The struggle to belong
Dealing with diversity in 21st century urban settings

Amsterdam, 7-9 July 2011

Beyond modernist planning: Understanding urban street vending in Botswana

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Abstract
Urban planning policies and models based on the modernist thinking are geared towards creating cities and towns constituted entirely of formal sector activities. Any activity regarded as informal is excluded from the urban landscape through the execution of rigid and restrictive planning and development control mechanisms. Despite this, it is now acknowledged that street vending or informal sector trading in cities and towns of developing countries will continue to grow, and as such, require detailed understanding beyond the technocratic approach to urban planning. This paper summarizes the main findings of two studies the author conducted within street vendors in Gaborone, the capital city of Botswana. Informed by the modernist and postmodernist theoretical positions the first study adopted a mixed-methods approach to investigate urban planning aspects of street vending in the city. The second study was conceptualized from a qualitative case-study research design to understand contextual factors shaping youth livelihoods in Botswana from the perspective of young women engaged in street vending in Gaborone. The two studies revealed that street vending activities in Gaborone like in other cities of the developing world are undertaken to generate self-employment and income as a response to the multidimensionality of poverty. Beyond economic viability, the participants are embedded in a web of complex livelihood challenges, which transcend the official rhetoric of youth and women empowerment. Not only are they subjected to repressive planning legislation, but they strive to construct personal identities rooted within diverse socio-cultural contexts to which they belong. They define and position situations of their livelihoods beyond their immediate spatial context of Gaborone. Engagement in street vending emerged to be a socially constructed phenomenon which is intertwined with historically-situated gender and intergenerational power relationships. This paper argues that it is worthwhile to respond to the proliferation of street vending beyond the modernist planning approach and consider meanings people construct about their livelihoods.

Key words: *Botswana, gender, modernist urban planning, street vending, youth livelihoods.*

Introduction
The main purpose of urban planning is to create healthy and economically viable settlements. As a tool to create and manage human settlements urban planning is informed by a wide range of competing theoretical perspectives from the modernist to postmodernist thinking. The modernist thinking has greatly influenced policies and tools that shaped urban areas. Urban policies and instruments based on the modernist thinking are geared towards creating cities and towns constituted entirely of formal sector activities. Rigid and restrictive planning and development control systems have been executed to exclude any informal activity. Despite this, it is now acknowledged that urban street vending in developing countries will continue to grow and thus require detailed understanding beyond the modernist approach. This paper is based on two studies conducted within street vending in Gaborone city. Informed by the modernist and postmodernist theoretical positions the first study adopted a mixed-methods approach to investigate urban planning aspects of street vending in the city. The second study was conceptualized from a qualitative case-study design to understand youth livelihoods from the perspective of young women engaged in street vending in the city. The paper begins by providing a brief defining street vending in developing countries. It then highlights how modernist urban planning in developing countries became instrumental in an attempt to suppress street vending activities. The paper provides an overview of current thinking on livelihoods and then conceptualizes street vending as a livelihood episode. It moves on to highlight the methodological approaches adopted in each of the two studies. The last section provides summaries of the major findings and conclusions of the two studies.

Defining street vending
In its simplest terms, street vending falls within the category of economic activities generally referred to as the informal sector. Despite the existence of substantial literature about the informal sector, there is still no concise and universally agreed definition of this sector. Studies indicate that there are at least as many ways of defining the informal sector as there are countries where it has been studied (Tinker 1997, Cross 1998). The boundaries of the informal sector vary greatly depending on the geographical and historical context within which it is being discussed and according to theoretical and methodological approaches adopted in a particular study (Pick *et al.* 2002). Notwithstanding this diversity, in general terms, the informal sector can be defined as 'legal and ethical sound' economic and commercial activities that take place outside government's licensing and regulatory framework such that only the entrepreneurs themselves regulate their activities. Being one of the highly visible informal sector activities, street vending is basically 'unregulated' trading that takes place in public spaces such as streets, sidewalks, bridges, pavements etc.

From a gender perspective, the literature indicates that street vending activities have become an important domain of women in almost all sub-Saharan African countries (Awuah 1997, Tinker 1997, Pick *et al.* 2002). The Informal Sector Survey conducted in Botswana in 2007 estimated the total number of informal businesses in the country at 40 421, of which 27 315 (67.6%) were owned by females and 13 106 by males" (Republic of Botswana 2009: 8). From a generational perspective, youth in sub-Saharan Africa are increasingly engaging in the informal sector to enhance their livelihoods (United Nations 2003, Palmer 2007). Palmer (2007) contends that informal sector activities are becoming the primary destination of all school leavers in Ghana looking at large numbers of youth who enter this sector each year. A comprehensive situation analysis study on youth in Botswana reveals that 41% of youth in the country were involved in informal sector activities, the majority (68%) of them being young women (GoB and UNDP 2000: 22). The characteristics of the informal sector activities and their benefits to youth and adults, men and women have been well documented for sub-Saharan Africa and this paper presents the findings documented for Botswana.

