

Resilience under Sustained Attack from the City Police: Will Informality Survive?

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Abstract

Since the general elections of Zimbabwe in 2018, there has been a sustained blitz by the police against informal activities in the central business district (CBD) of Harare, the country capital city. Initially the blitz was motivated by a desire by authorities to avoid the spread of cholera. Although the cholera scourge appears to have been contained, the municipal blitz against informal business activities in the CBD did not relent. It seemed to be the most sustained onslaught that the city had undertaken against informality in many years both in terms of duration and the magnitude of manpower resources used. The Harare Municipal Police undertook this blitz in collaboration with the Zimbabwe Republic Police. Previous research has focused on the extent of informality in Harare, the regulatory framework, the measures informal traders were taking to evade the police, and how they were surviving in these contested spaces. The continuing blitz against informal traders has seen many traders giving up their places in the CBD and relocating to ‘designated’ new spaces elsewhere. Using a mixed methods approach, this research sought to examine the status of informal retail trading activities in the CBD of Harare as the municipal onslaught on informal enterprises has exacerbated. The study sought to answer several key questions: What has become of informality in Harare? What old and new strategies is Harare municipality using? Are the informal traders surviving the onslaught? How are they coping? What is the extent of their presence in the CBD? What are the affected informal retail traders saying? What has become of the documented vendors’ resilience in central Harare? The paper argues that the authorities’ failure to acknowledge the reality of informality is causing unsustainable pain to traders as well as to themselves.

Keywords: resilience, vending, small-scale, informal enterprises, conflict, enforcement

INTRODUCTION

In 2018, there was a cholera outbreak in Harare and approximately 40 people died, and many were hospitalised (WHO, 2018). This prompted the municipal authorities to ban vending in the central business district (CBD) and move traders to new sites outside the CBD as a ‘precautionary measure

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to curb the spread of the disease¹. To enforce this, authorities have had to deploy numerous measures. The new increased use of both regulations and municipal police has been one of the most sustained, with some significant visual impact as shown by the reduced presence of vendors. The study sought to examine the status of informality in the city centre of Harare, focusing on the vendors' and institutional responses as well as whether the sector remains resilient. The paper argues that whilst the municipal authorities continued to use commonly tried and well-documented strategies to fight vending in the central business district of Harare, the efforts met with limited success as vendors responded by adopting new coping mechanisms such as further reducing stock, improving surveillance, and fighting back. The paper further argues that the results of the sustained raids, whilst seemingly harming the vendors' livelihoods, have in fact impacted negatively on the interests of both the authorities and the public.

Conflicts between city authorities and vendors are common in many parts of Africa and the rest of the global South. There is abundant literature that documents the daily struggles of small-scale retail traders operating informally in contested urban spaces. These traders experience running battles with municipal police while defending their main source of livelihoods and doing business in indecent places (Njaya, 2014; Mitullah 2004; Kamete, 2010; Potts, 2008). These conflicts characterised the central business district of Harare over several years. The deteriorating national economic environment led to even more people joining the sector further infuriating planning and policy authorities who were struggling with recognising informal trading activities (Toriro 2014, 2018). The responses of local authorities to informality had been heavy-handed and mainly included tightening both the regulatory and policing environment. Moreover, new by-laws were introduced whilst old ones were reviewed mainly either to stop or reduce the extent of informal sector operations in the core of the city. The Harare vendors' by-laws were amended in 2014 in order to give more powers to municipal police and development control staff of the city to strictly manage vendors in the city (GoZ, 2014). Interestingly, there were also reports of more police officers being recruited specifically to deal with vendors (The Herald, 18 August 2018).

¹ Interview with the Director of Housing and Community Services for City of Harare in Harare on 16 May 2019

GLOBAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXTUAL ISSUES TO VENDING

