"Street Vending in Urban Malawi: Strategies and Practices of Vendors and Local Authorities"

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Introduction

Four months ago, a big clash took place between street vendors and the police in the Malawian capital Lilongwe. Vendors were with force removed from the streets and their structures were demolished by the police and city council authorities (Face of Malawi, 2015). According to the city council, the street vendors were selling outside of the designated vending areas and therefore they were relocated into the – already overcrowded – markets (Face of Malawi, 2015; BNL Times, 2015). However, the vendors resisted the evictions which led to riots between the police and the vendors. The police used teargas to handle the situation and arrested several of the vendors (BNL Times, 2015). Afterwards, the police patrolled the city in order to restore peace and order (Maravi Post, 2015). Events like these have occurred several times before in Lilongwe (BBC News, 2012; Riley, 2014), as well as in other urban areas in Malawi (Riley, 2014), and beyond (e.g. regarding Lusaka, Zambia, see Tranberg Hansen, 2010). They are illustrative for the repression of the authorities of urban informality (e.g. Chen & Skinner, 2014) and the subsequent tensions. Generally, such repressive strategies of the authorities have been attributed to their aspirations of becoming a 'world class city' (like New York or London) (e.g. Robinson, 2002) as well as the contemporary planning practices in the Global South which do not, or extremely limited, accept informality (e.g. Kamete, 2012).

In this paper, these tensions between local authorities and street vendors are explored by identifying the strategies of both the local authorities as well as the street vendors in two different urban areas in Malawi. More specifically, by distinguishing between different types of street vendors as well as urban areas within each city, the aim of this paper is to explore normative associations of different places as well as how modernization aspirations of urban planners are articulated in this specific context.

Street Vending and Modern Cities

In this paper, street vending includes sellers of any type along the streets, sidewalks, squares, public parks or in other public spaces, including those selling prepaid phone cards, newspapers, fruits and vegetables, second-hand clothes, as well as those shoe shiners and tailors (after Jimu, 2004). Street vendors are part of the informal sector, in which workers are portrayed as mostly unregistered, unregulated and as unable to access organized markets or institutional support. And even if these workers are registered or covered by some aspects of the law, then they are still often unprotected in the workplace by social security and labor

legislation (ILO, 2004). Generally, activities in the informal sector are characterized as small scale, labor intensive, low capital, use of simple technology, use of family labor, low level of productivity, low and irregular incomes and highly unstable (ILO, 2004). In Sub-Saharan Africa, the informal economy contributes to about 30-60% of the total GDP in each country (World Bank, 2010), and was still growing from 1999 to 2007 (World Bank, 2010). As part of the informal economy, street vending thus also contributes to poverty alleviation (e.g. Hope, 2001). Additionally, research in different cities suggested that street vendors contribute to the food security of many of the poorer urban residents (Riley & Legwegoh, 2014). In many ways, street vending thus fulfills important functions within urban areas.

Despite these various positive effects for urban residents, street vending is seldom supported, and more often even repressed by the local authorities and urban planners (e.g. Chen & Skinner, 2014). Street vending's portrayal as a cause of congestion, theft, dirty-ness and urban waste (e.g. Yatmo, 2008) has transformed it into a symbol of disorder (Steck et al., 2013), thereby opposing city planners' aspirations of a modern city (e.g. Lewinson, 2003). Street vending has thus become the symbol of the failure to modernize (Steck et al., 2013). Urban aspirations for modernization in the Global South have thus often been accompanied by the formalization of street vending and the erasure of informal activities from certain public spaces (Steck et al., 2013). Instead, 'properly' planned and ordered cities are to be designed to attract investment and to match certain global city ideals.

