

# A Spontaneous Location Theory and How Street Vendors Acquire Spaces (Case Study: Kampala City – Uganda)

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper presents a 'spontaneous location' theory to explain the choice and appropriation of street spaces by street vendors for their private enterprises in the central division of Kampala city. It provides for how street space locations are chosen and acquired for vending activities. To attain an appropriate sample size, the concept of saturation was used, whereby respondents were selected based on the type of goods sold, how goods were sold, the street occupied, time of vending, gender, age, and spatial distribution on the streets. Subsequently, 90 respondents were sampled from 30 streets. The selection of streets was based on the existing land uses the intensity of vending, and their spatial distribution. In the study, direct observations and interviews were used to collect data. Reference was made to location theories and business location decisions. Results indicate that street vendors tend to locate their enterprises on roads and paths with high human traffic that offers a market for their goods. We conclude that the ambiguity of government agencies towards street vendors and the audacity of street vendors as citizens with rights to urban space could promote more random locations of street enterprises and set a stage for further street space use contestation. To avert further conflict arising from the appropriation of spaces, we recommend that streets identified by street vendors for their street enterprises be assessed for feasibility and valorized by city authorities to allow the enterprises to take place and generate revenue for the city.

**Keywords:** *Spontaneous location, Street vendors, Street spaces, Kampala.*

## INTRODUCTION

Street vending is one of the critical sources of employment for urban dwellers. "It is an ancient and important occupation found in virtually every country and major city worldwide. Street vending is simply the retail or wholesale trading of goods and services in streets and other related public axes such as alleyways, avenues and boulevards" (Bromley, 2000). Street vendors are "a sub-group of a bloated informal sector which the World Bank blamed on the "urbanization of people without capital" (Gumisiriza, 2021). Some scholars have observed that "Street vending is defined by a clear labour market failure: when high labour supply driven by rapid urbanization and population growth coexists with low demand for low skilled labour, limited opportunities for

formal employment force job seekers into informal income-generating activities" (Young, 2018). Street vending is part of the urban informal sector, which is "a major force in African economies, comprising the majority of gross domestic product (GDP) and employment" (Mbaye, 2014). In-fact, the formal sector "which is the privileged domain of intervention for public powers, cannot expand without the support of the clandestine networks and traditional markets through which the distribution of goods operates" (Igué, 1983). This includes the strategic location of such distribution chains to maximize visibility and accessibility to markets in 'informal' spaces.

"In Uganda, the informal sector remains relatively large contributing over 52 percent of the country's GDP and

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employing over the 70 percent of the population" <sup>1</sup> (UBOS, 2020). It is considered that "scarcity of job opportunities in Uganda has led the emergence of a bulging un-employed or under-employed and underproductive workforce of young men and women. Many of them are forced to take up work in the informal sector" (SIHA, 2018). And in "Kampala alone, over 70 percent of the 3.5 million people who work there daily are engaged in low paying informal sector activities" (Gumisiriza, 2021).

The informal sector in Uganda and, by extension, street vending can be traced back to colonial planning. With the coming of the colonizers, society was structured into formal and informal, and the formal being those business entities registered by the state system" (Kabanda, 2017). Thus, between 1919 and 1921, "Uganda's economy had expanded within the loosely structured framework of an officially undefined dual-economy in which the cultivation of both European plantation and African-grown cash crops was actively encouraged" (Tailor, 1978). In fact, as Youe (1979) suggested, even when a dichotomy of formal and informal had been set, where colonial plantation farming was regarded as formal, and small subsistence holder African agricultural enterprises were considered informal, Governor Coryndon "did not think of indigenous and alien enterprise in terms of alternatives; he regarded them as complements" (Youe 1979). Similarly, when the planning of Kampala city only catered for the British colonialists and Asians, who were mainly traders, Africans were allowed to offer low-skilled labour in the mainstream economy driven by colonialists. Thus, the significance of having both formal and informal sector activities as compliments was recognized in the city as earlier as the colonial period. Yet, in Kampala city, little attention is paid to the informal sector needs for working spaces, despite its significance to the city economy.

