driving force in Accra’s spatial development outwards from the center (Grant and Yankson 1999).

Accra is in dire need of comprehensive land-use planning. The central issue is for policy makers to work towards restructuring the city to ensure a sustainable city environment. This requires paying more attention to living and housing conditions, improving the broader physical infrastructure, raising health and environmental standards and implementing ambitious policies that connect the sizeable informal economy to formal activities.
CHAPTER 3: THE INFORMAL ECONOMY AND PUBLIC SPACE

3.1 THE “INFORMAL ECONOMY”: THE DEBATE

Although ‘traditional economies’ had long been in existence for centuries in many societies, there were optimistic expectations in the political economy of the 1950s and 1960s that given the appropriate mix of economic policies and resources, these traditional economies would transform into dynamic modern industrial economies (Chen 2004; ILO 2002). Typified by the assumptions of Arthur Lewis’ theory of economic development, the common notion was that the traditional sector comprised of petty traders, small producers and a range of causal jobs would be absorbed into the modern formal economy and thereby cease to exist (Becker 2004; ILO 2002).

Contrary to such expectations, the so-called traditional economy survived the emergence and growth of modern economic systems and institutions. By the 1970s and 1980s traditional economies were growing in scope and intensity in many developing countries, especially in Africa (Leonard 2000). The term ‘informal sector’ made its maiden appearance in the academic literature in Keith Hart’s seminal work on urban wage employment in Accra in 1970 (Hart 1973). In his application of the term, Hart sought to conceptualize the employment engagements of Accra’s marginal poor and migrant workers, whose realm of employment lay outside the formal urban economy (Gërrixhani 2004; Trager 1987). Hart postulated a model of income opportunities of the urban labor force characterized mainly by the distinction between “wage employment” and “self-employment” (Hart 1973: 68):
The distinction between the formal and informal income opportunities is based essentially on that between wage-earning and self-employment. The key variable is the degree of rationalization of work – that is to say whether or not labor is recruited on a permanent basis for fixed rewards.

Picking up from Hart’s report, the widespread stagnation in economic growth and unemployment in the 1970s and 1980s spurred a number of ILO ‘employment missions’ to study the dynamics of the informal sector in a number of developing economies, beginning with Kenya in 1972 (Chen 2005; Gërxhani 2004; ILO 2002). The ILO’s Kenya “employment mission” reported that not only had the traditional sector persisted, but also it had expanded to include profitable and efficient enterprises as well as marginal activities. The widely published report popularized the existent of a ‘dualist’ economy in which a creative, resilient informal sector existed alongside the formal sector. The ‘dualist’ contention for the sustained expansion of the informal sector was that the modern economy had failed to create enough job opportunities to absorb the surplus labor because of either slow economic growth rates and or a faster growth rate of population (Chen 2005). The duality contention has been critiqued especially, on the basis that in practice both formal and informal sectors do interact. Further, the usage of the term, ‘informal sector’ creates the impression that informality is confined to a particular economic sector and hence, as Becker (2004) notes, there is a generally increasing shift to the use of the term, ‘informal economy’ to indicate that informality is a cross-sectoral phenomenon.
The school of authors, e.g. Castells and Portes (1989) and Moser (1978), labeled ‘structuralists,’ are the prime disputants of the duality concept. In the view of the Castells and Portes (1989), the informal economy is far from being a set of survival activities of the marginalized. Rather, in their opinion, informality cuts across the whole spectrum of society embracing different situations e.g. a street vendor in Latin America and a software consultant moonlighting in Silicon Valley. In either circumstance, the authors note, the income-generating production relationships are unregulated by the institutions of society. The structuralists claim that the nature of “capitalist production” rather than inadequate formal job opportunities accounts for the persistence and growth of the informal economy. In their view, through mutually beneficial economic relationships, informal production minimizes the production costs of firms e.g. through the hiring of informal workers or subcontracting to informal units. This further translates into employer benefits of jobs and lower prices of consumer goods and services. This view is limited in terms of its ability to explain the dynamics and growth of the urban informal economy in low-income developing cities with scant industrial bases and other relatively lesser-developed service sectors.

A section of the literature, labeled the ‘illegalist’ school subscribes to the notion that informal production is an avenue for deliberate avoidance of commercial regulations and the evasion of taxes. In addition, informal producers and sellers seek to avoid operating overheads such as electricity and rental fees usually associated with operating formal businesses (Maloney 2004). According to Palmade and Anayiotos (2005), tax evasion is a key motivation for going informal in many domestic sectors e.g. retailing, food processing and housing construction. Through non-compliance and tax evasion, informal operators take
away the productivity advantage of large formal firms, leading to more informality. However, this view does not explain the growth of numerous informal sellers in the urban distribution chain and informal units in micro manufacturing and repair services etc. in developing cities which activities may not be entirely explained by such suggested evasive tendencies. Many informal operators such as street vendors may not even have the resources to procure permanent legal places of work and hence, may operate in unauthorized venues in the streets and other public spaces.

De Soto (1989) and others e.g. Centeno and Portes (2003), Cross and Pena (2001) and Bromley (1994) etc., collectively identified as the ‘legalist’ school, hold a view that contrasts the assertion of the ‘illegalist’ school. Spearheading this perspective, De Soto (1989) argues that unreasonably excessive formal rules and regulations and cumbersome bureaucratic procedures increases transaction costs of registration and compliance and as a result stifles private enterprise, preventing citizens from accessing opportunities in the formal economy. In the view of De Soto (1989) and his followers, the informal economy represents actors or micro entrepreneurs whose defiance of the red tape enables them to avoid the overburdening transaction costs of formal registration and compliance. Hence, these micro entrepreneurs or informal operators will continue to produce informally so long as government procedures are cumbersome and costly.

Centeno and Portes (2003) further present the case of a mismatch between voluminous regulations and poor enforcement capacities of states. The authors argue that an informal economy will develop when and where it can whether in developing or advanced
societies. However, the ‘degrees of freedom’ for its occurrence depends not only on the scope of regulations but also on the regulatory capacity of state agents. A weak state may assign to itself a large ‘load’ of regulatory measures that overstretches its enforcement capacity. On the other hand, a weak state may leave society to its own devices producing a situation where economic exchanges are subject to exclusive regulation by the norms and normative enforcement capacity of society itself. Therefore, in the view of Centeno and Portes (2003), the formal bureaucracy creates its own informality and a weak and frequently corrupt state apparatus usually facilitates the systematic violation of these rules as many Latin American countries exemplify.

3.1.2 The informal Economy: The Concept

The concept of the informal economy is a subject of ongoing debate and controversy and does not lend itself to easy definition. In instances where authors venture a definition, the relevance is usually constrained by context rather than appeal to worldwide universality. Hart (1973) intended to capture the unregulated economic activities outside the formal economy. Following in a similar fashion, Suharto (2004) views the informal economy as simply comprising both economic units and workers involved in various commercial activities and occupations that operate beyond the realm of formal employment. The ILO (2002) maintains that such gravitation to the ‘historical definition’ of the concept makes it is rather too inclusive. To forestall such near wholesale inclusiveness, ILO (2002) delineates the boundary between the formal and informal by spelling out “what is not the informal economy:” It is neither the ‘formal economy,’ the ‘criminal economy’, nor the ‘reproductive’ or ‘care
Labor statisticians offer a perspective that apparently sheds some more light on these ‘units’ and ‘workers’ (ILO 2002:11). They define the informal economy as

A group of household enterprises or unincorporated enterprises owned by households which may include informal own-account enterprises, which may employ contributing family workers and employees on an occasional basis; and [also] enterprises of informal employers, which employ one or more employees on a continuous basis.

The problem with this definition is that it restricts informal economic units to the limits of household groups. In practice, depending on context, many informal actors are self-employed individuals pursuing petty trading and other informal small-scale manufacturing. According to Castells & Portes (1989: 12), the informal economy comprises “a process of income-generation characterized by one central feature: it is unregulated by the institutions of society in a legal and social environment in which similar activities are regulated.” Statistics South Africa (SSA 2004: xxvii) ² also underscores the regulation question but adds the location element of informal enterprise units. In its view, the informal sector consists of “those businesses that are not registered in any way. They are generally small in nature, and are seldom run from business premises. Instead, they are run from homes, street pavements or other informal arrangements.” Less of a definition and more like a descriptive, Cross (1998b: 1) captures a multiplicity of elements of the informal economy as follows:

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2 Cited in Skinner (2006: 126)
The informal sector describes economic activity that takes place outside the formal norms of economic transactions established by the state and formal business practices…it applies to small or micro-businesses that are the result of individual or family self-employment. It includes the production and exchange of legal goods and services that involves the lack of appropriate business permits, violation of zoning codes, failure to report tax liability, non-compliance with labor regulations governing contracts and work conditions, and/or the lack of legal guarantees in relations with suppliers and clients.

Clearly, the definitional perspectives are inadequate to capture the universality of a concept, which is as diverse as the different societies in which they thrive and the various lenses of the scholars who attempt to conceptualize it.

3.1.3 Informality, Criminality and Context

Various labels are used to describe the informal economy in different contexts. They include ‘unregulated,’ ‘unobserved,’ ‘household,’ ‘informal,’ ‘invisible’ or ‘hidden.’ Other labels suggest criminality or evasiveness e.g. ‘irregular,’ ‘criminal,’ ‘shadow,’ ‘black,’ ‘grey,’ ‘parallel’ and ‘subterranean.’ There is a general agreement in the literature indicating the tendency to confuse or conflate the informal economy with the criminal economy (e.g. Hart 2005; ILO 2002; Leonard 2000; Feige 1990; Giri in Brown 1996; Hart 1973; Cross 1998a). A number of authors have tried to differentiate between clearly illegal activities in the underground or criminal economy from economic activities that are arguably legal in
nature, but which occur without deference to the state regulatory system e.g. illegal street traders and unlicensed taxi operators. See ILO (2002), Centeno and Portes (2003), Hart (1973), Portes et al (1989), and De Soto (1989). ILO (2002) explains that while production or employment in the informal economy is often semi-legal or illegal, the informal economy distributes legal goods and services. In contrast, the criminal economy deals in illegal goods and services. According to Centeno & Portes (2003), the distinction between formal and informal does not hinge on the character of the final product, but on the manner of the production and or exchange. The authors maintain that articles of clothing, restaurant food, or computer chips – all perfectly licit goods – may have their origins in legally regulated production arrangements or in those that bypass official rules.

Nonetheless, the legitimacy of informal sector activities is limited to the socio-economic and political contexts within which they occur. The constituting elements and dynamics of the informal economy vary among countries and over time (Centeno and Portes 2003; Cowell 1990\(^3\)). For instance, Centeno and Portes (2003) indicate that the relationship between the state and civil society defines the character of informality and this relationship is in a constant state of flux. Every concrete situation, they note, has in common the existence of economic practices that violate or bypass state regulation but exactly what these are varies according to state-society relations. Therefore, in their opinion, what is informal and persecuted in one context may be legal in another and the same activity may shift its location across the formal/informal divide over time.