To understand the interplay of vending and other urban land uses, it is important to put urbanisation into context. This is important because cities of the global South are growing rapidly and this exerts contestations for land and land use (Toriro, 2018). The world is changing from being largely rural in historical times to being mostly urban (UN, 2014). As of 2010, North America was 82 percent urban, Latin America and the Caribbean 80 percent urban, Europe 73 percent urban, Asia 48 percent urban, whilst Africa was approximately 40 percent urban (UN-Habitat, 2015). Although Africa is the least urbanised continent, it is the fastest urbanising region in the world (Rogerson, 2016). According to the United Nations, the urban population of Africa will reach the 66 percent mark by 2050 (UN, 2014). The story of the rapid African urbanisation is however also a story of the urbanisation of poverty (Toriro, 2018). Whilst urbanisation in Europe, Asia and North America was accompanied by improved standards of living, in Africa the urbanisation is largely characterised by increasing poverty (Chirisa, 2008). With the estimation that ninety percent of all new urban growth will take place in Sub-Saharan Africa the situation has been described by some scholars as a ‘state of crisis’ for African urbanisation (Pieterse and Parnell, 2014).

Whilst retail trading as an activity has existed since biblical times, the changing forms of trade have attracted different reactions from governing authorities. Traders look for opportunities to sell their goods and always seek trading spaces where demand for their goods exists (Njaya, 2014; Toriro, 2014). Not all such spaces are deemed acceptable to managers of the different spaces. In the Bible, Jesus Christ took exception to entrepreneurs using the temple to sell their wares. The existence of governance authorities determining the appropriateness of space for purposes of trading is therefore not new. Maybe what has changed over time are the reasons for stopping vending: For many planners in the developing world, the negative treatment of informal traders has been motivated by modernist values held by planners and the elites (Watson, 2003; Toriro, 2018). Some of the planners of many cities in the global South are accustomed to ideas they have learned through western forms of colonialism, training, and their inspirations from ‘world-class’ cities such as Dubai, Shanghai, and New York. These planners tend to model their cities on the ‘beautiful’ cities idealised in the west (Watson, 2014). What these city planners seem to forget is that the cultural contexts and experiences

of these western cities and their own cities differ significantly. For example, whilst these planners in the developing world or the global South live and work in cities characterised with poverty, informality and unemployment they still expect and want them to look like ‘world-class’ cities (Toriro, 2018). Their day to day fight with informality is influenced by these ‘fantasies’ which Vanessa Watson describes more fittingly as ‘nightmares’ and not dreams (Watson, 2014). As Roy notes, ‘the relationship between informality and planners is complicated’ (Roy, 2005: 150). Due to the planners’ aspirations indicated above, ‘engagement with informality is in many ways quite difficult for planners’ (Ibid. 155).

Scholars focusing on small-scale and informal retail; the category in which vending easily fit; have identified two main ways across Africa in which vendors are treated. Local authorities either give it a blind eye or pretend it is not there or they take a heavy-handed approach and seek to remove it from wherever it occurs (Bromley, 2000). There is also evidence that this negative attitude towards vending by city authorities promotes disruptive behaviours by officials that further destroy these livelihoods such as corruption and frequent or periodic raids (Chen, 2012). There are also other obstacles brought about by the manner in which authorities regulate vending: Informal trade is approached from a control-minded perspective rather than a facilitatory one. Examples of these approaches are found in the location of offices responsible for small-scale trade in the institutional setups of local governments across Africa. They are always either in the departments responsible for health services or worse still in the police or enforcement departments (Mitullah, 2004). In both cases, the starting point is already to muzzle or restrict the informal sector business operating space.

Vending in particular and small-scale trade in general has not been accorded decent spaces in many cities of Africa because it is part of informality. This makes it a weak competitor for urban space as informal spaces are regarded as ‘gray spaces’ (Yiftachel, 2009) which are in most instances defined as illegal, unlike other accepted land uses. Many officials also see these spaces as medically unacceptable spaces that they describe as ‘pathological,’ requiring ‘normalisation’ or regularization (Kamete, 2012). This perception of informality as unacceptable held by the majority of African planners is unfortunate because many scholars have rightfully identified informality as a common reality of Africa’s urbanisation with the majority of urban residents living in informality (Roy, 2005; Yiftachel, 2009; Toriro, 2018; Rogerson, 2016; Skinner and Watson, 2018). If land use planners are not going to

understand informality as a reality of African and low-income urbanisation, they will continue to plan out of their contextual realities thereby creating problematic settlements that are in a perpetual state of conflict.

