2 The formal-informal interface through the lens of urban food systems

The Soweto food market
in Lusaka, Zambia

Gilbert Siame, Douty Chibamba, Progress H. Nyanga, Brenda Mwalukanga, Beverly Musonda Mushili, Wiza Kabaghe, Garikai Membele, Wilma S. Nchito, Peter Mulambia, and Dorothy Ndhlovu

Introduction

Although it is widely recognized that informal-sector activities heavily characterize urban systems in Africa, debates around African urbanization, urban development, and urban planning still fail to usefully conceptualize and characterize informality and its interface with formal actors, practices, and interactions in African cities. Based on a one-year research project implemented by the Centre for Urban Research and Planning (CURP) at the University of Zambia on the operations of the Soweto Retail and Wholesale Food Market (a large urban wholesale and retail market in Lusaka, the capital of Zambia), this chapter takes urban food systems as an entry point to understanding the workings and complexity of the formal-informal continuum in an African city (Jones, 2017). The study had two goals: firstly, to use co-production research methodologies to achieve a nuanced understanding of the formal-informal interface in an African city through the lens of food systems; and secondly, using this understanding, to ground and explore policy and other interventions that could make Lusaka's urban food markets more inclusive and sustainable spaces.

By critically evaluating market interactions and processes by and with food actors (in production, transport, storage, wholesaling, retailing, and waste management), we found that groups and individuals from the state, private sector, and society engage in creative and often manipulative interpretations of formal market regulations and laws to achieve maximum gain, resulting in both exclusion and inclusion. These multiple practices, relations, and systems are interwoven, interdependent, and exist between and within state and society – creating a new urban operational space that cannot be categorized as either formal or informal, and which exemplifies the wider workings of a society operating in the absence of a democratically functioning state.

Policy interventions and intellectual discourses in and on urban Africa need to engage with the complexity of urban governance dynamics and the ways in which they relate to and manifest themselves in formal and informal practices, power relations, and urban systems (Satterthwaite, 2016; Jones, 2017). We argue that urban studies and planning research need to set clear intellectual and policy goals for Africa and, by extension, the global South. Such studies need to delve into the policy space, critically analysing how the state and society interact, how these interactions are configured by power, and how they territorialize over geo-temporal scales. In other words, urban scholarship needs to transcend traditional urban studies and planning methodologies, and critically interrogate how urban contexts of the global South function in order to better understand why they remain so resistant to policies or interventions that are developed with different systems in mind.

The first section of this chapter provides the study's conceptual framing (which uses urban food systems as an entry point into debates on informality), and relevant context and background about urban markets and local governance in Zambia. Next we present our methodology and findings, which provide a granular understanding of the relationships and systems in Lusaka's Soweto Food Market, and point to the necessity of understanding the formal and informal as an interface or continuum. Finally, we present the study's conceptual implications, followed by conclusions and policy recommendations.

Conceptual framing

Urban food systems, governance, and informality in African cities

While global demand for food is rapidly growing, sustainably and equitably producing and distributing sufficient, nutritious food is becoming ever more challenging (Knorr et al., 2018). Meanwhile, with the impact of rising global food insecurity increasingly felt in cities, access to food – like that to clean water, sanitation, energy, and income-generating opportunities – has become a major urban issue (Crush & Riley, 2017), as well as one increasingly determined by income levels. On top of climate change and shifting patterns in small-scale farming, the rise of supermarkets, shopping centres, and wholesale retail chains further add to the complexity of a global food system that has led to poverty, unemployment, education, and city planning impacting hunger and malnutrition as much as agricultural yields and environmental conditions. Despite all of this, the urban dimensions of contemporary food systems are often overlooked, as are the ways in which these systems are governed, especially in the African context (Crush & Frayne, 2011; Battersby & Watson, 2018).

While there are many gaps in the existing knowledge about urban governance and urban food systems in Africa, one of the main deficits concerns the role of food actors in ensuring an inclusive and sustainable urban food system (Smit, 2016). Although much work has been done concerning potential improvements to

the governance of urban food systems in African cities, there is surprisingly little research examining existing processes through which urban food systems are governed (Battersby, 2013). As Porter et al. (2007) suggest, complex processes and rules shaping food systems and food marketing in Africa exist, and there is a need to know more about how these formal and informal regulatory systems and norms operate, and how they influence urban food dynamics and the broader urban livelihood systems.

The governance of urban food systems in Africa is complex and includes a range of formal and informal actors and economies, between whom a growing body of work shows many points of intersection and interdependence (Battersby et al., 2016). That said, Skinner (2016) argues that the majority of food retail and wholesale sectors in most African cities are located at the ‘informal’ end of the formal-informal continuum, and indeed, a wide variety of informal food outlets are evident in most African cities – from traditional, large public market spaces, to a variety of shops and kiosks, to street food vendors.

Like their formal counterparts, informal food traders are impacted by urban governance in various ways, from processes allocating trading space, to infrastructure and service provision (e.g., water, security, energy, and waste removal). Additionally, the regulatory environment, which can include ‘land-use planning and retail sites, shopping hours laws, labour-market regulations, and advertising codes, health claims legislation and consumer protection’ has a significant impact on urban food systems (Dixon, 1999, p. 155). Such regulations, which can be formal or informal (or a combination of the two), can impact on where food is (or is not) produced or processed, where and when retail is allowed, what types of food can be sold, and who is involved in producing, distributing, and selling food.