Formalizing attempts of street vending represents thus a potential solution for creating the 'proper' urban environments (Watson, 2003), and making the vendors part of the urban planning regime. Such attempts are, for instance, articulated by the authorities engaging in regulations to control the number of sellers, through issuing quotas of permits for example, or by spatially controlling them, through designating certain areas specifically for vending (like market spaces or stalls) (Steck et al., 2013). Final attempts of the authorities to normalize vendors that circumvent these regularization practices, includes evicting the remaining vendors from the streets (e.g. Kamete, 2012). Often, adopting 'world class city' aspirations provides sufficient justification for the authorities to remove vendors with force from certain (central) areas of the city (e.g. Swanson, 2007; Kurfürst, 2012; Linehan, 2007; Lewinson, 2003).

These findings suggest a strong link between how a 'modern city' should look like including which people or activities are considered appropriate. Ideas of a 'modern city' – as a specific place – thus come together with normative associations, thereby dichotomizing people,

objects and practices as being appropriate (i.e. 'in place') or inappropriate (i.e. 'out of place'). Things that are considered to be 'out of place' are generally described as pollution and dirt, suggesting it needs to be cleaned regularly (Douglas, 1966). This theory, which is further elaborated by Cresswell (1996), implies that the relation between a specific place and either the people, the object or the practice determines whether this object, people or practice is 'in place' or 'out of place'. Thus, some people, objects or practices may be considered appropriate in certain places, but not in others. Additionally, some places have a stronger spatial classification than others – subsequently also leading to a greater desire to expel and exclude people, practices and objects as a means to improve the order of that particular place (Cresswell, 1996). In line with Yatmo (2008), we can conclude that street vending is considered to be 'out of place' in urban modernity generally. The portrayal of street vending as a source of traffic congestion and waste, threatening the order, harmony and perfection in the urban environment (Yatmo, 2008) further confirms such conclusions.

By exploring spatial aspects, this paper aims to extend these findings by studying how different areas in a city may have different normative connotations, thereby making street vendors 'in place' in certain urban areas, but 'out of place' in others. By exploring such normative associations among the vendors themselves, I also aim to link their strategies and behaviors to whether they perceive themselves to be 'in place' or 'out of place' in certain urban areas. Yet, if street vending is conceptualized as inappropriate in 'modern cities' then local authorities may also use different tactics to ensure an 'appropriate' use of the modern urban spaces.

Differentiating Informality from Informality

Yet, street vending can also be perceived as existing between legality, safety and approval and eviction and destruction in what Yiftachel (2009; 2011) terms 'gray spaces'. These gray spaces exist partially outside of the gaze of the state authorities and city plans (Yiftachel, 2009), and they may not necessarily always be normalized, but instead they may be tolerate and even encouraged by urban policies (e.g. Yiftachel, 2009; 2011). As people in these gray spaces know that they most likely will be corrected in the future, it leaves them for now in a state of 'permanent temporariness'.

Yiftachel (2009; 2011) argues that sometimes these pathological spaces are not necessarily normalized, but tolerated and sometimes even encouraged by urban policies. Capturing these people within discourses of 'criminalization', and as a public danger to the desired order of

things provides sufficient. Additionally, sometimes these gray spaces are also legalized ('whitened') by powerful interests, whereas others may be destructed or eliminated ('blackened') (Yiftachel, 2009, p. 92). Thus, entering a gray space could either be beneficial, if it is legalized at a later stage, or punished, when it is destructed at a later stage (Yiftachel, 2009). Therefore, entering a gray space involves a certain risk, as it is associated with threats, both for marginalized groups as for more powerful groups. For instance, even if most of the constructions in Delhi violate some planning or building law and are thus unauthorized, only some are designated as illegal and demolished, whereas others are protected and formalized (Ghertner, 2008). It appeared that the looks of the building was decisive for determining whether it was formalized or destructed: if a building had a 'world class' look it was formalized, if it did not meet the 'world class' standard then the building was destroyed (Ghertner, 2008). Such findings suggest the importance of differentiating between informal and informal for understanding why certain informal objects or practices are legalized, whereas others are illegalized (Roy, 2009, p. 80).