\(^3\) Cited in Cohen et al 2000
The contextual interpretation of legitimacy also varies among developed and developing countries especially, low-income countries. According to Leornard (2000), while informality in the former may be characterized mainly by conscious endeavors to circumvent the regulatory framework and evade taxes, the latter are informal activities generally comprise popular enterprise or normative livelihood pursuits and survival strategies of the poor. For instance, Widenbank and Widenbank (1989)⁴ explain that far from being hidden, informal economic units are generally observable in societies where they are condoned, even to state authorities. Further, while the informal economic units may be ‘hidden’ or obscured from the state’s regulatory apparatus in some respects such as taxation, they involve starkly visible structures and they regularly engage the administrative processes to some degree in instances such as simple registration or daily collection fees (Suharto 2004). Such contextual diversities and time-bound differentials make it imperative to engage the analysis of the informal sector on a case-by-case basis if analyses are to be of any use at all (Portes et al 1989).

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⁴ Cited in Suharto 2004
3.2 THE CONCEPT OF PUBLIC SPACE AND INFORMAL ACTIVITY

The concept of public space is a broad one with a multiplicity of divergent meanings and some mainstream treatments of the subject focus on the politics of the ‘public sphere’ or ‘civic space’ in democratic societies (Drummond 2000). Generally, these originate in notions of unconstrained space within which political movements organize and expand into wider arenas (Mitchell, 1995:116).\(^5\) Alternatively, it is represented as the material location where social interactions and political activities of all members of the public occur (ibid). Such locations usually serve as common grounds where people carry out the functional and ritual activities that bind a community, including both the normal routines of daily life or periodic festivities (Carr et al. 1992).\(^6\)

Public Space is almost by definition urban space and Low and Smith (2006: 3) note that in many current treatments of public space “the urban remains the privileged scale of analysis and cities the privileged site.” In their usage of the term, ‘public space’, the interests of urban designers incline towards finding better ways of designing cities for leisure and aesthetic purposes or to enhance urban vitality and improve security (Brown, no date). Designers and architects also explore how physical form and spatial relationships influence people’s movement and experience of public space to facilitate social exchange and a vibrant street culture (Brown 2006). According to Low and Smith (2006), urban public space comprises a range of social locations offered by the street, the park, the shopping mall and local neighborhoods etc. Brown (2006) also outlines the spatial specificity of urban public space as comprising physical locations such as the square, pavement, sidewalk, boulevard,

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\(^5\) In Drummond 2000: 2379
\(^6\) Cited in Brown 2006
promenade, esplanade, plaza, piazza, park, playground, mall, arcade and market. Typically, these physical locales have a social significance as being “very recognizable geographies of daily movement” (Low and Smith 2003: 3).

Therefore, more than the sheer vacuity of physical spaces, buildings or objects, people and events and their relationships therein constitute the centrality of the conceptions of urban public space. As Harvey (2006: 17) acknowledges, “we do not, after all, experience the city blankly.” According to Harvey (2006), urban public space may be interpreted to include “the long drag of the commute, the jostle of subway crowds, the blandness of the shopping mall…the panhandlers [and traders] on the sidewalk etc”. (ibid)

It is only intuitive that physical spaces that accommodate the social relations in cities will normally belong in the non-private realm. Webster (2002) identifies the totality of these spaces as the ‘public realm’ and defines the ‘public realm’ as the spatial domain within which de facto or de jure economic or legal consumption rights over a local public good attribute are shared by all individuals within a city for diverse purposes including circulation, transportation, congregation and informal activity. Such spaces are thought of as ‘public realm’ because they are jointly consumed by the public and they are contrasted with the private realm – space consumed privately (ibid). Traditionally, rules of access, the source and nature of control over entry, individual and collective behaviour sanctioned in specific spaces differentiate public from private space (Lead 2003; Webster 2002; Benson no date.). Low and Smith (2006: 4) note that
Whereas private space is demarcated and protected by state-regulated rules of private property use, public space, while far from free of regulations, is generally conceived as open to greater or lesser public participation.

Nonetheless, the conceptualization of urban public space is beyond simple or neat delineation of physical spaces into private and the public. There are situations where urban spaces may not be clearly identifiable as either public or private. Brown (2002) argues that in such circumstances, urban public space ought to encompass all the areas of the urban environment that are not exclusively private but that has some degree of accepted and legitimate public or community use. These include spaces between buildings and the plots on which they stand (Webster 2002), areas of land in government ownership including road reserves and underdeveloped or ill-defined spaces (Brown 2002).

The literature on urban space strikingly inclines towards the urban experiences of the West drawing ample examples from Europe, North America and Australia. Set in western constructs, experiences and interpretations of the city dating as far back as Greek antiquity, there is little discussion about urban public space in developing cities where urban space constitutes between a quarter and a third of all space (Brown 2006; Brown 2002; Drummond 2000). The disproportionate representation both narrows the scope of the concept, rendering it inappropriate for effective analysis of important trends in the urban built and natural environments of developing cities.

For instance, in many developing cities various forms of space in the public domain have evolved from their initially intended functions to embrace a diverse range of informal
economic activities. These spaces include streets, sidewalks, pavements, road reservations, walkways, cab and minivan stations, railway terminals, spaces between buildings etc. The expression of urban public space has come to be defined by the architecture of the street and the diversity of informal economic activity it accommodates. According to Brown (2006), this phenomenon has emerged as the fundamental defining character of the image of towns and cities.

3.3. CONCEPTUAL BENCHMARK: PUBLIC GOODS AND EXTERNALITIES

3.3.1 Public Goods

The exploration of the relative differentials in restrictive access or control over public space is given by the theoretical concepts of public goods and externalities in the Economics of the Public Sector (Stewart et al 2004; Webster 2002; and Benson no date, 1999, 2001).

Public goods, also called ‘collective goods’ are very special class of goods which cannot practically be withheld from one individual consumer without withholding them from all others. They are thus, characterized by ‘non-excludability.’ Once they have been produced, the marginal cost of an additional person consuming the public good is zero. Hence, they are also characterized by ‘non-rivalrous consumption.’ The economics texts distinguish ‘pure public goods’ from ‘non-pure public goods’ by the extent to which public goods satisfy these criteria. National defence is commonly cited as a classic example of a nearly pure public good. The park is an example of a non-pure public good that is controlled to an extent through some measure of excludability such as fencing and the payment of fees by visitors. The streets and roads in a city are public goods the provision of which is generally the
function of governments and municipal authorities. While some streets may be tolled at some points they generally provide unrestricted access to public.

Where potential providers of a public good cannot exclude non-paying consumers from consuming or benefiting from the good, a ‘free rider’ problem arises. Consequently, private production of the good or service may prove unprofitable and therefore, the public good may not be provided at all by the free market. Hence, governments have to provide the service and compel citizens to pay for it. It is also true that forms of arrangements exist by which non-profits and private companies provide public goods. However, the classic “solution” to the problem of under-provision of public goods has been government funding through compulsory taxation (often, but not necessarily, accompanied by actual government agency production of the good or service in question).

A relevant applied research study involving the provision of public goods is Benson’s (no date) work on the use of street parking in London. Benson (no date) argues that as public goods, the openness and competitive use of urban public spaces will normally be efficient so long as congestion problems do not arise. However, as a congestible public good, urban space is liable to congestion, in which case the marginal usage costs occur. Illustrating the London street parking case, Benson (no date) notes that free access to street pavements for commuter parking was efficient while there was less pressure or parking congestion. However, at some point rising congestion necessitated the intervention of government with some measures of excludability. By providing parking meters, for instance, the city authority attempted to assign temporary property rights to urban public space and provided incentives
for efficient use of these resources.

3.3.2 Externalities

Externalities occur when the private costs or benefits to either producers or consumers of a good or service differ from the total social costs and benefits of production and consumption of the good or service. An individual or a firm’s actions may affect others in society positively or negatively without either compensating or being compensated for according to existing definition of property rights. When the production or consumption of a good or service creates negative spill over costs for others in society other than the producer or consumer, a ‘negative externality,’ ‘external diseconomy’ or ‘external cost’ situation arises. For instance, the consumption of public space by informal vendors may result in congestion and other nuisance costs for other users e.g. pedestrians but the vendors do not pay for such social costs and therefore they do not factor them into their cost functions. On the other hand, when the production or consumption of goods and services generate benefits for others other than the ones producing or consuming the good or service, an "external economy," "external benefit," or "positive externality" situation arises.

Both positive and negative externalities create a problem for the effective functioning of the market to maximize the total utility of the society. Thus, normal market incentives for the buyer and seller to maximize their personal utilities will lead to the over- or under-production of the commodity in question from the point of view of society as a whole, not the socially optimal level of production. Goods involving a positive externality will be "underproduced" from the point of view of society as a whole, while goods involving a negative externality will be "overproduced" from the point of view of society as a whole.
Usually private contracts, the legal system or government taxation are some options that exist for resolving the externality problem i.e. to ensure the optimal levels of production of positive and negative externalities.

3.3.3 Measures to resolve the externality problem

Contracts may seek to internalise the negative externality into the costs. Third party bystanders affected can offer compensation to the buyers or sellers in exchange for adjusting production or consumption levels of the good to a more acceptable level. However, where too many people are involved, the costs of negotiating such many-sided contracts may be so large as to make this contractual solution impractical. In such instances where the transaction costs of contractual solutions are prohibitively high, complex modern societies normally provide "second best" remedies to private persons through the courts. People adversely affected by other people's activities may go to court and sue them to obtain an award of financial compensation for the damages and/or a court injunction requiring their obnoxious neighbours to change their ways in the future. Filing and prosecuting a law suit is itself a costly procedure, both for the individuals involved and for the taxpayers.

Government regulations or tax policies are often justified to the public as a means of "correcting" the outcome of the market for goods involving especially sizable externalities, especially negative externalities. The government might, for example, place a special tax or licensing fee on the production (or purchase) of a good or service believed to involve significant negative externalities, with the size of the tax or fee to be determined by some estimate of the total costs being imposed on third parties. The tax or fees would effectively
cut the production or consumption of the good or service generating the negative external costs. Alternatively, through its law-making regulatory power, the government may solve the problem by using its law-making or regulatory powers to compel obedience. For example, a city ordinance may requiring all householders to keep their lawns mowed and their houses painted and forbid them from allowing trash or old automobile hulks to litter their front yards. Similarly, city or municipal ordinance may ban street trading in the CBD or elsewhere in the city’s jurisdiction.

3.4 THE URBAN STREET ECONOMY

Although not much of it has been studied, urban space in developing cities is a key element of the physical capital in the livelihood strategies of a good number of urban residents, mainly the poor (Brown 2006). This is because most households in developing cities obtain part or all of their income from informal economic activities such as petty trading and manufacture, which rely on access to urban space making it a critical physical livelihood asset (Brown 2002; Brown and Lloyd-Jones 2002). Cohen (2000) classifies urban informal workers by their degree of visibility. The least visible workers (the majority of them women) operate from homes selling or producing goods and services. The less visible workers operate from small factories and petty commodity manufacture or repair workshops (Cohen 2000). The most visible informal workers are those with a ubiquitous presence in urban public spaces; who operate in the open air, especially along main transportation routes and arteries (ibid).
The literature widely documents the heterogeneity of informal economic activities occurring in urban public space with diverse forms of operations and employment relationships (e.g. Satterthwaite 2003, Yankson 2000a; 2000b, Portes et al etc.). Vibrant informal vending activities transpire in streets pavements, walkways, and other venues in public space (see Jima 2005; Suharto 2004; Cohen et al 2000; Yankson 2000a, 2000b). Other areas along major thoroughfares and streets; areas around market places, bus stops, work sites and preferred downtown locations attract large concentrations of street vendors and other informal operators (Cohen et al 2005). In many of these locations in the public spatial domain, high pedestrian traffic provides ready market for informal goods and services (Suharto 2004). Being the most visible of all informal activities, informal street vending and affiliate activities tend to influence the nature of the urban environment and landscape and hence, attract the most attention from local government and urban policy makers (Suharto 2004; Pena 2000). As Jimu (2005: 18) observes:

Although, street vending is a phenomenon least acknowledged in daily discourses it is possibly the most visible and significant aspect and manifestation of how far informality has clipped the structure of urban economies in developing countries.