Modernist urban planning and street vending
This section summarizes the literature review of the first study conducted in Gaborone city. The study was based on the observation that Gaborone is experiencing an increasing number of people participating in a wide range of street vending activities (Joseph 2003). It assessed urban planning aspects of these activities from the modernist and postmodernist thinking. This section elaborates on the modernist perspective which appears to have shaped and/or continue to influence urban planning approaches in most of the developing countries.

Land-use zoning systems
In the period immediately after the Second World War cities in less developed countries were seen as the main agents of development and they were regarded as the spatial oases from which progress would eventually be spread (Potter and Salau 1990). This role of cities was considered to be crucial for modernity. The thoughts of many urban planners and decision makers in most of the developing countries were and are still dominated by pursuit of modernity through city beautification and orderly layouts (Post 1996). Modernist planning became central in the designing and shaping of towns and cities in most of these countries. In most countries urban planning consists of an overall framework, usually a master plan, planning and building standards, zoning regulations, and a development control system.

Perhaps no function is more central to what planners do than is land use zoning. Zoning divides the city into distinct areas each of which has its own set of permitted uses. This instrument is used, for instance, to ensure that housing and housing-related activities are restricted to residential areas while commercial activities are confined to business districts and industrial activities housed within industrial and manufacturing parks (Njoh 1999). Healey (1997) highlights that land-use zoning, urban plans, layout plans for subdivisions and projects were introduced for the reorganization of the urban fabric and thus became part of the management of all the physical development process. Evans (1995) notes that one recurring theme throughout the literature on urban planning is the underlying assumption that planning is uncontroversial in the interests of all. The rationale for urban planning has been the improvement in the use and development of land for public interest. Hence, street vendors are still regarded as contravening with this rationale by illegally occupying public space.

Urban planners and managers maintain that modernity is inconsistent with the continued presence of large numbers of street vendors (Post 1996). Yiftachel *et al* (2002) indicate that zoning is also used as a planning tool to control and exclude the 'Other'. Hence, apart from simply compartmentalizing land use activities zoning was used as an instrument both for keeping the 'undesirable other' out of the urban areas (Njoh 1999). The use of public space both physically and socially by street vendors became the subject of intense contestation. Street vendors continue to be victims of urban planning machination for the achievement of a 'healthy' urban environment. All sorts of labels indicating the undesirability of street vending were put forward to emphasize the perceived dangers these activities pose.

Nesvag (2000) states that in the post-apartheid South Africa and other post-independence African countries, street vending is perceived as a major problem and an "eye-sore" in the urban landscape city authorities wish to present to their booming tourist industry. Street vending activities in Sudan were seen as the "reminiscent of the past and are swept into a pile which they labelled chaotic, untidy, unhealthy and illegal bundle which distorts the image of their towns" (Post 1996: 5). Urban planners and managers in Mexico city criticize street vendors for causing or contributing to a number of social ills that afflict the city, and as such, they have labelled them as a squad of 'mafia' (Cross 1998). The official discourse in Tehran City of Iran perceives street vending as a social disease, afflicting malaise, parasitic and fake and pseudo-occupation which causes nuisance in public sites (Bayat 1997: 144).

Development control mechanisms
Development control regulations provide an administrative mechanism for the planning authority to exercise discretion on specific development proposals (Adams 1994). Urban planners in developing countries formulate policies to control the operation of the informal sector activities particularly street vending. Such policies reflect the anti-vending attitude and the total lack of comprehension and/or recognition of the socio-economic processes affecting the urban economy (Dasgupta 1992). Notions of the so-called 'sanitary syndrome' has a powerful influence on the formulation of many policies and legislations that guide urban development and planning in both the developed and the developing countries (Cherry 1980). Anything perceived to be an eyesore in the urban landscape is subject to removal as a way of creating physically 'healthy' urban environments (ibid). There were/are demands to remove the eye sores or ugly batches which are seen not only marring the beauty of the cities but also as breeding grounds for diseases, immorality, crime and other social ills (Sarin 1982). Local authorities the developing world resort to all sorts of development control mechanisms to exclude street vendors within their areas of jurisdiction. They exert moral pressure and also wage violence against those engaged in street vending. Random attacks, demolitions, and the removal of street vendors are an everyday practice, one that continued since the late 1980's.