While this chapter argues that formal and informal systems are inextricably interwoven, it is also true that the often-contested nature of who is able to access ownership to spaces and opportunities, and who is excluded, is highlighted in informal spaces (Roy, 2005). For example, concerning the informal nature of marketplace governance in Maputo, Mozambique, Lindell (2008, p. 1896) notes: ‘governance appears to lack any semblance of coherence and to be more fragmented, disjointed and split by deep antagonisms’. In other words, key actors continuously challenge each other’s legitimacy to govern, and this contest is invariably more pronounced in informal spaces. As such, the examination of bottom-up, market-based, urban-space governance systems and tools (such as levies and planning regulations, among others) can offer new perspectives on the use of surveillance, peer pressure, and control of physical space (Lyon, 2003) as modes of governance. But bottom-up approaches to food governance rarely exist in a vacuum, and often interlock with top-down state apparatuses, creating select, aggressive groups that conquer and control others in urban market spaces. However, the details and nuances of how the formal-informal continuum is governed – and how these groups interact – remain largely unexamined.

In spite of advances in the literature, ‘the African city’ often remains depicted in policy circles as a dualistic space made of formal and informal activities, systems,

actors, and processes.¹ Such a dualistic understanding perpetuates views of the informal as illegal and impermanent, negates the complexity and interdependence of the actual relationship between the two, and reinforces the state's perception that the informal economy should be eradicated (SERI, 2015). The reality, however, is that urban space in Africa is formed and structured by an interwoven and interdependent continuum of both formal and informal practices, power relations, and infrastructural systems, which are in turn characterized by various concepts, urban management dynamics, and urban development outcomes (Lindell, 2008). Chief among these is Resnick's (2014) argument that the urbanization and governance processes and dynamics in sub-Saharan Africa have direct implications on livelihoods and service delivery, and that understanding the 'everyday' – and the survival tactics required to get through it – is key to critical African urban studies. As such, this study seeks to contribute to debates on what Pieterse (2011a) calls the 'vein of postcolonial theorization', opened up by de Boeck and Plissart (2014), Diouf (2003), Mbembé and Nuttall (2004), Simone and Simone (1994), and many others, who argue that theorizing the urban post-colony requires nuanced insertion of theoretical discourses in grounded reality.

Achieving a deeper appreciation of urban reality in contested food market spaces requires deployment of a pedagogical approach that can unravel the complex urban food systems found in African cities. This requires digging deep into the reality of relations; that is, how actors deploy various governance tactics to dominate and control what we call 'dense food markets'. As such, this study is mindful of the imperative to know what is happening on the ground before proceeding to interpret how citizens understand, experience, navigate, transcend, resist, admit, or reinterpret the psychosocial experiences that are affected by 'tough material conditions' (Biehl & McKay, 2012; Pieterse, 2010).²

But to understand relationships on the ground, a broader view of governance in the African urban context must also be considered. Swyngedouw (2005) draws on neo-Foucauldian theories of governmentality and technologies of government to discuss a 'democratic deficit', or a lack of governance that raises questions about who is allowed and enabled to participate, and who is excluded. Such a deficit underscores ill-defined systems of representation, accountability, and legitimacy, and the state's role in organizing and 'legitimizing' urban governance networks systems. Urban spaces characterized by such deficits tend to be governed by creative and manipulative relations between state and society, and aspects of clientelism, fear of the politically powerful, patronage, utter theft, and corruption become the structuring elements of such urban governance. Thus while policy-makers extol the virtues of democratic citizenship and participation, in reality 'existing forms of participation in many parts of the global South do not conform to these idealized governance models' (Robins et al., 2008, p. 1070). That the nature of democratic practices in countries with political and historical contexts marked by disenfranchisement, poverty, and clientelism differ from those found in countries of the global North (Robins et al., 2008) must be acknowledged. Robins et al. (2008, p. 1071) further argue that the relations between the state and people

in such ‘political and historical contexts’ are punctuated by disenfranchisement, authoritarianism, and clientelism, and do not align with normative versions of citizenship and the virtues of a functional democracy.

Using the lens of food systems, this study thus investigates the ‘everyday’ in the ‘ways of doing business and existing’ in Zambia’s largest urban food market. By uncovering and critically interrogating inter-actor relations (between food traders, market managers, political party cadres, and national state operations), this chapter attempts to capture the granular reality of Soweto Market’s governance, and through this, arrive at a better understanding of the formal-informal continuum.

Context and background

Urban markets – history and governance

Though Zambia does not have a long history of urban market activity (Nchito, 2007), markets exist in every urban settlement today, where they serve a dual purpose of providing employment for people not in the formal labour structure, as well as goods and services to the majority of urban households. The Markets and Bus Stations Act of 2007 sets out two ways of establishing and managing a public market in Zambia. The first is the formal, top-down process, where a city council establishes a market with on-the-ground administration through the market master (a city council employee), and a Market Advisory Committee (MAC) overseeing functionality and management (see the section on Local Governance for more detail).

The second type – known as cooperative markets – is a response to a governance void in areas of the city that are yet to be formally sanctioned through the city council. Cooperative markets, constituting about half of Lusaka’s marketplaces (Blekking et al., 2017), are governed through independent market committees comprised of people elected from the market’s vendors. Official channels point to the market committee, but everyday access to markets relies on negotiating with a number of actors, includes political cadres, the city council, the traders themselves, the food suppliers, and the commodity association(s), all of which have a core interest in the running of the market.

While access to trading spaces in both formal and informal marketplaces is guided by rules and regulations, the reality is that these rules are relaxed, suspended, or simply contravened when ‘political party cadres’ take charge of market management. Indeed, most markets in Zambia serve as strongholds of the ruling political party. Political party cadres in Zambia refer to party loyalists who use their political affiliation or association with the ruling party principles to influence and control access to the markets.³ The allocation of market trading spaces by party cadres has a long history, dating from the UNIP era (1964–1992) through to the MMD (1992–2011) and PF (2011–today) eras.⁴ Traders, who can always be threatened with eviction, continue to be easily manipulated and organized for political gain, making marketplaces indispensable to politicians (Nchito, 2007).