Thus, besides differentiating urban areas, the aim of this paper is also to explore the strategies that local authorities deploy for deciding which type of street vending is legalized and which types have been labeled as illegal. Therefore, I will distinguish between different types of street vending. These different types of street vending will also related to the spatial aspects, through exploring whether certain types of street vending are appropriate in some areas, but inappropriate in others.

The presented findings are based on a short period of fieldwork in May and June 2015, whereby both the capital city, Lilongwe, and the economic center, Blantyre, of Malawi were visited by the researcher. In each city, research was conducted through observations and conducting interviews. Observations were mainly limited to the central areas of each respective city. Interviews were conducted with local authorities, including the city council's directors of commerce, trade officers and town planners so as to understand which motivations fed into their selective tolerating of some of the vendors in the city's streets. Additionally, interviews were conducted with different types of vendors. Within each city, vendors were identified that differed in the legal status and geographical location of their businesses and they were interviewed about their strategies for dealing with their current situation, especially regarding measures of the local authorities for controlling and regulating them. Before describing the findings, I will first briefly introduce (street vending in) Malawi.

Malawi and Selected Urban Areas

Malawi is among the poorest countries worldwide. Even if national poverty rates have decreased since 2004 (UN-Habitat, 2012), according to the IMF and the WorldBank's GPD per capita rankings, Malawi was actually still the poorest nation in the world respectively in 2014 and 2013 (IMF, 2015; World Bank, 2015), with over 90% of people living on less than 2 US dollars a day (World Bank, 2015). In 2013, totally 16,3 million people lived in this reasonably densely populated country (with over 173 people per square kilometer), of which the large majority (84%) lived in agricultural areas, and only the 16% remainder living in urban areas (World Bank, 2015), making Malawi among the least urbanized nations worldwide (World Bank, 2015). Yet, its urbanization rate (5,2% annually) is among the highest in the world, and its urban population has grown from 1 million in 1990 to 1,6 million in 2000 and to over 2,5 million in 2013 (World Bank, 2015) – whereas the rural population grew 'only' from 8,6 million in 1990 to 13,7 million in 2013 (World Bank, 2015).

Of the urban population, the majority (77%) lives in one of the four major urban areas in Malawi: Lilongwe, Blantyre, Zomba or Mzuzu (UN-Habitat, 2012). Poverty in the urban areas was estimated to be over 25% in 2008, with 64% of the urban population living in unplanned settlements and slums. With the earlier mentioned high urbanization rate, there is a need for proper governing the influx of new residents into the urban areas (UN-Habitat, 2012). The economy of Malawi consists primarily of agriculture (including tobacco, tea and sugar), with over 80% of the total population engaging in subsistence farming. In the urban areas, informal employment accounted for over 30% of the total economic activities (UN-Habitat, 2012).

Lilongwe, the capital and largest city of Malawi, with about 680,000 residents, became the administrative center in 1975. This has led to a high rate of urbanization, as all the governmental offices were relocated to this city. The city consists of four different parts, of which Capital Hill (in this paper indicated as the newer City Center) and the Old Town are the two main commercial and administrative centers. About 76% of the city's population lives in informal settlements, and, although numbers are lacking, informal employment forms a significant proportion of the totally employed people (UN-Habitat, 2011a).

Blantyre, the oldest urban center in Malawi, is the main hub for communication and commercial activities. In 2008 about 660,000 people inhabited Blantyre and its twin-city Limbe, of which the majority (65%) lives in informal settlements, and of which about 36% of the total

population works in the informal economy (UN-Habitat, 2011b). In Blantyre, remnants of the colonial society are still visible. Most formal areas within the city were built for Europeans, and after independence these areas were inhabited by the indigenous elites (Riley, 2014).