More progressive scholars with an entrepreneurial focus have rather argued for measures to unlock the business acumen in these small-scale traders. They argue for an approach that uses the law to protect these operators, otherwise the good ideas or business assets remain ‘untapped’ (de Soto, 2000). Similarly, Chen makes two important recommendations: If municipalities want these traders’ potential to be fully realized, they must ‘increase the positives’ and ‘reduce the negatives’ (Chen, 2012: 19). She correctly further observes that town planners are key in realizing those recommendations because vendors are part of the informal sector which in turn constitutes what she describes as the ‘main generator’ of employment in the global South. Sadly, she notes that planners rarely give attention to informality when they plan or upgrade settlements. In the context of Harare, Rogerson (2016) observes a similar heavy-handedness and concludes that the future of small-scale traders is ‘unpromising’.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study collected both primary and secondary data. Primary data involved interviews with vendors, vendor representatives and municipal officials using a semi-structured questionnaire. A total of 20 vendors were interviewed, 10 from the new sites and the other 10 from vendors that continue to trade in the streets of central Harare so that a complete picture could be captured. Two vendor representatives were also selected to get a view of the informal sector lobby perspective. Five planners were interviewed, purposively selected for their role in managing vendors. Five other municipal officials considered relevant from other departments that also interact with vendors were also interviewed. Field observations were also undertaken over a period of 3 months. The first phase was January, followed by a second phase in March then a third one in June, all in 2019. These were undertaken in the city centre as well as at the new sites. A checklist with aspects to be observed was prepared and used to ensure all the research members checked for the same issues. There was also room to record other observations deemed relevant. Secondary data was collected through newspaper reports, municipal reports, laws, by-laws and policies used to manage vending in Harare. Published research reports and books on vending were also used to help fully respond to the research questions.

STRATEGIES TO CURB STREET VENDING IN HARARE

There has been a new and sustained onslaught on street vending in the central district of Harare. The onslaught has taken the form of intensified enforcement of the existing development control regulations and the enactment of new bylaws.

STRICTER USE OF REGULATIONS

One strategy that city regulatory authorities are using is stricter regulations. City officials are revisiting existing regulations and local development plans to exert more control on street vending operations in the CBD. Toriro (2018) notes that the existing statutory planning provisions seem to have been used and ‘abused’ in urban planning in Africa for the benefit of local planning authorities.

One such provision that seems to have been abused is Statutory Instrument 195 of 2014 (SI 195/2014). The Planner (2019) tells us that ‘the City of Harare uses this by-law to designate spaces for vending, to register individuals for placement at different sites, and to provide leases on all vending spaces and the fees payable’

The onslaught on street vending in the city witnessed a resurgent deployment of all existing national and subsidiary legislation relating to vending. The Public Health Act (GoZ, 1996a), the Regional Town and Country Planning Act (GoZ, 1996b) and the Urban Councils Act (GoZ, 1996c) are the major legislations that had traditionally guided urban local authorities in the control of street vending in the country’s urban areas. These three Acts are complemented by subsidiary legislation in the form of by-laws. Whilst all these have always been used, in 2014 the municipal authorities reviewed the by-laws to make them stricter. The frequency of use of these regulatory instruments has increased with all vendors confirming officials’ renewed ‘use of the law’ to control them². This is vividly put across by one vendor, ‘we always knew they considered vending illegal in some spaces but now we even know there are many chapters of laws’ (Eva, 2019). Indeed, the regulatory tools are being fully utilized and the vendors are feeling the pinch.

² Interview with a vendors’ representative and corroborated by several vendors, Harare 17 May 2019.

TIGHTER ENFORCEMENT

Closely linked to the tightening of regulations is, another strategy to increase physical enforcement in the streets. The city authorities have recruited hundreds more officers in the municipal police to increase their visibility in the city. This was also confirmed by newspaper reports that indicate that almost a thousand new officers were recruited to join the security sector (Herald, 2018). This was also confirmed by a municipal official in an interview:

‘We have had to boost the numbers of enforcement officers so that we have a significant presence on the streets. We are no longer just raiding periodically, but we are now permanently deploying officers to the streets so that we are not just reacting, but we deter them from even coming to the streets’ ,(Housing Officer, 2019).

The increased presence of municipal police officers on the streets was also corroborated by the vendors interviewed. The study also observed a significant increase in the number of city police officials on the streets. This marks a clear intensification of their enforcement when compared to all previous studies which reported only periodic raids but never a sustained presence on the streets (Njaya, 2014; Mitullah, 2004; Toriro, 2014). As shown below, the impact has also been unprecedented.