Non-compliance with development control
While urban planners are still firmly devoted to the notion of modernity by getting rid of street vending activities the actual demand for vending sites is on the increase. Street vending activities are not only currently experiencing rapid growth but they are also becoming diverse despite urban planning interventions to curtail them. The literature indicates that street vending activities have continued to grow rapidly due to inadequate and incompetent development control mechanisms, poor and outdated planning standards and planning laws. Bayat (1997) teases that street vending in most cities and towns of the developing world 'spread like a bush fire'. Efforts to remove street vending in urban centres meet fierce resistance on the side of street vendors. Many local authorities enforce development control regulations so strict that vendors become forced to violate them simply to make a living. Cross (1998) reports that street vendors in Mexico City have successfully defied city officials' orders to leave the areas they have turned into huge bazaars, despite the use of riot police against them. Despite the enactment of repressive apartheid planning legislation to stop street vending in South African cities, there was defiance and resistance led mainly by African women who dominate in the sector and survive through it (Nesvag 2000).

As a political activity authorities in developing countries often reach urban planning decisions that sometimes appear to be technically defective (Adams 1994). The issue seems to be not the amount of state intervention but the type of intervention and the overall institutional and political context in which it takes place (Itzigsohn 2000). The degree of compliance with development control regulations is apparently linked to potential benefits that can be obtained through the achievement of the legal status (Tokman and Klein 1996). Street vendors create economic resources to sustain themselves as urban development efforts fail to provide social and public services to maintain security and ensure adequate formal wages (Tripp 1997). People challenge existing planning systems by engaging in activities that become new economic and institutional resources for their survival. Another consequence of restrictive planning policy on street vending is revealed by social protests or the collective expression of grievances performed in the public domain (Yiftachel *et al.* 2002).

The livelihoods approach to development
Research and development policy and practice are now shifting from viewing the informal sector as anathema and backward activity towards formally recognizing it as an important contributor to economic development (Middleton 2003). The second study from which this paper is based sought to understand contextual factors shaping youth livelihoods in Botswana from the perspective of young women engaged in street vending in Gaborone city (Joseph 2009). The subject of youth livelihoods, defined as the means, capabilities, assets, social institutions and relations that 'young people' require to generate and maintain their means of living and enhance their well-being is attracting increasing attention in developing countries (Chant and Jones 2005, van Blerk *et al.* 2008). Youth livelihoods are framed around the sustainable livelihoods approach, which is currently informing development interventions at local, national, regional, and international levels. The literature reveals that the livelihoods approach was coined by Chambers and Conway in 1992 (Whitehead 2002, Niehof 2004, de Haan and Zoomers 2005, van Blerk *et al.* 2008), with a subsequent formulation of the sustainable livelihoods framework. Chambers and Conway (1992) cited in Niehof (2004: 27) state that "a livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets, both material and social resources, and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capability and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base".

Current emphasis on livelihoods approach has since led to the formulation of several livelihoods frameworks. Whitehead (2002: 575) emphasizes that "the widespread development of livelihoods frameworks in policy arenas arises out of the adoption of anti-poverty strategies as the objective of development intervention, and the understanding that poverty is more than just insufficient income". There are common key concepts underpinning the livelihoods frameworks as conceptual and/or analytical tools for understanding development in developing countries. Such common concepts include amongst others, assets and resources, strategies and diversification, sustainability and vulnerability, and transforming structures and processes. Although these concepts are often defined and applied differently within livelihood research, the livelihoods approach to development generally focuses on the assets and/or resources people have access to in making a living. In simple terms, resources and assets are the inputs to the livelihood system (Niehof 2004). The commonly mentioned forms of assets include human capital (people's productive or marketable skills), financial capital (cash, savings, credit, insurance), social capital (kinship and other social networks), physical capital (agricultural assets, infrastructure), natural capital (land resources), and recent inclusion of political capital (power and relationships).