Street Vending in Malawi

Growth of street vending in Malawi is generally attributed to the political liberalization, the change from dictatorial political governance to the multiparty politics, in the 1990s (Chinsinga & Kayuni, 2011) in combination with a liberalization of the economy and rapid urbanization (Manda & Mzumara, 2005). Additionally, some politicians took advantage of this situation by expressing their support for street vending (e.g. Presidents Muluzi), even if it was (and still is) illegal by law. However, during the last decade, the government, in collaboration with the police and the army, removed with force the vendors from the streets into newly constructed flea-markets (as part of the operation named 'Dongosolo') so as to establish order in the major urban areas. This led many vendors to indeed occupy the newly constructed market spaces or to return to the rural areas as subsistence farmers (Kayuni & Tambulasi, 2009). These forced relocations and the increased pressure of the authorities on the vendors, thereby not allowing them to vend outside the designated market spaces, has led to a variety of tensions between the vendors and the authorities. For instance, soon after the operation that relocated the vendors, they started abandoning their market spaces as the vendors experienced a lack of profits as their business places were more difficult to reach for their customers. The abandonment of the vendors of their market places hampered the collection of the fees by the authorities and their generation of revenues from the markets. Additionally, vendors also refused to pay their market fees as there was a lack of service provision in the market (e.g. they were not offered free access to the toilets) (Kayuni & Tambulasi, 2009). Other reported problems include corruption among the law enforcers (those collecting the market fees), and the small vending spaces inside the market (Kayuni & Tambulasi, 2009). Up to the present day, some vendors are still resisting their relocation in the designated market spaces which leaves them in battle with the authorities, and evictions occur on a daily basis in the major cities. For instance, only a few months ago, an illegally constructed market was demolished by the police in the outskirts of Lilongwe, who even used teargas to overcome the resistance of the vendors (e.g. BNL Times, 2015). Yet, the exclusionary and harsh practices of the authorities for dealing with vendors on the streets are limited only to a share of the people who engage in economic activities in the streets. Some vendors along the streets are namely left in peace by the

authorities. The present paper, therefore, distinguishes between different types of street vending and aims at understanding why some practices along the streets have been allowed, whereas others have been labeled inappropriate. Additionally, this paper also describes how the vendors are dealing with their current situation, by describing the strategies that they adopted for sustaining their livelihoods. Finally, the paper also addresses spatial patterns of vendors' and authorities' practices by distinguishing between different urban areas and exploring how they are perceived by both street vendors and local authorities.

Street Vending in Lilongwe and Blantyre

In Lilongwe and Blantyre – as in the rest of Malawi – informal vending is supposed to take place in designated areas in each city, i.e. constructed markets. People wanting to vend outside of the premises of the market would need to obtain a license – which is controlled by the city councils in both cities. City councils in both cities had patrolling vehicles and policemen to arrest people who were vending without a license outside of the premises of the designated market spaces.

Unlicensed (Illegal) Vendors

Illegal vendors - who risk being arrested and paying a fine to the city council – consisted in Blantyre and Lilongwe mostly of mobile vendors who carry a few items with them, such as groundnuts, fruits and vegetables, second-hand clothes or shoes. Main reasons for them to become illegal vendors included a lack of business in the market and a lack of capital which prevented them from occupying a (legal) spot in one of the designated markets. In the market, there is fierce competition as many people are selling similar items. By following the customers, these vendors circumvent such competition which allows them to sell more of their merchandize, and thereby increase their profits. Thus, some vendors did stay for some time in the market, but abandoned their stand for this reason. By lack of capital, the vendors suggest that they do not have sufficient means to acquire more merchandize which they could display in the market. Having only a few items that they can sell, it seems useless for them to occupy a spot in the market. Other vendors reported strong feelings of attachment to a specific area, as traditionally, they and in some cases even their parents have been selling from this specific spot. Some of these illegal vendors have also applied for a business license at the city council, but their application failed – yet, they continue vending from the same spot. The majority of these vendors had been arrested at least a few times in the last years.