IMPACT OF THE RAIDS

The increased use of regulations and enforcement impacted on street vendors adversely. All interviewed vendors reported that the sustained enforcement of street vending regulations has inconvenienced them and impacted on their returns negatively.

‘It has not been easy at all. We are always on the run these days. There has not been any such experience in the past. In the past the municipality would have conducted similar blitzes for a few days or a week but that would soon be over. This time the raids have been going on for months without let. They don’t seem to be stopping any time soon. We are slowly giving up on this because it is just too much.’ (Eva, 2018).

Another vendor who refused to be identified also indicated that the sustained raids have caused loss of viability in business:

‘The business is no longer as profitable as it was in the past. Nowadays it is very common to lose all my stock in a raid. We are trying to bring in very small stocks at a time in order to minimize losses whenever raided by the

police. Still it is not working because the raids are very frequent and unrelenting rendering Street vending unprofitable. *Zviri nane kugara kumba nekuti izvi zvanyanza ende hazvichabhadhari (It is better to stay at home because this is too much, and it no longer pays),* (Anonymous vendor, 2019).

A vendor representative also lamented the increase in raids since they were forcing some of their members off the streets. He had this to say:

‘The numbers have reduced significantly. Those of our members ‘vasingadi hondo vakabuda’ (who don’t like war have moved out). Those that remain are struggling. It is a struggle with the municipal police. It is very difficult for them’ (Matinyanya, 2019).

The evidence indicates that the raids have had a significant impact on the vendors and many have been forced off the streets. Whilst many have left, there are still thousands that remain and were observed still engaging in the usual battles with the police. Whilst those that ‘do not want war’ have left, there are some that are still taking chances and hoping the situation may return to what it was in the past.

NEW COPING STRATEGIES

In addition to the coping mechanisms such as hiding stock in drains, quick retreat, bribing the police and changing trading times (Njaya, 2014), the study also found new strategies and variations of the old strategies as discussed below.

FURTHER STOCK REDUCTION

Many vendors are responding to the sustained attack on their activities by further reducing stock that they bring to the market. Whilst previous studies also observed this phenomenon, the traders reported that they have reduced volume of stock they bring to the streets ‘even further’.

‘Chibage ichi taimbouya nebhagidhi riri musaga but mazuva ano taakungotakura chinokwana mubhegi kuti kana ndanzwa kuti chachaya ndinongovhara zipi kwaakutomira zvangu semunhu anozvifambira (With green mealies, we used to bring a bucket measure in a sack but nowadays we just carry enough to fit in a travel bag so that when there is a raid I simply zip up my bag then I carry my bag as a traveller)’ (Anonymous, 2018).

Whilst this is similar to Njaya’s finding of stock reduction, there is a new innovation in ensuring all stock is not just portable but also in a bag which

enables the trader to quickly blend in with other users of urban space thereby confusing the municipal police. Traders indicated that most of the places where they used to hide stock were now known to municipal employees, hence the new strategy to move with your stock.

ENHANCING SURVEILLANCE

The traders have also increased surveillance. Numerous people are employed to watch for the coming of the raiding municipal officials. All possible approach routes are monitored by one vendor who will not have any stock with them to avoid drawing the attention of authorities as well as to free them from any obstacles when they must rush to raise alarm.

‘In the past we would monitor the police approach routes occasionally but now we have improved. The municipal police sometimes come in civilian clothes, so we have to be extra careful because they can come any time. We are still getting to know the new officers so whilst it is everyone’s duty to look out for enemies, at any time we now have people that are not selling anything but are busy watching for the police approach. These people can then quickly alert those busy trading’ (Eva, 2019).

This increase in surveillance has placed an extra burden on the traders. It was beyond the scope of this study to examine the costs of continuing to trade in the Harare city centre. The indications were however that this is straining the continued existence of vending in central Harare. Its resilience has certainly been stretched significantly. How much longer it can hold however, remains the subject of another inquiry.

FIGHTING BACK

A disturbing strategy that the vendors are also resorting to is fighting back; which includes the use of physical violence. Some respondents indicated that sometimes they are ‘forced’ to fight the city officials especially if they feel cornered with significant stock or think the number of raiding officials can be resisted.