All livelihoods approaches are actor-focused and stress the tactical and strategic behaviour of impoverished people (Whitehead 2002: 576). In order to improve their livelihoods households engage in different strategies by mobilizing and/or combining different forms of assets at their disposal. Strategy means conscious and coherently structured actions that are aimed at achieving something in the future (Niehof 2004: 323). Ellis (2000) in Niehof (2004: 321) states that "since the concept of livelihoods has rapidly gained ground as [a development] approach in poor countries, the notions of diversity and diversification have become part and parcel of livelihood theory". Diversification is generally recognized as an important strategy for decreasing livelihood vulnerability (pp 325). Vulnerability denotes a negative condition that limits the abilities of individuals, communities and regions to resist certain debilitating process and improve their well-being (Yaro 2004). The livelihoods approach emphasizes that people's access to different categories of livelihoods assets and potential diversification strategies and options are also shaped and constrained by transforming structures and processes (policies, institutions, and practices).

Although appreciating the value of the livelihoods approach, the literature indicates that it is also failing to address complex development problems in developing countries (Toner 2003, Yaro 2004, de Haan and Zoomers 2005, Masanjala 2007). This approach has depended on the household as the basic building block for research and analysis and it overlooks the diversity of individuals within a household (Masanjala 2007). For instance, Toner (2003: 779) argues that a "critical examination reveals that the concepts and assumptions used are often overly simplistic, and attempt to codify and rationalize complexity to too great an extent". Hence, de Haan and Zoomers (2005) find the livelihoods trajectories (life-course) approach as providing an appropriate methodology for examining individual strategic behaviour embedded both in complex historical and social contexts. As explained below, the second study was conceptualized from the life-course perspective. The life-course has been defined as "a sequence of socially defined events and roles that the individual enacts over time" (Giele and Elder 1998: 22). This approach has given a distinctly sociological tone to the study of human lives and livelihoods (Crosnoe 2000).

Street vending as a livelihood episode
The World Youth Report 2003 reveals that "there is evidence that young people [in sub-Saharan Africa], out of necessity, are increasingly turning to the informal sector for their livelihoods" (United Nations 2003: 68). As indicated earlier on, the main focus of the second study was on young women engaged in street vending activities in Gaborone. However, the study moved beyond popular conceptions which regard street vending as either an aberration of economic failure by the state to provide adequate employment in the formal sector or as a mere form of self-employment or a livelihood diversification strategy by the urban poor. Rather, it conceptualizes it from a life-course perspective as a socio-culturally embedded episode or an event, which marks particular transition/s and/or turning point/s in the livelihood trajectories of those people who engage in it. When viewed as an episode, engagement in street vending is a point in time in which youth (young women) can look backwards at their lived experiences and ahead towards their livelihood trajectories as adults. This conceptualization of street vending is substantiated by White (2002: 1102) that:

> For not only do individuals grow through childhood to adulthood, but they 'read back' and 'read forward' their own experiences and that of others. Their histories and their expectations of the future thus affect both their present choices and how they relate across the generations.

This conceptualization is humanistic in that it looks at livelihoods of people engaged in street vending holistically not in an anecdotal basis as is the case with popular conceptions. It moves away from conceptions which see street vendors as helpless victims of 'poverty' and restrictive modernist urban planning approaches, but consider street vending to be part of a highly complex and dynamic process in which people engage to construct their livelihoods. As an 'episode' not just a 'strategy', street vending constitutes a relatively small portion of a complex socio-cultural context within which youth livelihoods trajectories are embedded, and as such, it was just an entry point in understanding the complexity of such contexts.

Methodological approaches
The first study was conceptualized from the modernist and postmodernist theoretical positions to investigate urban planning aspects of street vending in Gaborone city. Contrary to the modernist approach, postmodernists view the continued existence of the informal sector activities in general as a healthy reaction to restrictive planning. Street vending according to the postmodernists is not a passing phenomenon but rather, it is a vibrant and steadily rising sector which is complementary to the formal sector (Tripp 1997). The study adopted a 'mixed-methods' approach by combining primary and secondary data. Secondary data was collected from official documents such as development plans, labour and demographic survey reports, and government policies, and from Acts of Parliament. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires administered to a sample of street vendors, a sample of their customers, and senior officials from Gaborone City Council. Selection of the street vendors and their customers was based on convenience and quota sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used in the selection of government officials. A total number of 160 street vendors and a total number of 40 customers were interviewed. The data from secondary and primary sources were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively.

The second study was designed from an interpretive qualitative case-study approach and it was informed by the theoretical positions of social constructionism and the life-course. The study focused on understanding the lived experiences and points of the research participants through eliciting diverse meanings they attach to their livelihood trajectories.