Lusaka's Soweto Food Market

Lusaka is Zambia's capital and largest city, with a population of over 2.5 million people. Located near Lusaka's Central Business District (CBD), Soweto Food Market (henceforth referred to in this chapter as Soweto Market) is Zambia's largest formal, council-managed, open-air urban market that serves as both a wholesale and retail space for various food products farmed and manufactured from within and outside Lusaka (Hampwaye et al., 2016, p. 46; Wragg & Lim, 2015). According to Blekking et al. (2017, p. 7), 'Soweto Market is the central node of Lusaka's food system . . . supplying both cooperative and city council markets with fresh produce daily'. Acting as the largest landing site for food from farms and traders in the Lusaka City region and beyond, the Market is also an important contributor to food security in Lusaka (Hampwaye et al., 2016). Soweto Market's core role in influencing urban food systems, and the obvious financial flows in Lusaka's food value chain, mean the stakes here are high, causing a broad range of actors to be interested in the Market's activities and functioning.

Local governance

The Constitution of Zambia, as amended by Act No. 2 of 2016, has devolved powers to the local authorities (called city councils) in a quest to decentralize government operations, with all government departments and institutions intended to eventually be managed at the local authority level. Lusaka City Council (LCC) is the largest local authority in Zambia, and its primary responsibility, like that of all city councils, is public service delivery (e.g., garbage collection, construction of drainage systems, management of public markets, etc.). A representative form of local government, the LCC is formed of elected local leaders who serve as community representatives (councillors). The LCC encompasses 33 wards, which are smaller geographical demarcations in the seven larger constituencies that constitute the broader boundary jurisdiction of greater Lusaka City (LCC, 2019).

The Markets and Bus Stations Act of 2007, which, as noted earlier, governs market function in Zambia, names the city council as the body responsible for market management. In Lusaka, the LCC 'formally' interacts with market traders through the MAC, which is the committee responsible for administering and managing a market's affairs on behalf of the city council. MACs are comprised of seven members: the chair (the local councillor), secretary (the market master), tax collector (a council employee), council police officer, and three elected vendors from the local market. Some of the listed responsibilities of MAC include enforcement of council bylaws, provision of security in a market, revenue collection, monitoring standards of hygiene, and general cleanliness and allocation of market stalls.

Officially, access to formal market trading spaces like those in Soweto Market is based on merit-application to the MAC as an agent for the LCC, where applicants must meet minimum requirements, including the capacity to pay

council-approved levies. While Soweto Market has a MAC in place, actual management of the market – including the allocation of trading spaces – is dynamic and contested among various forces and actors. As is further discussed next, de facto governance systems differ sharply from those prescribed by law, and rules are more often than not relaxed, suspended, or simply contravened, particularly in the face of political party cadre interference, as is discussed in our findings.

It is important to note here the overarching role that political cadres have played in city council governance in Zambia since the early 1970s with the passage of the Village Registration and Development Act No. 30 of 1971. Seeking to actualize one-party state governance, this Act integrated city councils, ward development committees (WDC), and ruling party functionaries in the governance of local councils (Mukwena & Lolojih, 2002). Over the 1970s, the supremacy of the ruling party over local governance was further consolidated (Chikulo, 1993), until multiparty democracy in 1990 led to the scrapping of the one-party state (Chikulo, 1993). The promulgation of the Constitution of Zambia Act No.1 and Local Government Act No.22 (1991) delinked the ruling party from the civil service and state apparatus, reintroducing the distinction between the ruling party, the central government, and local government. However, implementation of subsequent Acts and decentralization policies have fallen short of depoliticizing local government, and national laws and Lusaka city bylaws have not been used effectively to ensure markets are not overtaken and managed by political party supporters. As a result, political party cadres continue to exert a strong influence in Lusaka city's governance and operations.

Methodology

Studying the market

The method applied in the study of Soweto Market was informed by the African Centre for Cities CityLab Programme⁵ supporting co-production of policy-relevant knowledge for African cities. One of ten CityLab studies funded at urban research centre members of the African Urban Research Initiative (AURI), this research, framed as a case study, follows the principles of case study methods in urban studies and planning literature (Flyvbjerg, 2011, 2004; Duminy et al., 2014). Using qualitative methods, our research sought to study the 'everyday practices' (Horelli et al., 2013) in food transactions in Soweto Market, a response to Robins et al.'s (2008, p. 1069) call for 'more attention to contextual understandings of the politics of everyday urban life, and to locating state, civil society, and donor rhetorics and programmes promoting "active citizenship" and "participatory governance"' in the urban South.

In doing so, our research also responds to Parnell and Robinson's (2012) post-neoliberal call for a need to re-engage with the state as a 'complex set of institutions, open to diverse political and policy agendas' (Parnell & Robinson, 2012). That is, Parnell and Robinson (2012) argue that traditional critiques of

urban neoliberalism that may have salience in the global North are inappropriately applied to interpret contexts that do not reflect this context, for example, in cities in the global South. To move beyond this approach requires more than understanding that neoliberalism is produced in different ways in different contexts, and indeed demands a geographical repositioning of urban theory (*ibid.*). As such, we argue that research such as this, which highlights the complexity of dynamics and economies as they actually operate in cities of the global South, are contributing to the need for more relevant ideas and concepts to emerge.

Focusing on the ‘everyday’ in Soweto Market, we collected and analysed data on transactions, engagements, and relations in food merchandizing, including a wide range of sociopolitical actors and infrastructural technologies of food flows both in Soweto Market and the wider City of Lusaka. We zoomed in on the detail of the food business in a growing city, examining specific instances of how actors engage with food merchandizing in Soweto. Responding to Flyvbjerg’s (2004, p. 283) call for a return to ‘concrete things’ of the urban (Pieterse, 2011b), we sat down with food retailers, food middlemen, farmers, political leaders, and state agents, examining how all these actors engage with both formal and informal food systems in Soweto. Given the complexity of Soweto’s food systems, a nuanced study of these systems required active involvement from all relevant actors. As such, the study was transdisciplinary and collaborative in nature, with our research team including scholars from different disciplines, as well as non-academic stakeholders, who together could address the challenge of food system governance with a view to developing solutions (Lang et al., 2012).