In retrospect, the significance of the informal sector is manifested considering that "the labor market, all over Africa, has become highly stratified. Regular, protected wage employment has not totally disappeared, but the proportion of individuals in such jobs has been falling consistently" (Mbembe, 2001, 55). In addition, there are overlapping layers of state power that advantage and disadvantage people to the extent that the "fragmentation of public authority and emergence of multiple forms of private indirect government" (Mbembe, 2001, 76) produces inequalities to opportunities, whereby the privileged ones fall in the formal sector while the unprivileged ones are driven to the informal economy. This is because, "formal spheres are defined by the state: they exist and are analysed as reactions to state or formal market 'failures'." (Roitman, 1990). As has been the practice in post-colonial African states where formal and informal processes are mingled, we often see "the image of the African producer with one

foot in the formal and the other in the informal" (Roitman, 1990). "But if the formal and informal constitute an entire system of production" (Roitman 1990), then there is need to harmonize their relationship for socio-economic and structural continuity of the state and stability of cities, by harnessing opportunities provided by informal sector street vending.

Yet, because both formal and informal structures characterize the "state power in Uganda, systems, and modes of operation" (Young, 2018), Kampala city "exhibits a deep institutional dysfunctionality that has for some decades rendered the implementation of effective urban planning virtually impossible" (Goodfellow, 2010). There is also the inability to discern the importance of street vending in Kampala city. There have not been any systematic and institutionally led programs to support street vending activities. This could have been because of the differences between the technical arm of the city that is often in conflict with the political wing of the city authority, leading to lack of consensus and delays in actual policy formulation and implementation, and therefore lack of provision of working spaces or even mere legalizing of street vending.

Subsequently, because of the pressure from Kampala vendors to use streets, attempts have been made by Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) to regulate street vending, such as gazetting places where vending should take place. For example, reserving Luwum Street and Namirembe road for street vending on Sundays. However, the gazetted places are inadequate to meet demand, and all of them have often been far from the highly popular traffic convergences. A study made in Kampala noted that "vendors have been allocated vending sites outside the CBD that they have rejected, arguing that they are inaccessible to customers" (Mitullah, 2003). Yet, similar allocations are still being done that compel vendors to return to their preferred but outlawed street spaces. This is because the location of goods on a particular street varies, and "the value of street vending lies in its ability to generate economic opportunities for a sizeable number of residents and help them to escape extreme poverty" (Ismail, 2020).

Some of the studies on street vending have included the demand side theories (Williams & Gurtoo, 2012) and supply-side theories of street vending (Williams & Martinez-Perez, 2014), multi-feature theory (Igudia, 2020), a globalized view of street vending (Bromley, 2000), Streets as private sector goods (Foldvary, 2006), Informal Vendors in Johannesburg, South Africa (Arias, 2019), Street Vendors in the Global Urban Economy (Bhowmik, 2010), others were from different contexts (Muktiwibowo, 2013), (Saha, 2011), (Dasgupta, 1992). On Kampala, studies covered selected markets and some streets in Kampala city (Mitullah, 2003), Informal Vending and the State in Kampala (Young,

2018), Uganda's regulatory role to formal and informal sector (Kabanda, 2017), women street vendors in Kampala city (SIHA, 2018), the politics of street vending in Kampala (Gumisiriza, 2021). However, the location factor and forces that explain decisions taken by street vendors to locate their enterprises in Kampala city have not had sufficient scholarly attention. The lack of proper understanding of how street spaces are acquired generates conflicts on how the spaces are used. The paper seeks to provide insights into how street vendors identify spaces, control them, and use them for their enterprises.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

To investigate how street vendors identify, take control, and occupy street spaces for locating their enterprises, extensive methodological approaches involving case study design, which according to Yin (2003), offers the opportunity for triangulation, interviews, group discussions, photographs, video recordings, direct observations, and document analysis and review were used. Subsequently, interview schedules, recorders, maps, tape measures, and notebooks collected data. The research was a multiple case study design, where streets and respondents were selected based on various criteria such as land use and prevalence of street vendors. In addition, Pre-field work surveys were carried out to inform the categorization of case studies into extreme case studies, critical case studies, and paradigmatic case studies (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Flyvbjerg (2006) provided that the categorization of streets was important because it provided the basis against which the number of respondents was determined, which also depended on the severity of the street vending practice. Extreme or typical cases "often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied" (Flyvbjerg, 2006). As extreme cases, Allen road, Sebaana Kizito road, and Ben Kiwanuka Street were selected because they provided street vending spatial and temporal characteristics.