Generally, the spatial manifestation of intense informal activities tends to gravitate towards the street and other public spaces in cities and towns. Witness this narrative by which Cohen et al (2000: x) capture a typical scene of intense informal activity occurring in streets of developing low-income cities.
City streets are...are lined with barbers, cobblers, garbage collectors; sellers of vegetables, fruit, meat, snack-foods, or a myriad of non-perishable items....In many countries, head-loaders, cart pullers, bicycle peddlers, rickshaw pullers...jostle to make a way...through the maze of cars, trucks, vans and buses on city streets.


This area often encompasses the most frequented thoroughfares...key commercial buildings, various ministries, and the nexus of public transportation. Given the amount of prospective clientele, street vendors gravitate to these areas and transform sidewalks, parks, and the town square into a mobile shopping mall where they hawk everything from chocolate bars to computer software.
Cross (1998a; 1998b; 1995; 1991) records a similar situation in the Federal District of Mexico City where vendors literally besieged the historical center, posing major city management challenges for city management intent on reclaiming public space in the historical center. Similarly, in a study of urban street enterprises in the Bandung Metropolitan Region of Indonesia⁷, Suharto (2004) reported that the majority of vendors operated their businesses on the pavements, streets, road reservations, main intersections, and in public facilities and green spaces. Additionally, they congregated in the surrounds of markets, shopping areas, commercial complexes, bus and pick-up stations, the entrance and premises of schools, universities and hospitals. In all these cases, according to Suharto (2004), the venues were public spaces originally unintended for trading purposes. In a similar study of the location of informal economic activities in Accra, Yankson (2000) pointed out a similar trend. He records areas of visible concentration of street enterprises particularly, along major transportation arteries and streets and in road reservations of the city. Beyond the street venues, and open spaces, Yankson (2000a, 2000b) also records concentration of enterprises that usually squatted in areas of publicly or privately owned land. In general, the location contravened urban planning and zoning regulations and the regulations governing public space and land use.

Street vending has yet to attract sufficient research attention; hence, there is a paucity of information on that segment of the urban economy just as other activities in the informal economy. The conceptualization of informal trading and related activities within unauthorised urban public spaces and a definition of the workers involved remain unresolved.

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⁷ Indonesia has one of the world’s largest urban informal economies.
in the literature. However, *street traders and street vendors* were one of four categories of informal workers identified by the 1993 International Conference of Labor Statisticians in their efforts to address the “place of work” of informal workers (Becker 2004: 13). The categorization gives no further details or clarification of who comprise the two groups of informal workers. Perera and Amin (1994: 5-6) also identify a class of “street-operated businesses,” by which they mean the informal economic units who located “inwards to the streets from the building line or in circulation areas of public places.” Similarly, Yankson (2000b) identifies informal units who operated in public spaces in central city areas and residential neighborhoods. Exactly who qualifies as a street trader or street vendor still remains unclear.

There are interchangeable usages of the expressions, ‘market vendor,’ ‘street vendor,’ ‘street trader,’ ‘vendor’ and ‘hawker’ in the informal economy discourse and these terms are loosely defined both across and within cultures. In some countries, the term, “street vendor” encompasses vendors in organized marketplaces, pavement sellers, mobile street hawkers, and home-based vendors. In others, marketplace vendors are a separate category and depending on the context, street vendors may be legal or illegal (Cohen et al 2002). Cross (1999) recognizes street vending as a key feature of the urban informal economy and defines it as

The production and exchange of legal goods and services that involves the lack of appropriate business permits, violation of zoning codes, failure to report tax liability, non-compliance with labor regulations governing contracts
and work conditions, and/or the lack of legal guarantees in relations with suppliers and clients (Cross 1999: 580 in Cross 2000).

The City of Durban (2003) in its policy on informal street trading defines informal trading as the economic activities undertaken by entrepreneurs who sell legal goods and services within a space deemed to be public property (where private property rights are not well defined and non-excludability may lead to congestion and negative externalities), within the informal sector. In its National Policy on Urban Street Vendors launched in 2004, the Government of India (2004) defines a street vendor broadly as

A person who offers goods or services for sale to the public without having a permanent built up structure but with a temporary static structure or mobile stall (or head load). Street vendors may be stationary by occupying space on the pavements or other public/private areas, or may be mobile in the sense that they move from place to place carrying their wares on push carts or in cycles or baskets on their heads, or may sell their wares in a moving bus etc...

Although the lines of definition remain blurry and subject to context and contest, the spatiality of the urban street economy is evident. In order to avoid the complications involved in classifying the diverse activities transpiring in urban public spaces, this piece of work recognizes all informal operators working therein as ‘informal economic units’, ‘street economic units,’ ‘informal operators in the street economy’ or ‘informal traders’/ vendors’ and interchangeably applies these terms. The object in the various uses is to capture operators of all forms of legal economic activities that transpire legally or illegally in urban public
space of developing cities and towns. It is not limited to those that occur only in the streets and pavements but also includes those that occur in public circulation areas such as cab and minivan stations and railway terminals etc.

3.4.1 The Urban Street Economy: Activities and Role

The range of activities in the urban street economy is vast and some authors have attempted to categorize them. Suharto (2004) attempts an all-encompassing, three-category classification. He outlines the main spheres of the selling of food, trading in goods and offering of services. By his taxonomy, food vendors sell food staples, prepare and or sell meals and drinks and a range of edibles; they also sell cigarettes, candies etc. Goods vendors sell personal effects (e.g. shirts, spectacles etc.), basic commodities (e.g. toothpaste, toilet soaps, etc), and household effects (e.g. buckets, saucepans etc). Service vendors range from creative services such as shoe-shining, hair-cutting, tailoring, to repair services such as repair of shoes, watches and clocks, keys, bicycles, electrical devices, umbrellas and home appliances (Suharto 2004). However, this taxonomy is not exhaustive since the activities are vast and the list is almost endless. For instance, Yankson (2000a; 2000b) identifies other activities such as petty commodity production, e.g. small-scale manufacturing and handicrafts enterprises. The list goes on to further include several other important segments such as water distribution, ‘bush’ garages, private waste collectors etc. (Brown 1996).

With limited job opportunities urban street economic activities provides both a buffer against instability and insecurity of work and income opportunities for the urban poor
through creative survival strategies (Rogerson and Hart 1989). Street economic activities contribute to the share of total employment in trade in many developing cities (Jimu 2005; Cross 2000; Cohen et al 2000). For instance, the share of street enterprises in total employment in trade is estimated at 99 percent in Benin and Chad, 94 percent in Burkina Faso, 85 percent in Kenya, 96 percent in India and 93 percent in Indonesia (Chen 2001: 74; Cohen et al 2000: 2). In developing cities, the role of the urban street economy in the provision of jobs and the boosting of income generation especially, for women is widely documented (see UN Habitat, 2002; Cohen et al 2000; Cross 1998c). For instance, women are estimated to make up 92 percent of total informal trade employment in Benin, 81 percent in Mali, 66 percent in Burkina Faso and 72 percent in the Philippines to cite but a few (ibid). Further, in Ghana, according to Levin et al (1999: 1978), women control a large share of market activity and commodity trading and have a particular strong presence in the rapidly growing urban economy working as street vendors and petty traders. This most likely reflects women’s lowest opportunity cost of engaging petty trade, most likely due to limited educational opportunities relative to men.

Across all categories of households, women’s income-generating activities are concentrated in petty trading and the preparation and sales of street food – more than two-thirds of women’s primary income-generating strategies fall in these two categories. Petty trading and street food vending are almost exclusively women’s work in Accra. Over 90 percent of all individuals

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8 Cited in Jimu 2005: 37
engaged in petty trading as their primary occupation are women, and almost
100 percent of all street food vendors are women. Levin et al (1999: 1978)

Some authors hold the view that the avenues of employment generated in the street economy provides a preferably “viable alternative” to formal employment and “parasitic or anti-social occupations like theft, prostitution⁹ and destitution” (Jimu 2005: 37). Urban street commerce stimulates small and micro production of goods and services and encourages the development of entrepreneurship by providing a market for small informal manufacturing firms (Rogerson and Hart in Jimu 2005). Through the payment of various fees and rates for the use of space and provided services, the activities contribute to the generation of local revenues and hence, generate resources for the provision of urban environmental services and development (Cross 1998c). Further, informal street activities enhance the chain of distribution of goods and services in the urban economy particularly, because of their reach to a dispersed clientele, which enables them to bring relatively affordable goods and services to the doorsteps of urban consumers. Moreover, they guarantee convenience to consumers by transacting very small units of essential merchandise e.g. one stick of cigarette, one apple or one AA battery which serves the needs of the majority urban poor and even the middle class (Cohen et al 2000; Cross 1998c).

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⁹ The findings of a study documented the transition of some of these prostitutes from earlier petty trading into commercial sex when their wares were seized by law enforcement officers charged with the responsibility of ridding the Accra’s streets of peddlers (Boadi et al 2005)
In some contexts, street economic activities contribute significantly to GDP. For example in India, street enterprises have turnover leverage over some multinationals (Jhabvala 2000 in Cohen et al 2000: 6).

In Bombay they turnover more money than Hindustan Lever – one of the largest corporations in the city – and in New Delhi hawkers and vendors contribute more than 50 percent of the city’s GDP.

3.4.2 The Spatial Problem: Constraints of Space and Externalities

Street economic activities present three major challenges to local authorities, which altogether compose a *spatial problem*. The first part of the problem is the fundamental challenge facing local authorities in accommodating street traders on the urban landscape (see Suharto 2004; Yankson 2000a; Donovan 2002; Cross 1998a, 1995; Perera and Amin 1996). City authorities face critical choices of reclaiming urban public space through the provision of trading space alternatives e.g. markets or by devising forms of ‘excludability’ to manage public space and avert congestion problems. While apparently simple and straightforward in principle, very much the contrary prevails in practice. The second part of the spatial problem comprises the environmental spillovers that arise either by virtue of the sheer location of street economic units or as a result of their activities in urban space. Mainly, these relate to urban public space being a congestible public good or common resource. Hence, the occurrence of informal economic activities across cities and towns tends to engender crucial spatial problems for cities and towns in areas where the intensity of informal activity approaches congestible levels with pertinent higher-degree externalities.
3.4.2.1 The Spatial Problem: Location Externalities

The literature provides ample evidence that the spatial location of informal activity presents challenges for urban environmental management, planning and administration. By their location decisions, street traders transform streets, pavements and other public and private spaces into arenas for commercial transactions, which effectively create congestion problems (Suharto 2004). The relevant literature almost unanimously record impediments to free flow of traffic, both pedestrian and motorized, worsening problems of already congested transportation networks in cities (Jimu 2005; Onesmus 2005; Briassoulis 1999; Perera & Amin 1996).