Research consisted primarily of personal interviews, focus group discussions, round-table discussions, and observations by all project researchers to generate primary data. We selected research participants using a purposive sampling approach, which sought to achieve data collection based on level of actor engagement in the activities and processes in Soweto Market. Research participants included: officials and senior managers at LCC, researchers at CURP, members of the People’s Process on Housing and Poverty in Zambia (PPHPZ), a local branch of the Slum Dwellers International (SDI) in Zambia, and relevant groups from Soweto Market (e.g., political party representatives, produce associations and alliances, individual traders, consumers, and market managers).

As per the co-production methodology, our team worked together with policy officials from LCC and food actors from the Soweto Market to frame the research questions for the study, collect and analyse the data, and produce research findings. Stakeholders grouped the data in themes and presented the data in the form of narratives; this happened in round-table meetings, multi-stakeholder meetings, learning labs, and a policy dialogue on Soweto Food Market.

The two CityLabs that we held enabled us to collaboratively analyse the data and share the research findings in the form of policy briefs. A city learning lab is a multi-stakeholder social meeting that seeks to collaboratively explore city development problems and frame possible actions by stakeholders. Allowing for deep conceptual analysis and exploration of material for policy innovation to improve

systems relevant to a complex and contested issue such as equal access to Soweto Market (Steynor et al., 2016). Intended to create an open space for thinking, debating, and engaging with the research process and outcomes, the labs proved a key innovation in our knowledge of co-production process, and we endeavoured to make them neutral or ‘safe spaces’ for all stakeholders. In some cases, creating a safe space can be done by choosing a venue that is both convenient and unfamiliar, in the sense that it is outside of people’s day-to-day ‘functional’ environments (Culwick et al., 2019, p. 13). In our case, we chose to separate political party leaders from the administrative staff of the LCC during the two CityLabs held on Soweto Market, in order for them to engage more freely.

Findings

This section identifies the actors present in the Soweto Market and shows how relationships are organized and structured; that is, the various ways multiple actors in the market use and interpret rules and regulations, and command control to change the outlook of market operations from a supposedly top-down market to a seemingly cooperative market.

The actors and regulations

As discussed in earlier sections, Soweto Market is officially a formal market. However, daily activities at Soweto show that its operations tilt towards those of an informal or cooperative market managed under non-state approved rules. For example, the ability to secure trading rights is not a clear process, but rather considered a privilege that is dependent on the nature of one’s relations with either LCC, one or more of the many commodity associations, or political party representatives. These agents or actors, all of whom compete for visibility and ‘job’ security, control all activities in Soweto Market. Thus, to win a food trading space in Soweto, one must show allegiance and loyalty to one or all of these actors. Findings around these actors and how they engage both formally and informally follow next.

Lusaka City Council

The most ‘formal’ mechanism around access to trade in Soweto Market is the LCC, which has established a daily 2 Zambian Kwacha (ZMW) citywide levy for all traders using public markets in Lusaka. While the LCC argues that this levy is used for service provision (e.g., security, waste removal), this was hard to prove on the ground. And although the LCC claims the fee is uniform and citywide, the reality we observed is that the amount varies according to the size, location, and quality of trading space (i.e., accessibility and convenience for doing business).

The LCC is also responsible for health and sanitation regulations at the Market, and fees are intended to improve the delivery of these services.

Although health inspectors carry out routine inspections, the maintenance of stipulated health and hygiene standards is never certain, and Market services are mostly provided by traders and political party representatives. Limitations around services such as poor public health, poor water and sanitation conditions, and waste management, among others, came to the fore in 2017, when a cholera crisis forced the Market to shut down nearly completely from November–December.

Produce associations

Produce associations are formally registered with the Registrar of Societies, the LCC, the Zambia Revenue Authority, and the Patents and Companies Registration Agency (PACRA), implying that they pay some statutory taxes, and can be said to be formal entities. In addition to paying the LCC's required levy (providing access to trading spaces), food traders are pressured to register with produce associations (e.g., Banana, Beans, Tomatoes), which membership enables them to deal in the associated commodity.

Each association has its own procedures for joining, as well as rules and regulations governing association operations and, to some extent, transactions in the trade of products. Transaction regulations include things like only allowing registered commodity traders to deal in the associated commodities, and enforcing separate produce trading spaces (e.g., bananas from potatoes). It is worth noting that all produce designated spaces in the Market are owned by various associations, and as such, traders must register with an association to acquire produce trading rights. Only bona fide members of an association can trade on the premises belonging to associations.

Association membership does come with benefits, including social protection, access to capital, the aforementioned right to trade, as well as discounted rates for trading spaces depending on market forces of demand and supply. Associations sometimes provide small loans to members at a widely used 20% interest rate, or act as guarantor when members need to borrow from micro-financial lending institutions found in the Market, thus increasing opportunities for business growth. Most produce associations also have storage facilities where member traders can keep their goods at the close of business for a reduced fee. Most associations require a universal association joining fee of ZMW55, and monthly or annual contributions to the funeral committee, which pays out ZMW2,000 to cover funeral expenses.

Political parties

As discussed in the previous sections on context and local governance, the Market is dominated by 'party cadres', through whom national politics operate, and who – according to traders, LCC market staff, and LCC head office actors alike – are the Market's most feared actor.

The study established that the easiest guaranteed way to obtain a good trading space in the Market is to pay party cadres, with amounts varying from ZMW2 to ZMW20 per month (in addition to the daily LCC levy of ZMW2). The fees to party cadres include what both traders and party cadres refer to as an ‘operations fee’ (ZMW5), required by all traders every Wednesday, as well as the daily ZMW2 LCC trading levy. No one could say what the operation fee is for. While these levies cannot be ‘questioned’ by the traders, party cadres promise traders physical security and potential loans from government. Party cadres justify the levies on the basis that they provide material support in the form of improved security, access to capital, and guaranteed trading rights. While access to trading rights is verifiable, it is hard to prove that complying with party cadre demands creates opportunities for physical security, and/or increased access to financial capital.