Social constructionism was viewed relevant as it emphasizes on understanding meanings people construct about themselves within their relationships with others (Burr 2003). The study adopted the life-course framework as a conceptual and analytical tool. This approach recognizes that people do not live their lives in isolation but they are embedded within historically situated contexts upon which they construct meanings (Giele and Elder 1998).

The study triangulated multiple methods in data collection which lasted eight moths. It largely focused on personal narratives of young women engaged in street vending. The study was also conceptualized to consider other key research participants, namely, young men and old women engaged in street vending as well as scrutinizing development interventions that are geared towards empowering youth and/or women in Botswana. Selection of the participants was based a diagrammatic model the author developed by weaving together three aspects (livelihood episodes, youth, and gender) underpinning the conceptualization of the study. The data collected consisted of 23 audiotaped in-depth life history interviews, 46 self-administered open-ended questionnaires and follow-up face-to-face interviews, direct observation, life charts, photographic diaries, and newspaper articles. A thematic narrative approach was applied in analyzing and presenting the findings evidenced by detailed extracts of the research participants' own words.

Research findings

Summary of the first study

Demographic characteristics
The majority of the respondents both on street vendors' and customers' surveys were women constituting 65% and 57.5% respectively. These surveys are in line with the statistics of 2001 population and housing census, which indicates that there are 93.5 males per 100 females in Botswana as a whole and in urban areas in particular. Data from both the street vendors' and customers' surveys indicate that the majority of the respondents were not married (76.9% and 72.5% respectively). Women made up the majority of street vendors and customers who were single as they constituted 69.2% and 69.6% respectively. By comparison male street vendors and male customers who were single constituted 62.5% and 52.9% respectively.

The dominant age group of the respondents both on street vendors' and customers' surveys were people in the 21-40 year age bracket. This group accounted for 71.4% and 77% for street vendors and customers respectively. The majority of the respondents had low levels of formal education as evidenced by 86.3% of street vendors and 60% of customers who have only gone up to primary school and junior secondary school levels. The study revealed that women have attained lower levels of education than their male counter parts. Only 11.5% of the female street vendors and only 27.5% of the female customers have gone to senior secondary school and tertiary level. In contrast, male street vendors and male customers who have reached the same levels of education constituted 17.8% and 29.4% respectively.

Entry into street vending
The study revealed that those engaging in street vending are from diverse backgrounds. The majority of street vendors (49.4%) were previously engaged in wage employment and many of them (43.1%) working in the private sector. Only 26.3% of the street vendors indicated to have been previously unemployed. Many of the previously employed respondents complained about lack of security of employment in the private sector. Reasons for leaving previous employment ranged from retrenchment, underpayment, and the quest for self-

employment. Furthermore, street vendors' survey also found out that 60% of the respondents actively looked for jobs in the formal sector before engaging in street vending.

The majority of the respondents (50.6%) indicated that street vending was the only alternative left for them after failing to secure wage employment. In addition, 41.3% of the respondents pointed out that they became street vendors mainly because it was very easy to join than to find a formal employment. Only 4.4% of the respondents indicated that they became street vendors mainly because they wanted to have more control over their own lives. The remaining 3.7% of the respondents became street vendors after witnessing the progress made by their family members and friends who engaged in this sector before them. Some of those who were previously employed stated that they became street vendors due to insufficient incomes, underpayment and fear of exploitation by their former employers.

Operation of the enterprises

The study found out that less money was used to establish the majority of the enterprises. The start-up capital of 61.3% street vending enterprises was found to be less than US$100. The source of this capital was very crucial to understand the significance of the enterprises. The study revealed that 67.5% of respondents used their personal savings as start-up capital and the source of personal savings for the majority of them was previous wage employment. The major source of the initial capital for 29.1% of the respondents came from friends and relatives either as a loan (with or without interest) or as a 'social grant' and/or inheritance.

Street vending appeared to be the main source of income to most of the respondents as evidenced by 79.4% who stated that they do not have any other income generating activity. In addition, 87.1% of those who indicated that they have other sources of income apart from their street trading in Gaborone still operated informal sector activities. Interestingly, only 41.4% of the female respondents made an average daily sale of less than US$20 while their male counterparts who received the same average sale constituted 48.2%. This implies that street vending will remain to large extent attractive to an increasing number of women to meet their current needs, augment their earnings and acquire resources for future investments. The research findings revealed that only 35.6% of the respondents were making social and/or health insurance contributions from the income they generate in street vending enterprises. Lack of insurance contributions was attributed on the one hand to pressing needs they were faced with and on the other hand to fluctuating incomes to sustain monthly contributions. Most importantly, the findings also revealed that 70% of the respondents had more than three old and young dependents and 28.1% of them were the only breadwinners in their families.