As mentioned before, the majority of the illegal vendors in both Lilongwe and Blantyre had become mobile. Additionally, many vendors have opted to relocate to less central parts in both cities. For instance, in Lilongwe, many vendors relocated to the newer City Center. Here, even some stationary vendors were encountered. These stationary vendors were able to vend from the streets by making agreements with the patrolling police. Others also made agreements with private owners of land – in some cases even written contracts – that allowed them to vend without harassment from their premises. In Blantyre, many of the mobile vendors congregated along the major road connecting Blantyre with Limbe, for instance at filling stations or other transport hubs, and where people congregated (such as Queen Elizabeth hospital). The majority of these vendors were also mobile, which allowed them to run in case the city council with the police was signaled. Even when they did put their merchandize on the ground, the vendors had several strategies to ensure that they could run with their merchandize at any time. One such a strategy was to display only part of the total merchandize (and to hide the rest of it), so that it would allow them to quickly take their displaying merchandize and run.

Demolishment of illegally constructed markets seemed to stimulate some of the vendors also to relocate to markets on private lands. For instance, evictions in Lilongwe along the main road southwards (the M1 towards Blantyre) had led to the establishment and expansion of another privately run market (Waka Waka market), for instance.

Licensed (Legal) Vendors

Yet, not all street vending was deemed illegal or inappropriate by the authorities. In the streets in both Blantyre and Lilongwe, including the city centers, a variety of legal and semi-legal vendors were identified. These included people selling airtime – topup prepaid phone cards, shoe polishers, phone repairs, curios sellers, tailors, photographers, second-hand car vendors, bun and soda vendors, and newspaper sellers. These vendors either had obtained a license, and were thus legalized, or they were temporarily allowed and thereby labeled (by the authorities) as semi-legal. Being a legal vendor implied also paying a fee to the city council in order to be allowed to conduct a business from the streets. Being a semi-legal vendor implied a temporary acceptance, with possible relocation in the near future, and that no fees had to be paid to the city council. The geographies of these vendors differed substantively. Thus, some types of vendors were found only in some parts of the city, whereas others only in other parts, leaving some parts of the city completely absent from any (legal) vending activities.

In order to understand these different geographical patterns, insights are provided from the vendors themselves as well as from the regulating practices of the authorities. First of all, these vendors aimed at 'following' the customers, and preferred thus to locate strategically where many people or cars were passing by. For instance, the passport photographers were located opposite of the immigration office in Lilongwe, and some second-hand car vendors preferred a parking lot of a middle-class shopping mall. Second, historical patterns also seemed to be important. For instance, the tailors in Blantyre were located at a particular street where the shops in front of which they are doing their businesses used to sell the materials that the tailors were working with. In the last decade(s), these shops disappeared from this location, but the tailors remained. Yet, the preferences of the vendors were not always realized, as city councils also determined to a large extent the locations of where (legal) street vending could be taking place.

City Council's Strategies

Reasons for the city councils to decide which type of vending would be legal, semi-legal or illegal seemed to depend on various reasons. First of all, some types of street vending appeared problematic to the city councils as it lead to congestion and had poor sanitation. Typically, both characteristics were attributed to people selling perishables and other types of food along the road, and applied less to other types of businesses (like second-hand car selling). Second, the allowing of vending on the streets depended on whether markets had been constructed specifically for a certain type of vending. For instance, by constructing flea markets in both Blantyre and Lilongwe, city councils justified removing second-hand clothes and vegetable sellers from the streets – as they should occupy a space inside these markets. Thirdly, almost all types of vending that were allowed, either semi-legal or legal, in the streets had organized themselves. Each type of vending had their own small association with a small committee including a chairman. Some of the vendors had already been organized, but others organized specifically to apply for a license for all the vendors in this type of business. These associations facilitated the negotiations and discussions with the city councils, which provided possibilities for legalizing this type of vending. It allowed the city councils to inform them about the conditions under which vending could be accepted. Additionally, it also helped the city councils to control the vendors, as the committee of the association was responsible for the behavior of all the vendors and had possibilities to exclude vendors if they behaved inappropriately. Such associations also helped to locate the vendors at, by the council