Because both the LCC and party cadres allocate trading spaces, traders often pay twice for the same trading space (personal interview, Soweto trader, November 2018). Such levies for trading spaces, registration, and commodity licences mean that traders often pay at least twice and sometimes three times (overlap of LCC, association, and party-cadre levies) for the same thing. Traders also must pay offloading fees of ZMW30–40 per load to party cadres, which maintain ultimate control of space in Soweto Market. Loading fees also differ from one trading space to another, with trucks coming from out of town taken advantage of and required to pay offloading fees of no less than ZMW100, while those from within Lusaka pay a maximum of ZMW40.

When it comes to security, while official rules governing actors’ behaviour in the market do exist, an informal arrangement between the LCC and party cadres allows cadres to play a larger security role at Soweto Market than the officially and legally mandated actors:

The police and party cadres jointly maintain law and order in the market. When an offender is caught, he or she is first taken to the cadres who assess the gravity of the offence before deciding whether they deal with the case conclusively or refer it to the police. Offenders with smaller offences are fined and released, while those with serious offences are handed over to the police where the due process of the law is purportedly followed.

(Personal interview, November 2017)

This quote illustrates how informal and formal actors and systems meld to the extent that it is impossible to separate one from the other, and how power is maintained through a constantly negotiated process and sharing of benefits among them. Law and order in the Market is a product of both formal and informal systems, symbiotically intertwined on mutually agreed aspects of the Market. For example, the police use cadres as fronts to enforce the law, while the cadres gain monetary benefit by engaging in this collaboration.

Meanwhile, our findings also reveal that multiple actors in Soweto Market express political identity – in order to gain influence and power in the

Market – through various means, including displaying party regalia, expressing verbal allegiance to senior political party leaders and individuals, and promoting and enforcing clientelism between food traders and the party in power by means of rule relaxation. It should also be noted that within the cadres there are many individuals who merely claim to be members of the ruling party, but in fact are just thieves. Pickpocketing and beating of Market patrons (especially traders and consumers) by the cadres is rife, and often carried out by people who purport to act in the name of a ruling political party. In sum, it is very hard to delineate genuine from non-genuine party cadre members in Soweto. As such, the study's findings show that the relations and interdependences between formal and informal systems and actors create a non-sovereign, urban market space that belongs to no single actor exclusively.

Social solidarity economy

It is notable that the study found an absence of a strong farmer or food producer association in Soweto Market. This lack works against the interest of market farmers and food suppliers, inhibiting their ability to harness the potentials of a social solidarity economy (SSE). The International Labour Organization (ILO) explains SSE as enterprises and organizations (cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations, foundations, and social enterprises) that produce goods, services, and knowledge that meet the needs of the community served, through the pursuit of specific social and environmental objectives and the fostering of solidarity (ILO, n.d.). Given that all actors have power and a sphere of influence, if the governed masses in Soweto Market could find a way to overtly assert their influence on those in power, they could redirect actor relations to safeguard the public good, which would serve to protect the food traders and consumers, and ensure that the Market's politics work for the good of all.

In fact, some of the Market's produce associations have begun to create SSE for their members, setting objectives to improve their own operations and make the market more enabling to their members. Providing members with things like social protection through funeral grants, access to capital at lower interest rates, and protection of their businesses (through restrictions on nonmembers to engage in certain activities), these produce associations have also made efforts to increase production through collective entrepreneurship. Such collaborative efforts endeavour to create and sustain the social solidarity economy (Jolly & Raven, 2015) in Soweto Market.

However, the current overwhelming relationship between Soweto Market food producers can best be described as disjointed and uncoordinated, undermining the potential of SSE, and creating sociopolitical spaces for manipulative acts by 'local political elites' to continue. In other words, there is no farmer or food producer association that seeks to protect and champion the interests of food producers in this dynamic and contested food market space.

Balance of power

Examining the various actors managing Soweto Market,⁶ the study revealed constant contestations over ownership and control of space, as well as implementation of norms and practices.

Pros and cons of ‘belonging’

Despite clear benefits of association membership, some traders do not belong to any association, having withdrawn membership because they feel the associations do not meet their expectations of providing loans or boosting their business. These traders typically register only with the LCC for permission to trade. LCC-only registration allows one to trade with limited rights in a shop or established stand, and not on open spaces, which are largely controlled by party cadres. Thus, while incurring lower costs, such traders remain confined to the shops, and argue that they have less visibility (and limited market rights). While LCC-only traders may escape commodity association affiliation fees, they still must pay the party cadres’ other fees, as described earlier.

Some traders have neither association membership nor LCC permission to trade, and rather acquire trading spaces or rent trading stands solely from political party cadres and/or those who have opted to sublet their trading spaces and property rights. However, subletting a trading space with neither association membership nor cadre support can be risky: for long-term tenure security of trading space, and for a sense of physical security (i.e., protection from possible attack for resisting political force), traders find it both convenient and necessary to ‘cooperate’ with the cadres. While party cadres have a long history of allocating market spaces, research participants noted that the situation is increasingly out of control, and currently verges on localized gangsterism. This situation is leaving food dealers with very little space to negotiate and protect their rights to freely trade in the market.

Some traders do not register with the LCC, political parties, or a produce association. Nonetheless, they still are forced to comply with and pay levies to the political cadres. Lack of compliance with cadres can lead to loss of trading space and physical attacks. By contrast, other traders and food dealers pay multiple levies to multiple centres of control and regulation (e.g., the LCC, produce associations, and cadres) in order to access services such as trading space and physical protection from various market players. Nearly all traders lamented the rising cost of doing business in the Market, attributing the high costs to multiple and unexplained levies that have not translated into an improved business environment or protection of rights.