Further, the location of street economic units upsets existing planning frameworks and defeats the planned role of streets and relevant public spaces within which they occur. Hence, in many developing cities, the spatial problem has elicited much attention from business elites, local government, urban planners and civil society (Jimu 2005). Even De Soto (1989), who justifies the existence and presence of street vendors and other informal actors, concedes the indiscriminate occupation of public space in defiance of formal planning and land use arrangements and with little regard for their intrinsic beauty and suitability. Other authors observe problems of zoning and land use conflicts and the generation of haphazard urban development created through the concentration of unauthorised street enterprises that mix with other standard land uses (see Jima 2004; Yankson 2000a and Perera and Amin 1996).
However, Yankson (2000a) and Perera and Amin (1996) represent diametrically opposed viewpoints about where the responsibility for the apparent anomaly in urban space resides. Yankson (2000a) views the failure of street economic units to comply with urban planning and environmental regulations as the prime cause of the spatial problem in developing cities. On the other hand, Perera & Amin (1996) attribute the spatial problem to the failure caused by unresponsive planning systems to cater for the needs of urban informal production. Somewhere, midway, Omuta (xxxx in Perera and Amin 1996) explains the locational problem in terms of the imbalance of population distribution vis-à-vis available space, localized congestion and the quality and standard of the structures used (e.g. Omuta in Perera & Amin 1996).

A few authors e.g. Jima (2005) and Danesh (1999) hold radically different perspectives about traders’ use of streets and other public spaces for economic activities. Jima (2005: X), for instance, draws attention to the public’s willingness to transact business with street traders. This, the author notes, partly reflects the ongoing meaningful social interaction between the traders and their clients that border on “conveniences and inconveniences” underscoring the imperative that urban public space is not “a neutral and passive geometry.” Similarly, Danesh (1999: 145) argues that street vending represents the reproduction of urban space by juxtaposing and superimposing “two spatially distinct entities” (private versus public) to allow the emergence of a “neutral zone in the urban environment” that enables the redefinition of public space for commercial use by informal workers.
Far from conceiving street economic activities as urban chaos or a series of disorganized activities generating congestion externalities, Danesh (1999) argues that the conversion of public space into informal street business is an innovation that enables the accommodation of the needs of city dwellers. This, in the authors view, explains why the urban street economy continues functioning, under specific conditions, without state officials terminating it despite the obvious violation of municipal codes. However, Danesh (1999) concedes that with the emergence of “neutral zones” springing up with great rapidity across the urban landscape, without commensurate “check and balance,” urban congestion could rise dramatically.

3.4.2.2 The Spatial Problem: Environmental Externalities

The literature is bereft with substantial evidence that links the environmental problems of cities to the presence and activities of street traders even though there is unanimous consensus that developing cities suffer a cascading plethora of environmental problems. For example, authors such as Rakodi (2005), Satterthwaite (2003), Devas and Korboe (2000) and Silitshena (1996) etc. have done extensive work on urban environmental problems in developing cities none of which hint of any correlation or causation between street trading and the urban environment. However, the authors unite in their agreement that developing cities especially, in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and Asia have fundamental challenges in the provision of environmental services, weak and collapsing urban planning regimes and failures in land use regulatory systems.
This notwithstanding, there is marginal documentation of some adverse physical and environmental conditions associated with street economic enterprises, among them littering, solid waste management and public and environmental health and safety risks. These problems tend to associate with unintended consequences of urban street economic activities and their location (Jimu 2005; Yankson 2000a; Briassoulis 1999; Perera and Amin 1996). Most notably, the authors agree that unregulated street trading activities tend to create environmental problems such as the generation of excess filth and littering that stretches the already limited capacities of city authorities to keep their cities clean. Further, the street food vending industry is widely cited for poor environmental hygiene and sanitation practices and methods that expose the public to severe public health risks, particularly the spread of food-borne diseases (Boadi et al 2005; Jimu 2005; Onesmus 2005; Mensah et al 2002; Songsore 2000). However, some authors e.g. Perera and Amin (1996) argue that street traders exacerbate existing waste disposal problems partly because of non-existent or inadequate infrastructure resources and properly functioning systems of waste collection and management in developing cities.

Generally, information from local authorities and city managements tend to emphasize the environmental problems associated with informal street trading activities than does the academic discourse. City case examples reviewed in the next chapter illustrates that cities confronting the spatial problem usually perceive the practice of street trading as a prime cause of environmental problems and urban congestion necessitating policy attention.
CHAPTER 4: SPATIAL REGULATION IN EXAMINED CITIES

4.1 COMMON SPATIAL PROBLEMS

The negative externalities associated with the spatial problem of Accra are also evident in all the comparative cases, existing at even more acute levels in some instances e.g. Lagos. In all cases, the location or activities of street economic units generate social and environmental costs; and in all cases, finding alternatives measures to accommodate street vendors remain a formidable challenge facing city authorities. Just as in the case of Accra, congestion externalities appear to be the most recorded problem facing local authorities as street vendors occupy streets, pavements and other circulation areas. This congestion is generally seen in the obstruction of traffic (pedestrian and motorized) and the blocking of frontages of shops and other premises particularly, in the central city. This not only mars the ambience of the urban trading environment but it also raises implications for public safety and environmental health risks in all the cities examined.

In all the cities, street vending activities are associated with improper disposal of refuse and other environmental and sanitation practices, which necessitate urgent policy responses. The City of Lagos represents the extreme case where the accumulating heaps of rubbish in road medians are attributed to the activities of street vendors. The argument that street vendors are responsible for many of these environmental problems is yet debatable because it is not clear in the various cases whether there is the provision of the requisite environmental infrastructure and services. What is much clearer in all the cities are the representations of environmental costs that result from the breach of zoning regulations and
other regulations governing public space and land use, creating a sense of disorder and chaos as urban space goes out of control. In Cape Town and Johannesburg, the result has been partly inner city decay and general deterioration and dilapidation of key areas and nodes leading to a decline in property values.

Generally, local authorities interpret the illegal occupation of streets and other public spaces by vendors as impinging on the hitherto pristine urban environment and erosive of city image and city aspirations to attain ‘world class’ recognition.¹ In the post-apartheid cities, the spatial problem was as much psychological and conceptual as it was spatial and physical. This is because the occupation of public space by vendorst challenged the colonial and apartheid urban imaginary and marked a radical departure from the ordinary sense in which the city was lived and experienced. Thus, the presence of mainly African traders in the city pavements not only invoked a sense of environmental health risk and chaos, it also disrupted the spatial epistemology of urban planning and administration.

¹ Ranjagopal 2001 in Anjaria 2006 : 2140
4.2 RESOLVING THE SPATIAL PROBLEM

The cities under study employ variously diverse approaches to resolving the spatial problem. The underlying principle is normally to increase the opportunity cost of engaging in uncontrolled street trading by inventing access control devices through which the consumption of public space by traders could be controlled at least, if not eliminated altogether. In different ways local authorities attempt to assert and exert their regulatory influence as custodians of public space to ensure social order and sound urban environmental management. Normally, a city applies a multiplicity of regulatory devices simultaneously e.g. a combination of stringent enforcement of byelaws with permit systems and market construction to accommodate street vendors. These measures are categorized for reasons of convenience into two: traditional approaches and emerging innovations. The traditional approaches include the use of coercive controls, market schemes and permit systems while the emerging innovations comprise strategic shifts in city policy which include permitted trading zones and new systems of managed markets.

4.2.1 Traditional Approaches: Coercive Intervention

All the cities examined have at various times and under different circumstances applied direct coercive control of street vendors to ‘exclude’ them from occupying public space. In Accra, coercive intervention methods were systematized during the Salifu Amankwa eviction squad era of the 1980s and persisted through the late 1990s. Nairobi, Mumbai, Mexico City (under Uruchurtu), Lagos and the post-apartheid cities of Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg (before 1991) have variously employed violent eviction methods
to reclaim urban public space from illegal vendors especially, in the CBD and other major locations in the city. The use of coercive intervention is evident in other developing cities as well e.g. Bogota (Colombia), Kathmandu (Nepal), Bandung (Indonesia) and Maseru (Lesotho). Generally, these measures are executed with the view to enforcing the legislations governing public space and land use. They normally include raids on trading sites during which there are usually arrests and prosecution, confiscation of wares and demolition of trading structures. Generally, coercive interventions tend to be reactive devices that are employed either intermittently to relieve congestion problems, or to complement other policies such as relocation projects. The city of Lagos exemplifies a situation where systematized coercion is employed as the major policy to address the spatial problem.

4.2.1.1 The Case of the Lagos Environmental Wars

Coercive intervention in public space in Lagos first emerged in the city’s metropolitan administration during the Buhari military dictatorship of the 1980s as part of an ostensible ‘War against Environmental Indiscipline’ (WAI). Environmental Task forces were set up to organize ‘public enlightenment campaigns’ and enforce ‘environmental discipline’ through mobile sanitation courts. Sweeping police raids and demolitions of kiosks and illegal structures of illegal traders etc. were permanent features. The application of brute force did not succeed in eliminating vendors from the streets until the ‘war’ collapsed with the military dictatorship that authored it. It was however, soon to be resuscitated in 2003 under the banner, ‘Kick against Indiscipline’ (KAI). KAI is part of the city’s effort to restore its ‘lost
image’ and to “sanitize and beautify” the state. In prosecuting the second war, there is a state-wide ban on street trading. A paramilitary ‘environmental sanitation brigade’ has been set up; tasked to remove illegal street traders, ‘combat ecological abuses’, and coordinate monthly street cleaning exercises. Street captains have been appointed for the various suburbs to identify and arrest people who flout new environmental and sanitation laws. Offenders risk a six month to a year’s jail term or a $27 dollar fine or both.

Coercive measures have rarely been sustainable solutions beyond the immediate short term. Vendors will reasonably weigh the opportunity cost of compliance with coercive systems e.g. raids and evictions against the cost of non-compliance coercion. It is comparatively more costly to remain in unauthorized space and risk coercion only when there is a better spatial accommodation alternative being offered. Hence, where coercive measures are used as a stand-alone policy, they are unlikely to succeed in getting vendors off the street. This problem is exacerbated due to the large control costs governments have to incur to control access to street vending, which effectively makes streets in most cities an open or non-excludable resource. This explains why in many cities, where coercive intervention has been used, resilient street vendors have soon returned to the streets. Such resilience is recorded in Accra under Salifu Amankwa and Mexico City under Uruchurtu. Other instances include the persistent return of vendors to Bogotá’s historical center, the CBD of Accra and Bandung and the streets of streets of Harare and New Delhi.

3 ibid
5 IPS News, 2003, November 14
4.2.2 Construction of Marketplaces

Marketplaces built by local governments may be part of a comparatively longer-term alternative to resolving the spatial problem. In principle, a well-resourced market facility presents vendors with higher opportunity cost situations of continuing their operations in unauthorized public spaces. While catering to the accommodation needs of street vendors, local authorities are also able to ease congestion in areas of previous vendor concentrations. Market construction, therefore, tends to be the most common approach cities employ to resolve the spatial problem e.g. Lagos, Mexico, Durban and Johannesburg Nairobi and Accra.