‘In a few instances we have been forced to fight the municipal police. Sometimes we just can’t handle the pain of losing all your wares in these difficult times. You wonder what happens next. *Unozongodzimara waona kuti hapana kusiri kufa saka pamwe toita zvejambanja* (sometimes you are left with no option but to use violence because either way, we lose)’ (Anonymous, 2019).

One incident of violence was witnessed during the study. Police officers raided a street and started confiscating vendors' wares. The vendors supported by some members of the public started throwing stones at the officials. Some of the municipal vehicles used in the raid sustained broken windscreens. A few officers were injured in the exchange. Although the municipal police got support from the national police and won the battle, a lot of damage to nearby shops occurred. Clearly there were no clean winners in the violence, both sides and other parties lost.

NETWORKS

Street vendors are also operating in networks with other business persons or their workers to build protection for their trade. Numerous vendors reported that they are planning with other businesses so that they can store their wares in their premises during raids. The businesses with which they make such arrangements are sympathetic to them and their businesses do not compete with them for customers. This strategy is a variation of an old strategy where Harare vendors were using other hiding spaces in the event of raids. Now they use networks as safer ways of ensuring their wares are safe from the officials. The study found some of the businesses assisting the vendors being questioned by municipal officials. The sustainability of the strategy is therefore under threat. It is not far-fetched to see the threat to this strategy.

NEW SITES

The city officials have also designated new sites where they want all vendors to relocate to. Two main sites were identified in different parts of the city, outside the CBD. The first site is located in Graniteside, three kilometres south of the city centre on the road to one dormitory city called Chitungwiza. The other is situated some 5 kilometres west of the city centre along Bulawayo Road adjacent to the National Sports Stadium. A third suggested site is a disused commuter bus holding bay just outside the south-western boundary of the CBD. This was confirmed by a senior municipal officer.

‘Under this new strategy and policy, new sites were proposed, all of them outside the CBD namely Coventry Road Holding Bay, Coca Cola Corner in Graniteside, and Golden Quarry Bus Terminus near the National Heroes Acre’ . (Housing Director, 2019)

Whilst it is understandable that officials would want vendors moved to more appropriate sites, it is the suitability of the sites that is debatable. The sites

require some development to make them attractive to both customers and traders. That all the sites are located outside the CBD also is a source of conflict with the traders. Small-scale businesses thrive on sites attracting high traffic volumes. The fact that Harare residents were buying from them means that their services were required in the CBD. It is not contested that authorities must regulate their activities. The regulation should consider the contextual realities of both residents and vendors' livelihoods. Taking them away from the known attractive sites means both the traders and their customers have been denied an opportunity to make business and get a service.

LIFE AT NEW SITES

Whilst city authorities used the designation of new sites as justification for moving vendors from the streets, problems with the new sites were observed. There are challenges regarding the overcrowding of vendors, the poor infrastructure at the sites, as well as the perceived poor location of the new sites.

NUMBERS

One of the problems observed at the new sites is over-crowding due to insufficient space to accommodate the large numbers of vendors. Whilst the sites appear inadequate, another challenge is that there is no agreement on the numbers of vendors between the city officials and the representatives of vendors. The representatives of vendors estimate that there are as many as 100 000 vendors in Harare CBD (Matinyanya³, 2019) whilst municipal records indicate far less. A municipal official responsible for the informal sector indicated that there were no more than 20 000 vendors at peak periods in the CBD⁴. There is therefore, a huge disparity between vendor records in Harare depending on the source of the records.

‘There are about 20 000 vendors operating in central Harare. We are aware that the vendors are more than the space available, but this is a process. We will be able to accommodate all of them over time. In any way, not everyone should be a vendor, we can only accommodate so many’ (Housing Officer, 2019)

³ Not his real name

⁴ Interview with an official from the Department of Housing and Community Services for City of Harare in Harare on 18 May 2019

The capacity of the city to not only accommodate the vendors but to consider informal livelihoods was doubted by the vendor representatives. They believe the problem starts from the failure by the city to keep an accurate database of vendors.