identified as, appropriate geographical locations. Communication between the vendors and the authorities was thus facilitated through the establishment of such associations. Almost all (semi)legal vendors had established such committees, including the Airtime sellers, tailors, shoe polishers, and second-hand car vendors. All these organizations were local (e.g. there was no contact between the tailors association in Blantyre and Limbe) and exclusively for one type of vending (e.g. there was no contact between the tailors and the Airtime association in Limbe). Finally, a major concern expressed by the city councils that decided whether vending potentially could be legalized, was related to the convenience of the people who inhabited and worked in the city. Vendors were supposed to cater to the people living and visiting the city on a daily basis. Their needs, as perceived by the city council, decided which type of vending could be allowed and which one was labeled inappropriate. Additionally, the same type of business could be legal in certain areas but illegal in other areas of the city. In the next section, these geographical patterns are explored.

Local Authorities' and Vendors' Spatial Practices

From the interviews with the Blantyre City Council, it became clear that vendors along the streets are not necessarily allowed (or legalized) as the city council realizes the precariousness of their livelihoods, but is rather connected to the extent to which their businesses cater to the people residing or working in that specific area. The Blantyre City Council themselves decided what these needs exactly are. Thus, in areas where mainly (upper) middle class people resided or worked, only a few airtime sellers and shoe polishers were allowed. In other parts of the city, other types of vending were also considered to be legal. For instance, tailors, shoe polishers, some phone repairs and higher quantities of airtime sellers were located in these parts of the city. A similar account was provided by the Lilongwe City Council, where they also clearly identified different types of standards in the city, which decided if and what types of vending would be allowed in that particular area. For instance, airtime booths were only found in, what the Lilongwe City Council identified as, lower standard areas and none were found in areas with a higher standard, as it would 'decrease the high standard' in these areas. Subsequently, tailors would not be allowed in these areas either. Thus, even if some forms of vending were allowed, they were only allowed in certain parts of the city. Those parts that were already of a lower standard, and vending should be restricted to these areas in order not to threaten the security in those areas and to 'export the problems to the other areas and to keep those areas nice'.

According to both city councils, those areas with a higher standard should remain nice as these places are visited by visitors, high-ranked officials, and the upper-class residents of the respective city – who are the ones contributing the most to city councils. Thus, these areas, including some other highly visible areas (like major roads – along which many visitors enter or leave the city) were more important to keep clean than others. These areas were, then, also more heavily patrolled by the police and the city councils, as to control whether no illegal activities occurred in these areas.

Vendors themselves were also aware of the spatial connotations of certain areas, which they indicated by saying that these are 'for the rich'. They understood that in those areas, they are not supposed to be, as they would not fit in the 'upper-class' environment. None of the (legal) vendors would even attempt to conduct their businesses there, even if business might be better in those areas. Additionally, the majority of the vendors also interpreted these 'rich' areas to be 'beautiful', which they would only degrade by their vending behaviors. Thus, vendors would perceive themselves to be 'out of place' in these areas too.

Some (illegal) vendors, however, were able to benefit from these exclusive 'rich' areas. For instance, at a parking lot in one of the areas with a 'higher' standard, some second-hand car vendors, catering to the middle and upper middle-classes, deliberately chose this site as people coming here are part of their customer group. When the police would cause any problems to them, they would be given the opportunity to become friends with them, simply by having a drink with them.

Discussion

The aim of this paper was to explore tensions between street vending practices and the local authorities by distinguishing between different types of vendors as well as focusing on the spatial aspects of street vending. The results showed that street vendors wanting to circumvent the measures of the local authorities primarily chosen to become mobile, or to make agreements with private owners of the land (including relocation to markets on private land). The findings also indicated that both city councils legalized some forms of street vending in certain areas of each respective city. Generally, the forms of street vending that have been accepted can be characterized as catering to the (upper)middle classes, without generating too much waste, dirt and congestion. Additionally, all of the legalized vendors belonged to some sort of association, which facilitates the city councils' control over them.