During the 1970s and 1980s, for instance, the City of Lagos constructed a number of open markets with stalls in some designated sites and by 1997, the metropolitan authority had altogether constructed more than 300 recognized markets in Mushin, Somolu, Ikeja and Apapa-Ajengunle. Similarly, under Uruchurtu, Mexico City executed a robust market construction program, building closed-top markets for recognized vendors groups. The markets were resourced with essential facilities including lighting, water, refrigeration, security guards, child care centers and other modern conveniences. As an additional incentive to win the cooperation of vendors and get them to relocate, stalls were offered at symbolic rental costs to vendors.\(^6\) Further, in the post-Uruchurtu era, newly constructed modern markets called *plazas* were constructed for street vendors who were to be relocated from the historical center of the Federal District. These markets were built for vendor unions at their expense. Another instance of market construction projects exists in Durban where markets

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\(^6\) Cross no date
are provided with a range of facilities including dormitory facilities, which is in turn boosting the regional *muthi* trade.\(^7\) The Warwick Junction market project is the most commonly cited of Durban’s investment in market space for vendors. The city of Johannesburg is also currently developing a number of markets in and around its inner city for vendors having already completed some market projects in Yeoville and Hillbrow, the Metro Mall in Newtown, the Mai Mai market in Bree Street and the Faraday market.\(^8\) Although, the construction of markets has enormous potential in resolving the spatial problem, their execution, in principle and in practice, is fraught with a number of constraints and problems. There cannot be universal standards or prerequisites for success but some thematic issues are common to most of the cases examined especially the ‘technical backlog’ problem.

4.2.2.1 The Technical Backlog Problem and Others

In most of the market schemes a technical issue arises at inception as a result of resource and capacity constraints. We can establish this sense by applying the test: ‘Does the local authority have the resources to provide market accommodation for all the vendors it seeks to relocate?’ If the response is positive, the rest is a matter of vendors’ affordability of the cost of market space and other issues relating to implementation and management logistics required to ensure the sustainability of the project, including the provision of essential services e.g. environmental services. However, if the answer is in the negative, then

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\(^7\) The *muthi* trade refers to a vibrant trade in African native herbal medicine with a long history dating to pre-apartheid and apartheid areas.

\(^8\) City of Johannesburg 2003a
an incipient ‘technical backlog’ problem is eminent. It is a common occurrence that constructed markets tend not to have the capacity to accommodate all the target vendors.

Although pragmatically, constructed markets may not reasonably accommodate ‘everybody,’ we may rightly anticipate a mitigated success of policy if not absolute failure, when the backlog is substantial. For example, in 2003 after decades of ad hoc relocations, the Nairobi City Council (NCC) set out to construct a 7,000 capacity market facility outside its CBD for street vendors when it faced an estimated target vendor population of between 50,000 and 100,000. Under the circumstances, the ‘technical backlog’ question was starkly evident. Similarly, in the post-Uruchurtu market program in Mexico City, about 24 modern commercial plazas of 7,000-capacity were constructed to accommodate about 10,000 street vendors who were to be relocated from the Historical Center. Another example can be seen in Johannesburg’s ongoing market projects, which upon completion will house between 3,000 and 4,000 traders even though there are an estimated 15,000 street traders in unauthorized spaces in the inner city. Usually, technical backlog problems tend to breed administrative corruption in the allocation of space and clientelist relationship between local authorities and street vendors seen in Mexico, Bogotá, and Nairobi etc. This occurs because the competition for trading spaces in the built markets creates fertile grounds for exploitative practices and corruption. In other instances, logistical problems and inherent implementation and operation costs may render the market construction alternative ineffective.
The use of markets as a device in both accommodating vendors and maintaining sound management of the urban environment and public space is further limited by a number of factors. The quality of services provided with commercial space, vendors’ affordability of rental costs, location of market facility and traders’ access to clientele etc. together determine vendors’ opportunity cost function. The construction of markets alone does not suggest a success in policy. For example, costs and location of market facilities seem to be very important determinants of success. In the case of Nairobi, for instance, the existence of vendors without the wherewithal to access the rental facilities lead to widespread infiltration of the new market facility leading to congestion and increased stress on the already limited infrastructure and services.

Further, designed for efficient accommodation, the commercial plazas of Mexico City did not have the previous street space advantage of coherent pedestrian flows. The ‘hiding’ layout stalls in a rat-warren of narrow corridors and the relative remoteness of the plazas themselves led to loss of clientele. As a result, there were high absent rates as vendors in some areas returned to the streets. The absent rates reached high levels of between 80 percent and 90 percent for some stalls in some areas e.g. San Antonio Abad and Conjunto La Merc’d.12 Those who remained in their stalls maneuvered their way to sell in adjacent streets.

In discussing market construction as a policy device, it is important to stress that very successful policies tended to be those where the location, design and management of markets involved the active participation of street vendors. The Warwick Junction Project in Durban
and some plaza projects in Mexico City e.g. Pino Suarez and Meaves are success cases of projects where vendor participation paid off and as a result vendor occupancy rates remained intact.

While market construction is a strong policy tool, particularly since it actually caters to vendor accommodation needs in cities, it is generally costly to implement and maintain. None of the relevant city cases succeeded in eliminating the presence of street traders from public space with market projects alone. In spite of the 300 markets constructed in Lagos and the numerous markets constructed in Mexico City, there were still a dearth of commercial space for traders and hence the number of vendors operating in unauthorized space continued to soar. In fact by 1993, the numbers had doubled in Mexico City to about 200,000. Even granted the availability of financial resources, it may not be pragmatically reasonable to accommodate all vendors in well constructed markets for reasons that space does not infinitely abound in cities and towns, most of which are already advancing in their urban sprawl, having exhausted most of the space in the central city and its surrounds.

4.2.3 Permit Systems

The use of vending permits and license systems are some of the direct attempts by the local authorities to exert some control over access to the virtually ‘non-excludable’ urban public space. Besides revenue generation, these regulatory devices also enable local authorities to manage numbers and prevent congestion and related environmental problems. However, the existence of an effective enforcement mechanism is critical in the implementation of licensing regimes for the policy to be of any use at all i.e. for overcoming
the free rider problem. All the cities examined pursue some kind of permit or license system under several different regulatory arrangements and with varying regulatory objectives. For instance, by 1993, Mexico City had advanced from an initial slash in the number of vendor permits through a ban in the issuance of permits to the voiding of all issued valid permits. The progressive adjustments were in response to the unyielding growth in vendor numbers in the city’s Historical Center. Wielding permits or licensing as a regulatory tool is effective when there is no excessive demand for space for trading purposes. Where the demand exceeds the supply application of permit regimes are usually beset with a number of problems. The case of Mumbai presents a unique instance, where a sustained two-decade freeze in licensing as a prime tool for spatial regulation induced the ‘critical backlog’ problem among several others.

4.2.3.1 Critical Backlog and Reverse Licensing in Mumbai

For two decades since 1978, the Bombay Municipal Council terminated the issuance of licenses to street vendors as a step towards stemming increased growth in numbers and the associated externalities. Vigorous enforcement measures complemented the cessation in the issuance of licensing. However, the two-decade cessation did not translate into the elimination of street vendors from public space – the contrary was the case. For instance, research indicates that the municipal corporation had issued licenses to only 14,000 of the estimated 250,000 vendors in Mumbai.13 The cessation effectively produced an accretion of vendors in public space, whose ‘illegal’ occupation expanded the scope of the city’s enforcement machinery. The accumulating backlog that developed over the period is the

13 Bhowmik Sharit K. No Date, ‘Urban Responses to Street Trading in India’ (p. 8)
‘critical backlog’; an inadvertent creation of deliberate official policy, which indicates that simple termination of licensing without the provision of alternative trading spaces does not resolve the spatial problem – if anything it helps to precipitate or aggravate it. The ensuing tension between street traders and the city management culminated in the invitation of the courts to the resolution of the spatial problem, which admonished city management to rethink its policy and consider creating permitted zones.

Rather than create permitted street trading areas as directed by the courts, the city resigned to a policy of reverse licensing known as the *pauti* system (1988 and 1997). Under this system, street traders paid fees to the municipal corporation not for rental but for ‘unauthorized occupation cum refuse removal charges,’ and such fee payments entitled traders to trade. The *pauti* system apparently sold well and a survey in 1997 indicated that on average, about 22,000 vendors were issued such *pautis* daily. In effect, the *pauti* system conferred de facto recognition to the location and activities of street vendors and served usefully as a means of revenue mobilization for environmental management. Although it provided room for street traders to proceed with their businesses, the pauti system had a number of pitfalls including complaints of official corruption and charges of fundamental illegality.

Although a Bombay High Court ruling effectively terminated the *pauti* system in 1998, a survey of street traders showed a general preference for the *pauti* system, indicating traders’ willingness to pay daily official charges for their use of public space. The scrapping of the *pauti* system led to a vacuum of official relationship between the Municipal

14 Anjaria (2006: 2141)
Corporation and unlicensed street traders. The non-official or illegal status of vendors resulted in bribery and rent-seeking practices as street vendors engaged functionaries of the Municipal Corporation and agent musclemen to prevent their eviction. A study of the National Association of Street Vendors of India estimated the collection of rents to the tune of Rs 4 billion (or $90.8 million) annually.\textsuperscript{15}

Although born out of a difficult situation of growing vendor numbers in the streets, the freezing of licensing as a regulatory device could not have been an efficient alternative. Since, the local authority did not provide any alternative commercial space for vendors, the opportunity cost of operating in the streets was virtually zero. Hence, there was no incentive whatsoever for vendors to vacate the streets despite the coercive enforcement measures applied. The subsequent reverse licensing underscored the inefficiency of the license termination because if street vendors were prepared to pay illegal rents, they would likely pay for the use of space that was properly regulated and provisioned with environmental services.

\textsuperscript{15} Bhowmik Sharit K. No Date, ‘Urban Responses to Street Trading in India’ (p. 5)
4.3 EMERGING INNOVATIONS

There are a number of emerging approaches to spatial regulation in some cities. The use of the term, ‘innovations’ does not in anyway suggest that these are superior to the previously discussed measures. They fundamentally entail the similar regulatory elements such as enforcement, markets, and permits that attempt to raise the opportunity cost of unregulated street vending. The differences involve the strategic policy outlooks and creative ways by which hitherto old structures are coordinated in new ways to accommodate street vending activities on the urban landscape. Generally, the emerging innovative measures, spring from strategic shifts in city policy to novel perspectives that incline towards accommodating informal trading activities to a greater or lesser extent.

4.3.1 Strategic Shifts in Urban Policy

Some cities have chartered new courses with fresh strategic thinking about the realities of the informal trading or informal economy, the urban environment and public space. For example, Durban recognizes street trading as a permanent feature of its landscape, critical to the development of the local urban economy. With developed policies for the informal economy and street trading, the city has evolved new programs and regulatory frameworks that seek to incorporate street trading into urban policy and planning. Cape Town and Johannesburg have each developed informal trading policies along similar lines as Durban with differing objectives and to a limited extent in practice or implementation. For instance, in both Cape Town and Johannesburg, the attempts to incorporate street trading into broad city policy are partially motivated by the objective to clean up and regenerate inner
city areas to attract businesses and prevent the decline in property values.

Further, in Mumbai, court decisions and leadership have legitimized street vendors’ constitutional rights to a livelihood by using public space for trading purposes. The invitation of the courts to the spatial problem in Mumbai was at the instance of street vendors. There is currently ongoing redefinition of urban space in order to accommodate informal traders. With their long-term outlooks, the redefinition of street vending in the various contexts inform the evolution of new policy, institutional structures and regulatory devices that are employed to resolve the spatial problem. The specific regulatory devices include permitted trading zones, evolved new markets and market management systems.