Urban planning constraints

The study categorized constraints affecting street vending in Gaborone city into four, namely, those faced by new entrants, those faced by established enterprises, those affecting all enterprises, and those faced by the local authorities in managing street vending activities. This paper summarizes only few constraints which are directly related to urban planning. Lack of suitable space for trading was ranked by 38.8% of the respondents as the second major constraints they encountered when still establishing their street vending enterprises. The findings of the study revealed that certain areas in the city are preferred over others. Suitable space is therefore a crucial element in street vending like in other businesses (formal or informal) and its shortage might be attributed to two main urban planning factors. One such factor was lack of appropriate land zoned specifically for street vending in Gaborone. The study found out that location preferences for street vending enterprises are customer driven such that the officially (poorly) zoned market area at *Bontleng* became unattractive to even the 'newest entrants' shifting them towards areas of high concentration of people.

The other factor that led to lack of trading space was poor management and control of the available space in preferred sites by the local planning authorities. Urban planners in the city were found to be reluctant and/or unwilling to organize space (demarcate market stalls) within street vendors' sites of preference. This disparity between demand and supply of space resulted in the haphazard placement of stalls occupying more space than they required. Those who were already established in street vending were found to be unwilling to allow new entrants to locate closer to them or in any other space which could be attractive to customers. Apart from this, the use of public space for street vending in Gaborone like in other cities is the subject of intense contestation between street vendors and the local planning authorities. The majority of the respondents (6.3%) complained about restrictive planning regulations. They pointed out that development control officers (byelaw officers) with the help of the police attacked them on several occasions and even confiscated some of their goods. The interviewed officers confessed that as authorities responsible for the planning of city spaces they engage in 'street cleaning campaigns' which in most cases turn to be confrontational. Local newspaper articles revealed that much conflict has been witnessed between the local planning authorities and street food vendors on the basis of food safety and hygiene.

The study identified several factors which made urban planning practices in Gaborone city particularly development control mechanisms to appear unfavourable to street vending. These included amongst others lack of definite statutes, disjunction between licensing and land requirements, lack of consultation, and environmental and public health concerns. The major factor related to the fact that there are no definite statutes which address issues of the informal sector activities in Botswana in general. Street vending and other informal sector activities in the country were and are managed using clauses found in legislations drawn to address different issues such as public health, food control, and environmental management.

The legislations include among others the Public Health Act of 1971, Food Control Act of 1993, Trade and Liquor Act of 1986, and Waste Management Act of 1998. The only available piece of legislation which attempts to address the issue of street vending is The Town Council Hawking and Street Vending Regulations of 1985. Nonetheless, the mentioned legislations appear to be one-sided in their attempt to address street vending as they tend to be concerned only with penalties to those people who contravene the provisions of the clauses. It is safe to argue that these laws are insufficient in addressing the nature and manifestation of street vending activities as they tend to be used in a process of excluding them in urban areas.

The other factor led street vending participants to regard planning regulations as restrictive is the fact that the majority of them possessed a street vending license. The Town Council Hawking and Street Vending Regulations state that 'No person shall carry on the business of a street vendor within the council area unless he/she is the holder of a certificate of registration issued by the Registrar'. In response to this legal requirement 71% of the interviewed street vendors were found to have a license issued by Gaborone City Council. They regarded planning regulations to be restrictive in the sense that they are required to have licenses but restricted to trade in areas best for their business. The arguments surrounding the issue of licenses might be linked to street vendor's lack of knowledge about the laws governing its usage due to lack of consultation by the authorities. The officers claimed that they consult with *Thusanang Bagwebi* (an association of street vendors) in order to ensure that street vending activities in the city are conducted in an absolutely conducive manner. Contrary to this, the committee of the association stated that the officers hardly consult them in good faith but they always accuse them of littering the city and threaten to evict them. However, most of the research participants pointed out that appropriate planning regulations are required to protect customers and the general public against possible dangers that may result from the haphazard placement of street vending enterprises around the city.

Summary of the second study

Demographic characteristics

The second study was basically a follow-up to the first study, and as such, in statistical terms the demographic characteristics of the research participants were more or less the same. However, for conceptualization purposes the study adopted the definition of youth from Botswana's Young Farmers Fund which initially targeted youth aged between 18 to 35 years. This categorization of the participants was a convenient way of gathering empirical data but it later emerged from the study that there is more to *age* than this definition of youth implied. Not all the interviewed 'young women' were willing to reveal their specific biological age. Personal narratives on age indicate that although the research participants recognized themselves as youth, they do not define the concept of youth in terms of biological age as implied within policy but as a social identity of being active, responsible and accountable.