‘There are no less than 100 000 vendors in the central business district of Harare. There is no way the number can be as low as 20 000 as you claim the city officials indicated. Our own records show at least 100 000 vendors on the streets of Harare. We represent the people and we know better. Due to the economic difficulties many people have been joining our sector. Sadly, the city is not only failing to accommodate our members, they don’t even care. That’s why their numbers are incorrect, they have not even taken time to count. So how do we expect them to have realistic strategies for our sector when they cannot do a simple exercise as counting.’ (Matinyanya, 2019).

The huge disparity in numbers makes planning for these people difficult. The city is assuming a much lower figure, and this reflects in their conceptualisation of the solutions. Their responses point to a small problem that can be easily managed. If their figures are incorrect, their solution will not solve the vendors’ problem.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The biggest challenge with the new sites is infrastructure. The sites do not have structures to protect the traders from weather elements. They also do not have basic amenities to support good hygiene such as toilet and cleaning facilities for food items traded. There is no running water on most of the sites. One can conclude that authorities; through their officials, simply dumped these traders at these sites without adequate preparation. This was confirmed by both the traders and the city officials. Vendors are angry with the state of infrastructure and facilities at the new sites.

‘There are no toilets and other facilities. Sometimes you wonder at the logic of the city authorities: *Vanokudzanga mustreet vachiti hapana matoilets nemasink but vanokuendesa kwavo kusina futi* (They remove you from the streets arguing that there are no toilets and sinks, yet they send you to their own sites *without* the same facilities.) *Better isu mustreet taikumbira kwekuenda* (At least in the streets we would make arrangements for toilets with those who have)’ (Matipa⁵, 2019)

⁵ Not her real name

Even the city officials also acknowledge the undeveloped state of the sites although they express the state of inadequacy of infrastructure more positively.

The new sites are currently under development, so it is work in progress. It is better than what was prevailing in the CBD. Sure, we need to further develop them. We are attracting institutional investors. The Coca Cola site is being funded by CBZ Bank. We are also creating space at the holding bay although we do not have suitable infrastructure in place yet' (Housing Director, 2019).

Harare is battling with providing basic infrastructure such as roads, portable water or housing. The city, as part of the nation of Zimbabwe, is going through economic difficulties and high unemployment. Residents do not have capacity to pay for their rates and user fees to enable the city to provide basic services. The failure to provide basic infrastructure is therefore reflective of broader economic challenges. If the economic situation does not change soon, it will be very difficult to provide decent infrastructure for informal traders.

LOCATION

Most vendors interviewed complained about the suitability of the location of the new sites. The street vendors were concerned that the sites were not viable since their customers shunned them. The sites were inaccessible, and it would cost a lot more for them and the customers to get there. They also thought the new sites were not easily accessible to high-volume pedestrian and vehicular routes, thus making them unattractive. Commenting on this problem, Eva, one of the street vendors at one of the new sites said:

'Yes, some people have moved to the new sites out of fear of losses but what I have gathered is that there is no business at the new venues. Hakuna vanhu (there are no customers). How do they move you from a place where you were making \$200 per day and put you to a new site where you cannot even make \$30 per day? This will even cover your payment of council fees, your transport to town and food. It just does not make sense to be operating from these new sites' (Eva, 2019)

PROBLEMS WITH THE APPROACH OF RE-LOCATING THE STREET VENDORS

There are problems with the new municipal strategy to increase the use of regulations as well as the presence of municipal police in the streets. It is not

just the vendors who are experiencing the pressure as a result of these raids. The measures are costly to the municipality as well. The raids are being conducted in teams of up to thirty officials in a unit supported by lorries and other vehicles to carry traders' confiscated wares as well as the patrol staff. The vehicles require fuel and servicing. They also constantly require repairs to damages encountered during the raids. All this is draining the already inadequate municipal finances. The residents also complain that this is not prudent or efficient use of limited resources. They would rather have money used on provision of services such as water provision and road repairs.

The strategies are also increasing hostilities between residents and municipal officials. That members of the public were found supporting vendors even when the latter were operating from unauthorised sites shows the unpopularity of the increased enforcement. Municipal officials are supposed to act in public interest, hence are expected to be supported by the citizens. This is not the case in Harare. Such hostilities are not good between those in authority and those they are supposed to govern are not good.