Overlapping interests and responsibilities

While the produce associations and the LCC together have reasonable control over the movement of food products, they have limited control over other

aspects – both formal and informal – of the Market, which most traders and LCC staff say is dominated by the party cadres. For example, despite the regulation requiring the market to open at 06:00 and close at 18:00, some traders indicated they can enter the market any time. Traders also say they trade in a very dirty environment, largely due to indiscriminate dumping of solid waste by themselves, and the local authority's failure to implement water and sanitation programmes to keep the market clean.

Thus, our study observed contradictions and overlapping interests and responsibilities between market actors. This observation challenges the normative notion of democracy, largely espoused in the global North, where public spaces in general, and urban markets in particular, are/should be publicly owned and managed, and market interest groups are well-organized and seen as working to promote the public good and guarding against manipulation and unproductive practices (Robins et al., 2008).

By contrast, in Soweto Market we found multiple mechanisms controlled by various actors to facilitate food businesses, regulate and control traders, protect consumers, provide opportunities for raising financial capital, and grant access to trading spaces including shops. These actors, both formal and informal, in some cases were promoting public good, and in others, very much protecting personal/group interest. For example, most traders access capital largely via informal lending by produce associations, supplemented by financing from formal micro-enterprises. This again demonstrates the loose integration of both the formal and informal systems. Other mechanisms of control and regulation that include collaboration between (formal) state and (informal) non-state institutions are the police and cadres, which collectively ensure law and order, a state that also draws on LCC and cadre collaboration to jointly allocate and manage trading spaces. Finally, the study also established the existence of 'fronts' in the administration and management of shops and other trading spaces in the Market, where people used political agents to acquire spaces that supposedly were only available for those with LCC and/or association membership.

Clientelism

The nature of the relationship between the state and other actors in Soweto Market has created fertile grounds for clientelism. Having established that in Soweto Market, anything goes and no one escapes the overwhelming and dominating presence of political cadres, the study also demonstrated that party cadres have near total control of the Soweto Market, to the extent that they even can overrule the LCC. In many instances, decisions made by the Council are overturned by the cadres, which have gone so far as to assume most Council responsibilities in the Market. Thus, actions and decisions such as allocating trading space, collecting levies, providing security, and enforcing the regulations and norms for food dealers are largely the purview of party cadres, with the local authority reduced to a subordinate position.

While many state agents with an interest in the Market lament this frustrating situation, they have limited decision-making power, or power to change the course and occurrence of the Market's function. The party cadres wield sizeable power due to their linkages to the ruling party. Challenging the cadres may leave traders or state agents vulnerable to intimidation and violence. Personal interviews further revealed that LCC hesitates to enforce the established market regulations and rules uniformly in Soweto because of fears of interference and possible punishment.

While this dynamic may be hard to understand if viewed from a northern perspective, in Soweto Market, as in other spaces in African cities, urban governance 'encompasses multiple sites where practices of governance are exercised and contested' and 'a variety of players, various layers of relations, and a broad range of practices of governance that may involve various modes of power, as well as different geographical scale of occurrence' are found (Lindell, 2008, p. 1880). Robins et al. (2008, p. 1079) posit that: 'urban populations in the South tend to adopt plural strategies; they occupy multiple spaces and draw on multiple political identities, materialistic identities, and social relationships, often simultaneously'. This has certainly been the case in Soweto, where the study observed food traders taking on materialistic identities, or various assumed identities that ensure access to the Market and protect their interests in the food sector.

Goodfellow (2010) argues that clientelism and patronage are very much part of political cultures, as citizens straddle 'civil society' and 'state' spaces in Soweto Market, which reality is vividly displayed in the ways that party cadres carry out their activities. The success of strategies for survival and well-being in the Market depend on one's ability to establish multiple strategic relationships and become visible to several powerful players. The relationship between 'the citizen' and 'the state' in many urban African settings seldom resembles the kinds of deliberative, democratic models of citizen participation promoted by normative discourses on state-society relations in the mainstream urban governance literature. We see this in Soweto Market, where unproductive practices in the formal systems are countered by clientelistic relations that simultaneously consolidate the resilience of the Market's informal systems.

We observed that the ability to effectively trade in Soweto depends largely on networks and clientelistic relations, and that the workings of the state and society are clearly not monolithic, but rather divided and fractured. Finally, all of these relationships are weakened by infighting, poor organization, manipulation, and corruption across the spectrum of Market actors. Relations in the market are constantly modifying and never take on one permanent feature. What happens in the market is under the bedrock of messy and wickedly complex relations between the top-down state and bottom-up urban populations seeking to survive the harsh conditions of urban poverty. Both the state and society use multiple tactics involving loyalty, identity, solidarity, and clientelism to exert influence on each other and extract benefits from the marketplace.

Analysis: conceptual implications

A lucrative space for both formal and informal food dealers in the Lusaka City region, Soweto Market markedly manifests the politics of livelihood systems. Here we see various actors deploying a range of tactics and tools to participate, and ensure their continued operation and access to Soweto, as traders or otherwise. This fight for access is seen most clearly in the way political party cadres force other actors (traders, wholesalers, and farmers) to pay multiple ‘unexplained levies’ in order to participate in the Market. Using the traders’ fear of eviction, party cadres extract taxes and enforce other localized regulations. Meanwhile, the state systems and organizations (LCC and associations) intended to promote accountability and participation in the Market are weak, failing to regulate food trading or, perhaps more significantly, to resist the very strong informal sector power of the party cadres. The combination of these characteristics of market management systems in Soweto Market have resulted in persistent low-level conflicts and persistent clashes of interests.

The following section analyses the social and economic implications of the formal-informal relations and interactions in Soweto on food traders. Identifying and analysing the conceptual significance of relations in Soweto Market on urban studies and urban interventions in the African context, our findings also speak to a gap in that body of literature and research. As such, it is our hope that these findings will contribute to conceptual innovations and generate new learnings on urban food markets and governance in African cities.