Although the study aimed at understanding youth livelihoods from the perspective of young women engaged in street vending, it positioned them within their real life contexts. It considered that these young women do not live their lives in isolation but are embedded within complex socio-cultural contexts and it paid attention to fundamental gender aspects. Hence, there were few young men engaged in street vending as compared to young women. The study also identified that the majority of young women do not operate their own enterprises but are employed by other people who are not always 'visible' on the streets. Thus, gaining entrée to negotiate for rapport with such young women was a very difficult process as it required authorization by their employers who are inevitably the gate keepers.

Notwithstanding this, marital status of the research participants varied from being married, single, divorced, and cohabiting, but the overwhelming majority were single. Narratives on gender and marital status portrayed marriage both as a desirable social status and as a potential means towards enhancing women's livelihoods. An important point to highlight here is that although most young women were not willing to reveal their specific chronological age they openly revealed their unmarried status as single and cohabitation. This appeared to suggest that the socio-cultural contexts within which young women obtain a livelihood privilege identities which are based on marriage and restrain those based on age.

Narratives on educational levels revealed that in the context of Botswana transitions of youth from 'school-to-work' are underlined by complex socially constructed factors. From a life-course perspective, they revealed diverse historical episodes and/or turning points which led to low levels of formal education amongst the research participants. Some factors related to the economic status of and/or social dynamics within families, some are personal deficits of individuals, and others resulted from the changing state policies on education.

Youth livelihoods contexts

The study revealed that youth livelihoods in Botswana are embedded within complex socio-cultural contexts which are inextricably intertwined. The experiences of youth are diverse and complex [and] cutting across this variation, however are significant social processes which are affecting more and more people, young and old alike (Wyn and White 1997: 151). The findings were discussed under these five broad interlinked thematic narratives, namely, the dynamics of familial belonging, multidimensionality of poverty, gendered power relations, the undesired school-to-work transitions, and spiritually trapped personal identities. These broad thematic narratives emerged to signify the complex ways in which the research participants define their diverse lived experiences in the process of obtaining a livelihood.

The family emerged from this study to be a significant social institution in the way the research participants define their lived experiences in the process of obtaining a livelihood.

Most of them interpreted their livelihood situations with reference to historical episodes linked to dynamics of life within their familial belonging, particularly the bleak side of it. The livelihoods of the participants have been directly and/or indirectly affected by negative and/or positive episodes that happened in their families of birth during and/or after their childhoods. The dynamics of familial belonging due to lived experiences such as death/sickness, marriage/divorce, desertion/single parenthood, dysfunctional extended family systems, and poverty emerged to be significant in shaping livelihood trajectories of the participants. The meanings participants attached to their changing family contexts are based on the meanings those episodes themselves have for them in the overall process of obtaining a livelihood.

An important development approach adopted in this study was the conceptualization of poverty as a complex multidimensional phenomenon, not only as insufficient income. The study therefore revealed that by emphasizing the changing nature of their family lives the research participants were basically contextualizing the multidimensionality of their own poverty beyond their apparent engagement in street vending activities in Gaborone city. Analysis of their life stories revealed that the livelihoods of most of the participants are embedded within family contexts which can better be described as poor family backgrounds. Although specific reasons greatly varied, the research participants generally indicated that the most challenging thing is lack of and/or inadequate money to meet their diverse livelihoods needs, which include amongst others improving living conditions of their poor families.

Defining poverty from a holistic perspective as a multidimensional phenomenon called for a critical consideration of inevitable power relations. Thus, the study revealed that in the process of obtaining a livelihood the research participants are differently subjected to complex power relations operating in diverse contexts within which they are embedded. Although their lived experiences varied, there was perception amongst the participants that in historical and cultural terms men possess certain *powers* which women do not have. It emerged that the participants regardless of age and/or sex symbolically defined and positioned 'men' as ideal heads and/or breadwinners of households or as tersely reported in one of the local newspapers 'they depicted men as God to women'. The participants attached valued meanings to the position and role of men within a household and/or in other socio-cultural contexts as compared to how they defined the position and role of women. For instance, some single 'young' women explicitly and implicitly defined their desired transition to adulthood through marriage in relation to the role of men and thus they appeared to be distancing themselves from development interventions geared towards empowering women.