SUGGESTIONS GOING FORWARD

After realising that the obtaining situation is not sustainable, the study also asked both the vendors and the municipal officials for solutions. Most vendors believe the council strategies are ill-considered and must be reviewed. Whilst acknowledging the need to consider livelihoods, officials believe only a percentage of the vendors can be accommodated in proper sites.

'I believe there can be two or three suitable vending sites in the CBD. These sites should have proper stalls and adequate functional sanitary facilities. The existing sites such as Fourth Street, Charge Office, and Copa Cabana can still be operated. Unfortunately, the avalanche of numbers that invaded these spaces resulted in authorities regarding all of them as unsuitable,' (Housing Director, 2018).

'Whilst we do acknowledge the role of these vending sites as livelihood areas, vending has to be controlled. They must trade from designated spaces. The trading spaces should not promote conflict. For example, it creates conflicts for vegetable vendors to trade in front of a supermarket that also has a vegetables section. There must be engagement regarding such cases with a view to agreeing what goods can be traded from which sites' (Planner, 2018).

The representatives of the street vendors held a different point of view. The representatives felt that council officials are insensitive to the prevailing economic challenges:

‘Council must stop this madness until the economy improves. They are fully aware that this is the only productive way people can survive yet they appear like they do not live in this country. Unfortunately, that is the problem of having decisions made by people that are well off who cannot empathise with us. There is no other way forward for now, council must understand the plight of the residents and stop this insensitive campaign’ (Matinyanya, 2018).

Traders suggested several measures including government support, owner-built structures, and identification of more sites in the CBD. They added that council should ask them for solutions because in their opinion, council solutions have not worked.

‘Government must chip in with resources to construct appropriate spaces through the Ministry of SMEs. The reason why there is that Ministry is that they can look after the interests of small businesses. But what are they doing? Nothing. The Ministry should help us because council cannot. Council cannot even provide us with drinking water in our houses, so I cannot expect them to develop facilities for our businesses.’ (Eva, 2018)

‘Maybe they should just tell us what type of structures they approve, and we develop on our own. It may be difficult but that is the only way it can be done. They always say we are an eyesore so let them tell us what we need to do so that we can look beautiful in their eyes. And because it is us and our businesses/livelihoods that are affected, we are the only people that can do something about it. But because we have suffered so many losses, let them tell us what shelters they want us to build for our trade’ (Matinyanya, 2018).

‘There are many places which are suitable here in town where we can operate from. We just need to sit down with council and discuss the options. Sometimes people do not have solutions because they are not talking to each other. Council must give us an opportunity to make suggestions. *Ivo vapererwa saka ngavambonzwawo kwatiri* (they are clueless so let them listen to our ideas)’ (Anonymous, 2018). There is no agreement between what the council officials see as the solution and the vendors’ position”.

CONCLUSION

The resilience of vendors in the central business district of Harare has been stretched beyond the limits. This has come at a huge cost to their operations. Whilst literature is awash with cases of harassment of informal traders in Zimbabwe and beyond, the new and sustained onslaught on street vending in the central business district of Harare is unprecedented. Many vendors

have reluctantly relocated to the new sites whilst some have stopped their vending operations. Some have however continued to fight for space in the streets. The new approaches have also negatively impacted on the authorities. The monetary and relationship costs may not be sustainable to them too. Literature has proved that small-scale retail traders are resilient (Mitullah, 2004, Skinner and Watson, 2018; Bromley, 2000; Chen, 2012). However, there are no comparable examples of the sustained attack on such traders as the case in Harare.

The following recommendations could provide a sustainable way forward. The local authority should adopt strategies that engage meaningfully with the public. The public here refers to groups of people that have an interest in how the city is managed. This includes residents and ratepayers' associations, vendors associations, the formal business community, and academic or professional planners. They must jointly imagine the acceptable vending environment that is realistic, sustainable and acceptable. This should lead to acceptable numbers of vendors being agreed and the sites on which they operate, from including the types of facilities and who should provide them. Successful small-scale operators' facilities have been provided elsewhere such as the Warwick Junction in Durban. Achieving successful small-scale business facilities however requires a lot of joint planning from different stakeholders.

Meanwhile, in Harare the tension regarding vendors in the CBD continues. Whether these traders will survive this onslaught or not will only be determined by how far city authorities are willing to sustain this or negotiate with traders. For now, the struggle of the poor street vendors in the central business district of Harare continues.

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