4.3.2 Permitted Trading Zones

Permitted zones are spaces in the city, usually streets, pavements, precincts and other public circulation areas designated for trading purposes. The creation of ‘permitted zones’ represents official compromise of public spaces in the face of prevailing realities or scarcities of commercial space for informal trading activities. Permitted zones also represent an important regulatory measure that introduces some form of proprietary access rights to a practically non-excludable resource. Access to space is almost invariably restricted by permit fees and subject to compliance with environmental and sanitation standards and obligations. Permitted zones exist in different forms and under different institutional arrangements in cities such as Durban, Johannesburg, Cape Town and Mumbai.

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16 Bhowmik 2005
17 Anjaria 2006
4.3.2.1 Durban: Street Trade

Durban’s street trading legislative framework sets out permitted zones and demarcates trading sites throughout the city notably in the CBD core, the Beachfront, and other demarcated sites. Access rights are contingent on purchased permits. Rental costs range from basic through higher differentiated rental costs depending on the size of space, desirability of location and the level of services provided. A basic package of services includes basic shelter, solid waste removal, water and toilets, lighting and storage facilities. City Health, a unit in the city’s Environmental Health Division, focuses specifically on street trading. It organizes environmental and public health training programs for traders and works to upgrade the skills and working environments of street traders. Meanwhile, Durban is shifting the enforcement of legislation governing street trade from criminal to administrative law.

4.3.2.1.2 Durban: Itinerant Trade

A separate policy framework regulates itinerant trading, defines itinerant trading zones throughout the city, demarcates itinerant trading spaces, and sets the maximum amount of permits to be issued for each zone. Since the policy goal is to enhance sustainable urban management while accommodating itinerant trading in its open spaces and markets, the policy further directs local government to facilitate the education of itinerant traders about litter control and refuse disposal options. It requires the municipality to inform traders about its waste management activities, procedures, strategies and programs. The policy makes it mandatory for all permit holders to sign a pledge on waste management, disposal and control.
The validity and renewability of vendor permits are subject to vendors’ performance on litter control.

4.3.2.3 Johannesburg: Legal Street Trading Zones

In Johannesburg, the city’s Department of Economic development creates legal trading zones and outlines governing regulations for the permitted areas. However, a private company, the Metropolitan Trading Company (MTC) allocates space to vendors and manages street trading. The allocation of trading spaces is contingent on vendors’ signing of a Lease of Agreement and Code of Conduct, which indicates vendor’s promise to comply with health and environmental regulations. Traders are obliged to keep their trading areas clean and responsibly dispose of litter using council-provided receptacles. The city couples its permitted trading zones policy with strict enforcement of new street trading bylaws to prevent trading in non-designated spaces e.g. parks. The establishment of the Johannesburg Metro Police in 2001 was part of efforts to strengthen the city’s enforcement capability.

4.3.2.4 Cape Town: Designated Trading Areas

The City of Cape Town demarcates trading spaces and issues trading permits for the use of space. It categorizes trading spaces in public areas into three: tertiary, secondary and primary ‘economic centers.’ Tertiary economic centers include pedestrian malls, designated markets and trading areas in the CBD. Secondary centers include designated trading bays along major pedestrian traffic routes, assigned streets and open trading areas. The primary economic centers comprise designated trading bays in high pedestrian flow areas in housing estates and
townships. The guidelines for space allocation recommends the use of uniform vending structures, which design the city determines and the cost of which are incorporated into the rental costs for traders. Generally, the structures are to be dismountable and freestanding i.e. not attached to any building, structure or pole.

4.3.2.5 Mumbai: Leadership of the Courts

The creation of ‘permissible’ and ‘non-permissible’ trading areas in Mumbai is a work-in-progress spearheaded by the courts. A court appointed committee is currently working in consultation with stakeholder interests to identify and designate streets in various wards as ‘permissible’ vending areas. So far, the committee has designated about 187 hawking zones throughout the city.\textsuperscript{18} The rethinking of urban space to make commercial space available for street vendors stems from important court precedents and decisions. The courts have underlined vendors’ unrestrained rights to public space for trading purposes. However, acknowledging the congestibility of space as a public good, the courts note that the use of public space for vending purposes is only possible upon the necessary condition that proper regulatory mechanisms exist without which the very essence of streets, pavements and roads would be defeated.\textsuperscript{19}

4.3.2.6 Spatial Leases/ Business Improvement Districts

‘Spatial leases’ involve the outsourcing of significant parts of inner city management to property owners or private companies in public-private partnerships (PPP). It proceeds

\textsuperscript{18} Anjaria 2006: 2141
\textsuperscript{19} Govt. of India 2006
through two parallel arrangements: application for spatial proprietary rights and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). In the first instance, property owners in a defined area of the city may apply for a sidewalk lease for further renting out to street traders. They may put up structures for street traders and manage the informal trading activities outside the buildings they own. Anglo American Properties (AMPROS) in Johannesburg for example, has applied for a number of their properties.20

Founded on the City Improvement Districts (CID) concept, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) involves a private-sector-driven, precinct-based city management system, where property owners in a defined jurisdiction form a private section 21 company to assume management responsibility for a defined geographic area. The property owners determine and agree to fund supplementary and complementary services to those normally provided by the local authority in order to maintain and manage public space and the urban environment at a superior level and thereby maintain or increase property and investment values.21 The company allocates space for street vending and manages the informal trading activities within its jurisdiction. The company also provides environmental services such as pavement cleaning and waste management services. It also maintains upgrading of the environment, order and safety. Both Cape Town and Johannesburg implement forms of BIDs/CIDs. In Johannesburg, for example, an established section 21-company sets up and manages at least five CIDs in the Inner City and Braamfontein e.g. Retail Improvement District, Central

20 Lund 2003
Improvement District and the Benrose Improvement District. Rates paid to access trading spaces under the CIDs are comparatively higher but according to local officials operating the CIDs, there is a noticeable difference between the private sector managed and local authority managed areas. The private system is usually associated with more orderly, stricter enforcement of bylaws so traders keep to demarcated sites and comply with environmental regulations.

4.3.3 Discussion of Permitted Trading Zones

Permitted trading zones can only be analyzed by their specific form or nature and the particular contexts within which they are implemented. They do not lend themselves to wholesale analysis. However, it is evident that permitted trading zones help overcome the resource and logistical challenges that will normally be involved in building marketplaces by creating legal commercial space in hitherto unauthorized public space for street traders. The success of a permitted trading zone will also be contingent on the bundle of provisioned essential environmental services and regulatory enforcement that altogether creates a congenial trading environment and effectively raises street vendors’ true costs of operating elsewhere in unauthorized space.

Furthermore, the regulatory intent of city managements and collaborating private actors are critical to the success of permitted trading zones. For instance, the creation of permitted zones in Durban and Mumbai clearly exhibits a motivation to create commercial space for street traders as a matter of urgent urban management priority. In the case of spatial

22 Ibid
leases or permitted trading zones in the BIDs of Cape Town and Johannesburg, the prime intent is to secure or enhance property values. It is possible that property owners or private section 21 companies (essentially composed of property owners) would not have the incentives to permit growth in street trading activities because of its overall impact on property values. Under such arrangements, outsourcing of city management functions could lead to a form of private sector dictatorship that excludes other urban citizens from participation in urban commercial space. If all necessary conditions critical to an effective and efficient permitted trading zone existed, there would yet be the overarching limitation of available space, which will likely vary inversely with vendor demand for permitted space. There is a limit to how much informal street activity permitted spaces can carry irrespective of the quality of environmental services and the effective management mechanisms that are in place.

4.4 New Markets and Management Arrangements

As cities think strategically about providing appropriate permanent accommodation for street traders, the establishment of markets assumes growing importance. The major difference between these markets and traditional ones lies in the emergence of new management systems that ensure the provisioning of essential facilities and services. Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg present clear examples of such evolved market forms. However, Durban is unique in the sense that the city maintains the traditional functions of establishing markets and managing them. On the other hand, Cape Town and Johannesburg adopt partnerships with the private sector to provide management and environmental services to market traders.
The different market management forms discussed briefly in the succeeding subsection includes the pilot area-based management system in Durban and outsourcing of market management functions in Cape Town and Johannesburg.

4.4.1 Area-Based Management: Durban

Durban’s Informal Trading and Small Business Opportunity (ITSBO) constructs major markets and satellite markets. To provide improved working environments for traders, the city commits substantial resources to provide essential infrastructure and services including environmental services. For example, Durban’s North Central and South Central Local Councils whose jurisdictions constitute Durban’s CBD spent about $6.4 million to provide shelter, dormitory/hostel facilities, water and ablution facilities etc. for traders in 2000. The city employs a pilot area-based management system in its management of the markets. This comprises a hierarchical network of area managers and site supervisors who focus on area-specific work and provide training and support to informal enterprises or ‘small business operators’. The management scheme entails the active involvement of traders in inclusive and participatory governance practices that offers space for ongoing interaction and negotiation with informal trader associations.

4.4.2 Outsourcing of Market Management Functions

Unlike Durban, Cape Town outsources its market management function to private actors by competitive tender. Although the city may sign management contracts with commercial operators, contracts with trader associations tend to be more common and successful tenders
obtain the management contract for a reasonable period after which it becomes open again. City policy requires management agents to sign Service Level Agreements with the city, clearly spelling out the parties’ responsibilities and penalties for non-compliance. Normally, the management agent is required to provide ablution and storage facilities and management of all aspects of the market including security, cleansing and collection of fees from traders and maintenance. Alternatively, the city may issue permits directly to individual traders but the service provider manages other aspects of the market such as ablution, storage and cleansing facilities and security.

Johannesburg’s Inner City Street Trading Management Strategy provides for the setting up of markets for street traders in disused buildings in the inner core of the city and the incorporation of companies to manage them with 30 percent of shares allocated to the street traders.23 Currently, the Metropolitan Trading Company (MTC) develops and maintains markets, provides infrastructure for informal traders and oversees property administration and facilities management. The city’s Department for Economic Development identifies new markets, coordinates trading activities and facilities, and facilitates skills development and support for the city’s informal traders.24