As already highlighted under demographic characteristics, the participants had low levels of formal education which appeared to be rooted on diverse contextual factors. Hence, the study went beyond mere statistical presentation of the resultant low levels of education and sought to understand their diverse underlying causes. In defining their livelihood situations, the participants constantly made reference to their unsuccessful educational backgrounds or what was interpreted as the undesired school-to-work transitions. Given the value attached to formal education or school-to-work transition it is not surprising that lack of marketable skills are causing frustrations and/or anxieties to a number of the participants. Beyond their low levels of formal education, it also emerged that young women widely cited nursing and teaching as their main career ambitions since childhood. They provided different connotations and justifications for their ambitions to join these specific professional fields. Hence, it appears that most young women engaged in street vending perceive their livelihood situations to be unsatisfactory because they failed to achieve their childhood ambitions. Although young women attached positive socially constructed meanings to nursing and teaching, their ambitions reflect how they were socialized at childhood because these two fields in patriarchal societies such as Botswana are conventionally perceived as feminine.

Lastly, it emerged that some of the research participants simultaneously make reference to religious faith and cultural beliefs to make sense of their livelihood situations. It emerged that they have complex and controversial lived experiences and they hold diverse and conflicting points of view between Christian religion and traditional cultural beliefs. They attached negative and/or positive meanings to significant episodes by associating them both with demonic and/or divine powers, and as such, their personal identities appeared to be spiritually trapped between Christianity and traditional cultural beliefs of witchcraft. Their life stories exposed controversies and contradictions of traditional cultural and religious beliefs characterizing familial contexts within which they are embedded. Importantly, some life stories appear to suggest that it is difficult to understand personal identity the participants construct within such controversial and contradictory contexts characterized by spirituality. However, these findings demonstrated that traditional cultural beliefs and modern religious faith shape people's livelihoods in many different ways over their life-courses. They appear to suggest that issues of spirituality are worthy of consideration in order to adequately understand the contextual realities of livelihoods of people engaging in street vending. Thus, they appear to pose a challenge to urban planning policy-making processes and practices.

Conclusions

Despite urban planning efforts to exclude street vending in Gaborone city, these activities have over the years experienced vigorous growth and have also become diverse in character. The results of the two studies summarized above clearly reveal that this proliferation of street vending activities can be attributed to a wide range of factors which include amongst others increasing rates of unemployment and the complex dynamics of life within familial contexts. A combination of restrictive urban planning regulations and street vendors' lack of business training diminish the prospects for enterprises to be more economically and socially viable. This paper argues that it is worthwhile to respond to the growing street vending activities in Gaborone city beyond the modernist urban planning approach and understand both its economic viability and diverse meanings people attach to their broader livelihood situations.

Interestingly, it emerged from the two studies that development policy-makers in Botswana now have a positive attitude towards street vending. They appear to adhere to the fact that these activities have become an inseparable part of every city's lifestyle. It is undoubtedly that street vending activities play a vital role in the economy of the country in general and in that of urban centres in particular. Hence, the consistent failure to curb informal sector activities and their continued proliferation has led some local authorities in the country to consider their integration in urban development and planning systems. Even though local authorities recognize the operational relevance of street vending, there are a number of problems which delays its integration in urban planning policy and practice. There seems to be a general lack of coordination or existence of weak coordination mechanisms between various actors that are involved. It is equally important to note that the proliferation of street vending activities contributes to the congestion of streets and sidewalks. However, problems of congestion are mainly a result of reluctance by urban planners to organize space in the preferred locations, and as such, street vending activities are haphazardly located.

Although young women are embedded within complex socio-cultural contexts which define power relations in terms of the 'valued' gender identities and roles of men, it emerged from the second study that they are also strategically positioning themselves within it. Although appreciating the complexities of the strategies used, it emerged that they mainly direct their social agency towards the dynamics of their familial belonging. Thus, the study concluded that it is worthwhile to view youth livelihoods in Botswana from the perspective of

negotiated interdependences particularly in relation to their families. On another important dimension, most of the research participants perceived existing development initiatives geared towards youth empowerment in Botswana to be accessible only to few 'youth' due either to bureaucratic requirements and/or corrupt practices of nepotism. Although there was no evidence to confirm and/or refute these perceptions, they however emerged to shape the ways in which the participants respond to youth empowerment initiatives in the country. Most importantly, the widespread perceptions about corruption demonstrate that it is complex to understand the socially constructed meanings 'youth' street vendors attach to the notion of youth empowerment without a critical consideration of their broader contextual realities.

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