Significance of findings to questions of formal-informal interface

The study shows how intertwined the formal and informal systems are in Soweto Market, and that the market’s formal and informal systems are contradictory, complementary, and interdependent. The allocation of space and enforcement of physical security and health and hygiene standards are undertaken by both city officials and political party cadres. The produce associations are also major players in enforcing both formal and informal norms, regulations, and laws governing operations in Soweto Market. Next to those realities is the fact that political cadres ultimately have final say about what happens in the Market. As such, delineating formal from informal systems and practices in the Market is a fool’s errand. The market space is a continuum that is neither formal nor informal, but rather a zone of constant change and evolution, the character of which is shaped by both formal and informal rules concerning market operations. Ideas around belonging and becoming in Soweto Market are subject to various multiple factors that are both contradictory and complementary.

Arbitrary ‘urban things’ and a clash of governmentalities in Soweto Food Market

The study established that use of force for manipulative purposes is rampant in Soweto Market, and has given birth to a rampant case of what Pieterse (2011a)

calls arbitrary ‘urban things’ – or how the arbitrary exercise of power gives rise to manipulative urban politics in African city contexts. As discussed earlier, the political cadres constantly and arbitrarily exert force over other actors, imposing serious sanctions (from intimidation to forfeiture of trading spaces) if those actors refuse or report such ‘illegal’ behaviour to the LCC, which in any case is largely impotent to act against the cadres. Further, the difficulty of delineating genuine from non-genuine party cadres in Soweto has created a behavioural free-for-all where anyone can claim to be part of the ruling political party, thus throwing the idea of spatial and social order, rule of law, and protection of urban rights in deep jeopardy, while also rendering traders ‘space-less’, as they are deprived of any form of proper recourse.

This study has shown that the ability to engage in food trading in Soweto Market is a direct outcome of one’s ability to successfully connect with agents who control the Market. Market efficiency has been undermined by fractured relationships within civil society (associations and groupings), as well as the relationships between the state and civil society, which are characterized by corruption and manipulative acts (Lindell, 2008; Robins et al., 2008). Unsurprisingly, trust among Market-space players has eroded, causing rampant manipulative acts from both state and non-state actors to flourish. The reality of this state of affairs has served to increase costs for food traders, reduce the Market into a site for manipulation and criminality, and exclude weaker members of society (e.g., members of opposition political parties, women, and disabled food dealers), despite state practices that claim to offer physical and social security at Soweto Market. That said, the state is also constantly evolving. This speaks to how the governance of Soweto Market ‘encompasses multiple sites’, meaning the state authority engages with a variety of players, various layers of relations, and a ‘broad range of practices of governance that involve various modes of state power at different scales’ (Lindell, 2008, p. 1880). In other words, while the state in many instances is not sovereign over Soweto Market’s networks and trading spaces, operations, activities, and outcomes, it retains the potential to steer all of these (Rhodes, 1997).

The existence of governance from above – that is, the state presence as embodied by the LCC as well as the political party cadres – provides a sense of legitimacy and power to market relations, and allows certain actors to claim due and undue privilege (e.g., levies paid to party cadres, allocation of trading rights in the Market, etc.). In Soweto, one cannot trade if not recognized by the ‘right’ people; specifically, ruling party cadres, the LCC, and/or other structures recognized by the ruling party. This system where political recognition (through the local state and ruling party agents) is tied to the allocation of responsibilities and privileges allows the state to control traders in Soweto Market, as the latter require registration and recognition to do business. Thus, the state and party cadres give or take traders’ rights and freedoms in Soweto Market, and, most importantly, bend the rules to their advantage.

At the same time, conflict and deviance from the norm also exist in Soweto Market. Manifesting ‘governmentality from below’ (Roy, 2009), non-state actors such as produce associations and political party cadres have formed rules and

norms of operating in Soweto Market and sub-locations within the food section. Thus, while party cadres on one hand assume the role of state actors, on the other hand they camouflage themselves, taking on multiple roles in order to make claims from various positionalities of privilege in Soweto Market. Meanwhile, although our research concluded that there is space and a need for the development of SSE in the Market, currently there is no group that has shown an inclination to take this on.

In sum, players in Soweto Market management exhibit various traits (Roy, 2009): collude with the state and act against weaker Market groups; become exclusionary in their practices; collaborate with the state to deliver services such as security, sanitation, etc.; and behave unilaterally and arbitrarily to protect their interests. This array of practices serves to either increase or undermine the legitimacy of a wide spectrum of the Market's actors, with questions of legitimacy creating grounds for conflicts. Such fluidity in turn creates fertile ground for state rules (through LCC) to clash with community rules (as established and implemented by party cadres and interest groups), as evidenced by food traders opting to register with and obtain trading rights from party cadres only, thus snubbing LCC and produce associations.

As decentralization efforts in Zambia coincide with Lusaka's rapid growth, Lusaka's urban food security issues appear to suffer from a lack of horizontal cooperation across sectors, as well as vertical coordination across tiers of government (Resnick, 2017). We argue for a conceptualization of the state, society, and relations between them that views the whole as a contested sociopolitical mosaic. Further, this view acknowledges that governmentalities from both above and below are constantly clashing, thus shifting the power and political dynamics that structure that mosaic.

Conclusion

Critically analysing the dynamics shaping relations in the Soweto Food Market, this chapter has shown how the formal-informal duality is in fact nonexistent. We argue that Soweto Market is a contested political commodity, and that relations between food traders and centres of control are largely based on political rationality. Further, we observed that food systems in the Market are under a political grip that uses food trading to manipulate the publics in Soweto. These findings point to the reality that while designated as a 'formal' space, the urban marketplace is largely an informal site, where the state is weak, and much governance happens beyond it. Governance, then, must be understood as 'a broad range of practices that may involve "various modes of power and contestations"' (Lindell, 2008, p. 1880), where the complex relations between formal and informal actors are a form of 'provisional governance' (Simone, 2004; Pieterse, 2010; Schindler, 2017; Foucault, 1980; Foucault & Hurley, 1990; Allen, 2004), and where the idealized figure of the 'stakeholder' – who is theoretically free, and encouraged to participate in governance, and by extension, governance of public space – does not have much sway (Swyngedouw, 2005).