The geography of street vending has also been explored in this paper. The findings suggest that city councils are engaging in zoning practices, thereby allowing vending in certain (lower standard) areas in the city but prohibiting it in other (higher standard areas). Those areas most visible and visited by both tourists and (upper)middle classes in town (including government officials) are severely restricted in terms of street vending. Only some vending is allowed by the city councils, those that cater specifically to their needs and hardly impact this high standard urban environment. The different standards of urban areas have been acknowledged by street vendors as well, who are aware of which areas are appropriate for them to conduct their businesses from and which ones are not.

This study has thus shown that in their efforts to create a 'modern city', city councils of Malawian Blantyre and Lilongwe have regulated street vending, both by licensing street vendors and by limiting geographically where vending is allowed. Such attempts illustrate efforts of the city council to match certain ideals and to cater to the elite in their respective cities. By distinguishing between different areas within each city, this study has also shown that vendors can be considered appropriate in certain areas, but inappropriate in others. Thus, in areas with a lower standard, they are considered to be 'in place', whereas in other (higher standard areas), they are considered 'out of place'. This study suggests that street vendors correctly anticipate in which areas they are perceived as inappropriate, as they do not fit in the higher standard urban environment. Thus, in line with Yatmo's (2008) findings street vendors are considered, and consider themselves, to be out of place in modern urban areas. However, urban environments of a lower standard are considered an appropriate place for the vendors, both by themselves as by the city councils. Besides the look of the urban environment, it seemed that historical patterns also played a role for determining whether vendors would perceive themselves to be 'in place' in a specific urban area. For instance, when they had been there already for many years, it would be hard for the vendors to perceive themselves as inappropriate at that particular spot. These findings raise questions of how a certain spatial classification might change. For instance, would renovating a so-called lower standard area immediately change the spatial classification? And would efforts of the city council to remove vendors make the vendors realize that they are no longer considered appropriate in a certain urban area?

Secondly, in the paper I have distinguished between different types of street vending. If street vending is conceptualized to be existing in the so-called 'gray spaces' (Yiftachel, 2009; 2011),

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then this study suggests that some of the street vending practices are legalized ('whitened'), others have been illegalized ('blackened') and some are left in the 'gray spaces' by the local authorities. Some types of vending were considered to be more suitable than others, hence only these types were not illegalized. Ghertner (2008) found that in India, only those buildings with a 'world class' look were 'whitened'. The findings from this study suggest that indeed certain standards have to be met in order for types of vending not to be 'blackened' (e.g. not compromising the security, leading to congestion, etc.), but it remains unclear whether these types will be 'whitened' at some time in the future. Additionally, local authorities favored the interests of the urban elites, thus preferring to 'whiten' (or at least not to 'blacken') those businesses catering to the (upper)middle classes or tourists.

The explorative findings of this study also indicated that the formation of associations among street vendors potentially supported them to become (temporarily) accepted in the urban environment. Being organized helps vendors to negotiate with the authorities and it also facilitates the city council to control them. Thus, such associations seemed to assist the authorities in their formalizing attempts (as described in Steck et al., 2013).

Finally, by focusing on the spatial regularization of street vendors, the study showed how attempts of creating a modern city in one of the poorest nations worldwide are articulated. With limited resources, and problems concerning governing the urban, aspirations for beautification are especially expressed in certain parts of the city. Urban areas which consist of modern buildings (like offices or shopping malls), where the majority of the (upper)middle classes live, work, or come in their leisure time, provide an opportunity for city councils to promote their respective city, which makes these areas especially important for city council to keep them clean and of the high standard they currently have.

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