23 Grest 2001: X
4.4.3 Discussion of New Market Management Forms

The innovations in the management markets are only different from traditional market construction schemes in terms of ensuring their maintenance and sustainability over the long term. The differences between the Durban model and Johannesburg’s outsourcing alternative border on effectiveness and efficiency. Durban’s area-based management system, while a form of decentralized management, continues to be centralized to the extent that it rests mainly on the shoulders of the city authority. In the case of Cape Town and Johannesburg, the management function is outsourced to private actors. Whichever of the two alternatives is more effective or efficient is not a matter of cursory judgment; rather it will depend on the prevailing contextual realties in either case. However, pursuing the Durban route demands immense financial and resource capability and elaborate management machinery that reaches to the ground where traders operate.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regulatory Device</th>
<th>Potential</th>
<th>Limitation</th>
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| Enforcement (normative and systematized)              | 1. All forms of spatial regulation need some level of enforcement to be successful  
2. Particularly useful when used in conjunction with other alternatives e.g. markets, permitted zones | 1. Moral/Ethical questions usually associated with human rights issues e.g. the right to livelihood  
2. Notably problematic when systematized and used as stand alone approach e.g. Lagos  
3. Problems with sustainability over the long term e.g. Lagos |
| Marketplaces or malls built by local authorities      | 1. Have long term outlook and provide permanent accommodation needs  
2. Where applicable, provisioning of services e.g. ablution, storage, and environmental services offer a preferable alternative to street vendors e.g. Durban  
3. Convenient for managing authorities to regulate informal vending activities and ensure compliance with regulations | 1. Construction costs  
2. Relocation/registration implementation bottlenecks e.g. Nairobi  
3. Vendors’ affordability issues  
4. ‘Technical Backlog’ problems e.g. Nairobi  
5. Environmental and other services may be lacking or may be at inefficient levels of delivery |
| Ordinary Permit Systems without coordinated zoned policy | 1. Provides means of checking congestion in public spaces  
2. Flexibility to vary permits with regards to demand for space | 1. Do not necessarily entail the provision of essential environmental services  
2. Varying permit numbers have ‘critical backlog’ effects e.g. Mumbai |
| Permitted Zones (Privately managed)                   | 1. Ease resource and implementation constraints involved in constructed markets  
2. Agents providing environmental services needed to create a congenial trading environment  
3. There is clear proprietary rights of access which makes effective regulation possible | 1. Regulatory intent may not favor commitments to accommodate vendors e.g. in the case of property owners managing zones  
2. Prohibitive fees may exclude some vendors and defeat the aim of policy |
| Permitted Zones (government managed)                  | 1. Provides clear proprietary rights of access paving way for effective regulation  
2. Strong tendency to have in-built socially sensitive mechanisms where government is accountable to the people  
3. Lies within traditional mandate of local governments | 1. Inefficiencies in implementation and management may defeat the aim of policy  
2. Higher demand for space may constrain ability to accommodate vendors because of limited availability of space |
CHAPTER 5: RESOLVING THE SPATIAL PROBLEM IN ACCRA

The spatial problem is essentially a two-fold problem: providing commercial space for informal traders and finding a means to deal with congestion and environmental externalities associated with the location and activities of informal street trading. Both parts of the problem as indicated in Chapter 1 are part of the bigger problem of dearth of commercial space and failed or malfunctioning planning and land use systems and poor environmental conditions. As a medium to long-term approach, an optimal solution will ensure a sound management of the urban built and natural environment without threatening the livelihood alternatives of the urban majority.

In theory and practice, we are certain that left to itself alone the market will not resolve the spatial problem. Therefore, the needed optimal solution must necessarily entail some form of public intervention. As a necessary condition, the emergent optimal regulatory alternative ought to raise effectively vendors’ opportunity cost of trading in unauthorized public spaces. This is important for compliance and success of policy over the long-term. Which of the traditional options or combinations thereof will offer the optimal solution to the spatial problem of Accra: stringent enforcement, permit systems or construction of market centers?

5.1 STRINGENT ENFORCEMENT OF BYELAWS

There are existing options within the ambit of the law to remove all street vendors from unauthorized public space in the streets, pavements, walkways and other public circulation areas in the central city and elsewhere. Should all vendors occupying public space
illegally be evicted? If forcible eviction were the most preferred alternative, all that would be needed would be a robust eviction machinery to be backed by already existing city byelaws and regulations. As other cities in this study, Accra has already seen such robust measures in the past most of which were short-lived. A basic understanding of the situation and dynamics of Accra’s urban informal economy, just as prevails in other low-income developing cities, should be sufficient for anyone to acknowledge the practical absurdity inherent in a proposed wholesale eviction decision. The informal traders and the spaces they illegally occupy are not separately and neutrally occurring phenomena. Rather, in complex interconnected ways, they partially represent products of the urban outcome and the situation of urban planning and administration.

Eviction of vendors from a particular precinct will likely lead to vendor’s occupation of other precincts in the central city or elsewhere or alternatively, there might be a later ‘bouncing back’ of vendor activity at the initial point. Evictions will make sense when economic alternatives exist and when the alternatives subject vendors’ to higher opportunity costs of engaging in street vending. Therefore, downright stringent enforcement as a major spatial regulatory policy as prevails in Lagos may neither be warranted nor appropriate for the purposes of Accra. That notwithstanding, nearly all regulatory option must necessarily be complemented by a well-resourced and properly coordinated enforcement machinery.

5.2 PERMIT SYSTEMS

Should we assign access rights through the issuance of permits or licenses? Informal trading in the public spaces of Accra’s CBD and the railway terminal has always involved
payment of some fees to the Accra Metropolitan Authority (AMA). Such fee payments operate in a similar fashion to issued permits since payments thereof grant vendors’ access rights to public space for trading purposes. Hence, there has always been some form of permit system in operation except that this was not implemented in a coordinated manner that coupled fee-paying rights of access with the provision of essential environmental services e.g. waste disposal services and others necessary to promote a healthy and safe urban environment. Meanwhile, implementing permit systems tends to be problematic when demand for trading space is high as occurred in Mumbai and Mexico City.

As the current situation in Accra’s CBD stands, an effectively implemented and enforced permit system that sought to curb congestion externalities would at best exclude a good number of street vendors who would likely spillover into other areas due to the ‘critical backlog’ problem. Overall, whatever the mode of fee-paying rights of access prevailed in the central city, it is evident that the carrying capacity of public space in the CBD was being overstretched beyond its limits. The current relocation of vendors to the newly constructed Pedestrian Mall outside the CBD is an important indication that the prevalent fee system was not an optimal regulatory choice.

5.3 BUILDING OF MARKET CENTERS

Nevertheless, how optimal an alternative is the construction of the Pedestrian Mall to the resolution of the spatial problem? Although, the mall offers superior advantage of permanent accommodation including essential social and environmental services, it is significantly limited by its capacity constraints. As indicated previously, the number of street
vendors runs into an estimated hundreds of thousands while the capacity of the constructed mall is only about 4,000. Hence, the technical backlog problems experienced in the cities such as Nairobi, Johannesburg and Mexico City is evident in the case of Accra. Hence, without even considering the problems associated with affordability and location/clientele, the success of the relocation policy is already threatened at inception. It cannot be denied that constructed markets present an ideal means to resolving the spatial problem on both fronts: accommodation and negative externalities.

However, market construction is heavily dependent on a city’s financial strength and the availability of space or land. Realistically, the city may not be in the position to finance as many market projects as is sufficient to ease street trading entirely. None of the cities under study approached the spatial problem with market construction programs alone. For instance, besides its widely published success in the construction of markets for street vendors Durban, pursues other regulatory devices e.g. permitted zones.

5.4 TOWARDS A STRATEGIC OUTLOOK IN SPATIAL REGULATION

The experiences of some developing cities in the study show some measures that the city of Accra could adopt and adapt to its own context including the rethinking of urban and regulatory policy in broad strategic terms. This involves new policy approaches to resolving the spatial problem that are futuristic in inclination, and which recognize informal trading activities as permanent features of the urban landscape and economy rather than as a fleeting urban phenomenon. Strategic thinking will commence with the development of policies for the informal economy and street trading for the entire city as pertains in Durban, Cape Town
and Johannesburg. An informal trading policy, in particular, will set out the tone for all policy measures and coordination of vending activities with the intent to integrate them into the broad metropolitan planning and urban economic development policies. From the strategic policy standpoint, then, Accra may consider such regulatory novelties as are suitable to its urban context by addressing the two major elements of the spatial problem i.e. providing commercial space and addressing congestion and environmental externalities.

5.4.1 Creating Legal Commercial Space

In the short to medium term, the creation of permitted zones in the central city and elsewhere should help to ease the congestion problems. For policy and implementation purposes urban public spaces need to be carefully mapped out and designated as being for either trading or non-trading purposes. A three-tier classification closely resembling that of Cape Town’s permitted trading zones will be welcome. Primary zones would involve all street and road pavements, and walkways and the surrounds of established markets in the central city and other central areas. The secondary zones would comprise all cab, trotro (minivan) and bus stations and terminals in the central city and elsewhere. Tertiary zones would encompass all streets, road reservations, and other public spaces in predominantly residential neighborhoods. The different zones may have different conditions and hence, necessitate correspondingly varying regulations and policies.

Generally, however, vendors’ access to carefully designated permitted trading areas must be regulated by purchased permits and vendors’ commitment to comply with spatial and environmental regulations and standards. The lesson from this is borrowed from the
‘good practice’ policies seen in both Durban and Cape Town where the validity of vendor permits is pegged to vendors’ performance on environmental sanitation and litter control in the public spaces where vendors operate. However, the provision of essential environmental infrastructure and services e.g. waste bins and regular collection systems ought to predicate such expectations of vendor compliance with environmental regulations. It is the provision of such reliable services for traders in designated trading spaces that brings in the question of agency. Should the City of Accra pursue the Durban approach where the city controls commercial spaces through innovative decentralized methods or should the Accra follow the outsourcing example of Cape Town and Johannesburg?

There is no simple answer to the above question. Accra may not have the financial strength and the human resources needed to evolve the trading and management structures in Durban. A likely option would be to engage the private sector through some form of partnership. However, in the recent past and even currently, other private sector contracts in waste collection and management throughout the city has yielded mixed results and hence, any attempts towards outsourcing management functions to private agencies must be pursued with caution. The City Improvement District concept has yet to enter urban planning and administration in Ghana and its implementation will doubtless raise an outcry from civil society. The Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) may consider a socially sensitive variant of the CIDs for sections of the CBD on a pilot basis.

On the other hand, AMA could contract out management functions to private agents including the issuance of permits and the provision of environmental and sanitation services
in the permitted areas. Whichever form of partnership emerges, there must be functioning enforcement machinery that involves the collaborative effort of the metropolitan guards and active self-regulatory systems of vendor associations and their leaderships. The Durban approach of systematized consultation and constant engagement of vendors in the regulatory process is recommended and preferable to the common approach of wielding the ‘big stick.’

5.4.2 Reviewing Traditional Markets

Alongside finding novel approaches to creating commercial space, it is equally important for city to review prevailing concepts of traditional markets in city and the region. In the near longer-term the existence of established markets presents the most pragmatic and relatively more permanent resolve than the construction of new plazas or pedestrian malls. This is because these markets already exist and provide commercial space to informal traders with fixed legal vending spaces in a manner that makes it convenient for city managements to manage and regulate the activities therein. However, the potential of these markets to contribute to the resolution of the spatial problem will remain deficient as long as there are many disincentives for market traders and vendors to keep to their allocated spaces and stalls.

Existing traditional markets suffer a myriad of debilitating conditions and the environmental situation in most markets is in deplorable states. There are usually no drainage facilities, improperly functioning waste collection systems, if any and dilapidated structures, which together mar not only the ambience of the trading environment but also pose health-threatening conditions for all its users. Considering the fact that informal trading absorbs a sizable portion of the workforce, especially women, and the fact that there is a dearth in
commercial space, it is only reasonable that the improvement and upgrade of traditional markets be prioritized in city policy and planning. These are domains where city management and regulation could be reviewed with the adoption of more efficient and effective socially sensitive private sector partnerships through the outsourcing or contracting out of management and service functions. A referent case is that of Cape Town where contractual arrangements have brought private agents, mainly companies formed by informal traders themselves, into market management and environmental services provisioning obligations.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND POLICY OPTIONS

6.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

The theoretical foundation set forth with Hart’s (1973) seminal work may stand challenged today with a number of theoretical controversies. However, one thing that remains unchallenged is the existence of the same ‘army of reserve labor’ thriving outside of formal work in Accra. More than three decades after Hart’s (1973) work on Accra, what has changed about this part of the urban economy perhaps, includes the visible growth in numbers and scope of activities and the growing presence of informal activity in public space. Over the period, population growth, heightened rural-urban migration, inadequate formal jobs and the effects of economic structural adjustment etc. appear to be lending momentum to the growth and dynamics of street economic activity. The prevailing growth and the interaction of street economic activity with public space and the urban environment signals even higher degrees of pressure on public space in the near future subject as the demand for commercial space for informal trading purposes rise. Without appropriate policy responses, including functional urban environmental systems and services and creative strategies to accommodate informal vendors, the urban congestion and related externalities associated with the activities and location of informal operators in the street economy will increase.