That is, in urban public spaces like Soweto Market, state promises of empowerment are paralleled by often undemocratic and authoritarian state processes and actions that lead to a substantial democratic deficit (Swyngedouw, 2005), uneven access to resources and livelihood opportunities (Pieterse, 2010), and skewed influence on governance institutions that collectively can result in outright exclusions, but also to partial and problematic inclusions that must be examined critically. The Soweto Market's hybridized governance framework, with its contradictory tendencies and manipulative acts (Swyngedouw, 2005), complicate citizens' relationships to and influence on the formal and informal systems and structures operating therein, thus keeping those relationships insufficiently codified to support the emergence of a strong social solidarity economy and/or good governance. Indeed, the lack of effective counterhegemonies, as could be manifested by food trader groupings, exacerbates the existing political hegemony. While SSE theoretically could serve as a counterhegemony to normative urban market management and operationalization, the reality remains that SSE would only work in circumstances where civil society and social mobilization are well thought out and organized. Currently, social mobilization for public good remains a challenge in many African cities and urban markets, including Soweto.

In sum, the Soweto Market case supports our conclusion that urban governance in African cities is undergoing informalizations; that is, it is highly fragmented and fluid, and contests the assumptions that underlie northern debates on urban governance and, by extension, the nature of the urban in Africa. Based on our findings, we argue that the interwoven formal-informal relations in Soweto Market are structured by 'multiple sites' of power and control, and that this conceptual finding is extremely relevant to the debates over the politics of urban livelihoods in African settings, and the political economy of urban informality and urban markets (Van Gent et al., 2014; MacLeod, 2011). Conceptual and policy innovations designed to transform African urban spaces must be driven by this concept of power and control located in 'multiple sites' power, which demands more nuanced understandings of the richly layered nature of urban settings like that found in Soweto Market.

The work presented in this chapter was only possible thanks to the use of co-production methods, which forced us to challenge traditional disciplinary approaches to urban space governance, and brought all relevant teams together in one room to critically dissect a complex and wicked issue. Collaboratively exploring policy options for better-managed urban markets in Lusaka, we came to appreciate the significant and emotive challenge facing public servants who deal with the daily politics of urban markets while striving to remain professional. Thus the co-production approach enabled us to explore the real feasibility of policy options, such as phased and partial integration of various informal food actors (e.g., food brokers) into the Market's formal management systems.

We argue that further comparative studies of such sites could offer robust and concrete possibilities for radically contributing to a new body of urban theory, urban studies, and critical urban theory, as well as advancing ideas of state-society relations and understanding of collective production of the urban in Africa. Such a

progressive intellectual positioning could serve as a bedrock to radically transform the current deeply entrenched hegemonic policy caricatures of African urbanism, and thus begin shifting the balance of power in favour of diversity, inclusivity, and a globally transformative urban agenda.

Recommendations

This chapter has argued that urban governance and, by extension, governance of urban public spaces is in a post-political or post-democratic governance era, and that a new fusion of formal-informal systems and practices of governance must be acknowledged and reckoned with if transformative interventions are to meet with success in African cities. We have shown that urban market governance as seen in Soweto Market is based on the realities of the formal-informal continuum, where dynamic and subjective semi-formal protocols are grounded in ideas of loyalty and power and the survivalist nature of urban livelihoods. As such, any policy hoping to transform African cities must understand and speak to these realities. Based on these findings, we submit the following recommendations:

Firstly, interventions in urban markets need to be framed within the political reality of those market spaces. Soweto is a political and economic space that is governed by highly intertwined formal and informal systems and institutions. Thus, policy and practical measures to improve food trading needs to recognize and engage with the actual political forces at work in the Market.

Secondly, having established that governance in Soweto Market does not conform to western democratic norms, interventions to promote and protect urban rights must acknowledge and incorporate the ‘arbitrary urban things’, and how they play out in real life.

Thirdly, authorities’ efforts must move beyond the formal-informal binary, and rather seek to engage with the formal-informal continuum as the site for transformative Market policy in particular, and urban policy in general. This could involve actions like revising capital sourcing to formalize the informal sources of capital (e.g., strengthening the lending capacity of produce associations) and establishing a formally recognized hybrid governance structure, such as a Market Board composed of both state agencies and informal actors (e.g., party cadres, interest groups such as loaders, among others).

Finally, the co-produced research presented here reinforces the need for studies of urban spaces, particularly in the global South, to methodologically extend beyond traditional disciplinary silos if they are to advance either policy or intellectual agendas.

Notes

- 1 Zambia’s Markets and Bus Stations Act of 2007, which covers governance around marketplaces, divides markets into ‘formal’ and ‘informal’, rendering traders and vendors who do not comply with statutory requirements illegal and thus subject to sanction. Based on this framing, the activities taking place in the Soweto Market can be defined

- as extra-legal in terms of the Act, though in practice the trading taking place reflects new norms and evolving realities.
- 2 Pieterse (2010) describes 'tough material conditions' as a context in which exploitative systems of daily rule govern every facet of life in African informal spaces (markets and settlements), and where the overwhelming majority of the urban population is left largely to its own devices for daily survival.
 - 3 Political party cadres grant access to the markets usually through rent seeking; traders who oppose or refuse to comply are vulnerable to physical violence and/or being barred from trade.
 - 4 Political parties that have governed Zambia since political independence in 1964 have included UNIP, MMD, and PF.
 - 5 www.africancentreforcities.net/programme/mistra-urban-futures/citylab/
 - 6 Market leadership management structures include the chairpersons and secretaries of produce associations, political parties, and LCC as well as various stakeholders and interest groups that do not belong to associations, including the loaders.

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