The current metropolitan initiative of relocating all street vendors from the CBD of Accra to the 4,000-capacity Pedestrian Mall is clearly inadequate as a measure to solve the spatial congestion and littering problems associated with vendor activities. In the first place,
street vending occurs all over the city in varying concentrations. While the central city may have higher intensity or concentration of street vending and associated externalities, there are other areas with similar concentrations of vending activities and nearly similar congestion and littering problems. Furthermore, the frequent attention on the central city alone tends to overlook the environmental problems in the immediate environment of the home and neighborhood, which functions dually as places of work and residence. Meanwhile, the immediate environment of the home and neighborhood provides has particular importance for the health many city residents especially, for low-income residential areas where the majority of Accra’s urban residents live. These areas concentrate most of the environmental problems in the city with very poor environmental services and facilities such as poor or non-existent drainage systems, absence of functioning waste collections systems and numerous households without toilet facilities. The existing poor environmental and sanitation conditions in the residential areas can hardly be attributed wholly or significantly to informal economic activities in the home and neighborhood environment. Rather, they tend to be particularly indicative of the consequences of failed urban planning, policy and administration and poor levels of environmental and social services provisioning. Against this background, the relocation of street vendors from the CBD does not resolve the underlying environmental problems, which are hardly restricted to the CBD.

Furthermore, the relocation does not present a sustainable and long-term potential to solve the spatial accommodation needs of informal traders in the city. With the clear evidence of a technical backlog at the project’s inception, it is unlikely that in the long-term the city would succeed in reclaiming public space from informal vendors in the central city.
It is even more likely that many vendors might locate in other public spaces in the central city outside the CBD and may eventually make their way to their former locations in the CBD thus, defeating the aim of policy. It is important for the city of Accra to approach the spatial problem from a strategic perspective and avoid the short-term reactive responses such as periodic evictions or hurried construction of marketplaces as is the case in the current policy. In fact, if the city’s motivation for the relocation, however explicitly or implicitly, is to clean up in preparation for its impending hosting of the African Nations Cup soccer competition, then the ultimate failure of policy is obvious and complete. However, in the short to medium term, a more strategic and comprehensive approach that draws on the lessons of some of the cities under study could help resolve the spatial problem.

Two principal pathways that could help resolve the spatial problem in the city of Accra include regulatory and urban policy measures that will provide accommodation for street vendors and ensure a sound urban environment for all citizens, including informal traders and vendors themselves. However, the urban planning and policy experience of the cities under study namely, Nairobi, Lagos, Mexico City, Mumbai, Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg show that there is no easy solution. There is no single measure or policy design that leads to an optimal solution. Rather, a combination of policies and regulatory regimes and structures appear to possess superior potential to resolve the problem over the short to medium term. Such bundle of policies and measures include in various forms the development of policies for both street vending policies and the informal economy such as that of Durban, the development of legally permitted zones, and the forging of partnerships with the private sector to provide management and environmental service functions for city
markets. Together, these measures set the tone for addressing the spatial problem from a strategic perspective as compared to reactive regulatory measures e.g. the ongoing relocation of vendors from Accra’s CBD.

6.2 POLICY OPTIONS FOR ACCRA: STRATEGIC POLICY DIRECTION

Accra may consider shifting towards a more strategic conceptualization of informal street trade specifically and the informal economy in general. The example of Durban and Cape Town in developing strategic policies for street trading and the informal economy present useful references. Rather than approach street traders as a nuisance on the urban landscape, strategic policy direction will offer opportunity to incorporate street trade and other informal economic activity into local economic development and into city planning and urban policy. Creating official recognition and framework for official support provides alternative regulatory in-roads into a mainly unregulated component of the urban economy. Such policy frameworks will define the legal context of street trading and outline the obligations and rights of street vendors as urban citizens with a right to livelihood and as partners in the sound management of the urban environment. The arrangement will also provide city authorities with a clear direction for making commercial spaces available in traditional market centers and through other innovative approaches e.g. permitted zones. Further, a strategic policy framework will outline the city’s environmental management objectives regarding commercial spaces and the mode of provisioning commercial spaces with basic environmental structures and services.
The city may find it preferable to advance its processes of strategic policy framework formulation with the active participation of street vendors and their associations. Such ‘participation’ must be beyond the orthodox official consultations to actual active engagement of vendor associations in such a manner that the spatial needs and concerns of vendors and the interest of the general public shapes the final policy outcome and regulatory processes. Such an inclusive approach to policy formulation as in the case of Durban will enhance the likelihood for future policy compliance and will be critical to the sustainability of policy measures and regulations that spring from the broad policy over the long-term. Further, it will offer policy makers the opportunity to build regulatory structures that hinge on efficient and effective self-regulatory mechanisms of the vendor associations themselves and their leaderships. This will normally apply whether in the case of sheltered commercial facilities or open public space derivatives. Such opportunities are already available through existing structures of vendor associations that could be exploited for efficient implementation of policy at the grassroots level.

While it is important to make street vendor associations central to policy and regulatory systems, especially self-regulatory systems, it is equally important to note that such an approach may not necessarily translate into policy success. In some instances, where some city authorities e.g. Cape Town have built regulatory systems of permitted trading zones into existing structures of street vendor associations, the results have been corrupt practices in the allocation and management of space. For instance, in Skinner’s (1999) account of the Mitchell Plain CBD in Cape Town, a referendum requested traders to choose between a permit system where the city authority directly regulated the trading area and a
proposal of the council subleasing trading space to the traders association. Contrary to the city authority’s expectation and preference, the traders voted unanimously for the former. Traders made preference for a direct city-controlled trading zone for a number of reasons. A small group of powerful people (leadership of vendor associations) controlled existing markets and the direct payment of fees to the association leaderships had become fertile grounds for corruption as leaders misappropriated funds and cheated in the allocation of trading sites. Therefore, direct engagement of vendors in the regulatory processes will likely succeed where the associations have not only clearly defined structures but also systems of transparency, accountability to its memberships and in-built checks and balances.

6.3 POLICY OPTIONS: REGULATORY MEASURES

City authorities may reconsider their approach to the provision of market space for informal vendors not. Rather than constructing impressive modern malls that will accommodate only a small fraction of vendors, the city may consider revising the current approach to traditional markets in the city. The traditional markets could be upgraded to include better infrastructures e.g. storage, environmental and other services e.g. waste containers and collection systems, and environmental and sanitation awareness programs for traders etc. Carefully designed partnerships with the private sector could be forged to provide management functions and environmental services. Indeed, private capital would be critical towards upgrading and expanding existing market spaces. Together, these incentives will provide a better commercial space alternative to trading in the streets and ease the growing pressure on streets and other circulation areas in and without the central city.
Further, public-private partnerships could be forged to ensure the establishment of satellite and major markets with sufficient incentives to attract street vendors. Besides providing permanent commercial space for vendors, satellite markets located in strategic areas throughout the city would be a helpful step towards reducing the congestion externalities that tend to concentrate in the central city and affiliate areas. Policy makers may prioritize the provision of essential environmental amenities and services at the outset rather than deferring their provision to a later future time and create market space out of expediency that is devoid of basic infrastructure and services.

Assigning defined areas of public space in the central city as elsewhere for permitted trading purposes will also provide the city with the opportunity to assert its control over public space and enable it to manage more effectively the urban environment while making commercial space available for street vendors. The Permitted zones will need to be designed with particular attention to the needs of other users of the relevant spaces and vendor numbers ought to be restricted to correspond with available space to prevent congestion problems. City management might also consider public-private partnerships, particularly by building a network with vendor organizations to help in the management and provision of environmental services in the permitted zones.

While the CID concept provides a variant of permitted zones, it may only be recommended for implementation in some selected precincts in the central city on a pilot basis. The window of opportunity for introduction already exists in the CBD where private shop owners allow some vendors to put up in the frontages of their shops. A well-coordinated
effort by city management and property owners, backed by legislation, may help create an arrangement for efficient management and provision of environmental services in the selected precincts. However, advance research is important before such idea is sold to property owners. There is equal risk that property owners may use the opportunity to exclude vendors from participation in urban space.

6.4 THE BROADER MACRO FRAMEWORK

The urban street economy in Accra, as in other developing cities, is neither a chance occurrence nor an isolated phenomenon. As indicated previously, it is a product of interplaying factors, including the informal vendors’ quest for commercial space to pursue various livelihood alternatives. The economic activities in the streets and other public spaces constitute a spatial projection of an urban economy that has not developed along similar lines as the western model it was originally built to fit. As many other developing sub-Saharan African cities, Accra has only progressed from the colonial center of extraction it once was to a center of distribution of predominantly imported goods and the urban street economy serves a vital retail function in the chain of distribution.

From a longer-term macro perspective, the resolution of the spatial problem transcends the provision of physical commercial space for vendors to include structural changes in the economy and society. For instance, it calls for growth of the economy to create job opportunities for the youth and a more equitable and even distribution of development, incomes, opportunity and quality of life across the country. It also relates to the quality and reach of educational service delivery that prioritizes higher retention rates
especially, for girls as well as skill-based training and availability of start-up resources for
the youth especially women to explore other livelihood alternatives. It is also concerned with
responsive urban planning and urban environmental management etc. Such structural
reengineering of the economy and society can only be achieved in the very long-term with
consistent policy coordination between the national, regional and metropolitan levels to
address the challenges on hand.

Furthermore, addressing the environmental externality bit of the spatial problem can
be seen in the bigger picture of environmental service delivery in the city as a whole. Poor
waste disposal practices attributed to street vendors by city authorities and problems with
poor sanitation are not exclusive to the unauthorized urban spaces of CBD. Similar
environmental problems can be seen in several areas throughout the city including
established traditional markets and homes and neighborhoods. Most low-income, low- rental
and high-density areas, which double as places of work especially, for women and where
about 60 percent of residents live, suffer deplorable environmental and sanitation
infrastructure and services.\textsuperscript{1} For instance, open dumping of solid waste is common in many
areas and about 35 percent of solid waste generated in Accra daily is not collected at all. The
bigger picture hints of deficient citywide environmental infrastructure and service delivery;
part of which could be the expressed in the streets, pavements, and other public circulation
areas where vendors operate. A comprehensive environmental policy and program beyond
the scope of this study is therefore necessary to tackle the broader reach of the spatial
problem.

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\textsuperscript{1} For details on Accra’s environmental situation see Boadi & Others 2005; Armah 2001; Songsore 2000;
Yankson 2000; Songsore & McGranahan
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Nonetheless, the recommendations outlined may be useful for the medium to long term policy options. However, such adoption of policies ought to be undertaken with caution because the success of other cities in employing them may not necessarily translate into a successful implementation in Accra. The local city and historical contexts of policy is crucial and must be taken into consideration in the adoption and implementation of policy.
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