On the other hand, a critical case study "can be defined as having strategic importance concerning the general problem" (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Streets that offered urgent cases included Kafumbe Mukasa road, Luwum Street, William Street, Kikuubo Lane, and Kiyembe Lane. Flyvbjerg (2006) suggests that paradigmatic case studies describe the general characteristics of the societies in question. In this case, residents of Kampala city have tended to be more responsive to roadside enterprises due to their convenience during shopping than businesses located inside buildings. Therefore, streets such as Kikuubo Lane, Kiyembe Lane, and Market Street were selected because street vending has been practiced on the streets for a more extended period of

time and because of their location in the central business district.

In an attempt to cover Kampala Central Division, comparative case studies were selected based on land uses and location. A summary has been provided in Table 1, which provides criteria used to choose streets, the streets determined, and the number of respondents selected from each street. A strategic purposeful sampling method was used to obtain respondents from sampling frames, as highlighted in the sampled cases of streets in Table 1. The interviews were structured to cover significant street demographics vendors such as women, men, single, married, elderly, youth, age, level of education, products sold, services offered, mobile vendors, stationary vendors, and vendors with and vendors without movable stalls.

Table 2 summarizes the questions that were posed to respondents, the types of responses obtained, and the nature of the frequency

The questions posed sought to find out how street vendors acquired street spaces for their enterprises, how they retained their enterprises' street space, and how the streets they selected favored their enterprises.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

How Street Vendors Acquired Spaces to Locate their Enterprises From table 2, 42.2% of street vendors acquired street space through social capital. They said that to acquire the space, "I talked to the management of this place," another said "a friend connected me to this place," while another observed that I "started by using this space, more people came, when the owner noticed, we discussed and made an agreement." Yet another was "given by someone working from here," and a vendor "talked to the security guards" and was permitted to sell from the street. Other vendors obtained street spaces from their relatives; "my brothers secured it for me," and another said, "I got it from a relative."

Thus, social capital played a significant role in the acquisition of street space for private enterprises. Social capital has been referred to as Characteristics of social organization used to enable societies to coordinate or cooperate to benefit individually or mutually (Putnam, 2000, 19). Social capital can be classified into "social relationships themselves that give individuals access to the resources of other group members, and secondly, the amount and quality of those resources" (Bourdieu 1983, as cited by Gannon & Roberts, 2020). Indeed, field studies revealed that new entrants in street vending practices used connections to access spaces; others took up vacant spaces but used their friendship with existing vendors to hold into

Table 1: Summary of case study selection criteria

Case study selection criteria	Sampled cases of streets	Respondents
(Highly crowded streets (Extreme cases	Allen Road	8
	Sebaana Kizito Road	8
	Ben Kiwanuka Street	8
(Moderately crowded streets (critical cases	Kafumbe Mukasa road	6
	Luwum Street	6
	William Street	6
	Kikuubo Lane	5
	Kiyembe Lane	5
Residential land use	Market street	5
	Prince Charles Drive	1
	Elizabeth Avenue	1
Industrial land use streets	Acacia Avenue	1
	1 <sup>st</sup> Street	2
Institutional land use	Old Port Bell Road	2
	Nakasero road	2
	Gadhafi Road	2
Mixed Industrial and commercial land use	Parliamentary Avenue	2
	Nasser road	2
Mixed commercial and office space land use	Nkrumah road	2
	Kampala road	2
Mixed commercial, residential, and office space	Buganda road	3
	Dewinton Road	2
Recreational land use	Wampewo avenue	1
	Yusuf Lule road	1
Office space land use	Nile Avenue	1
	Kimathi avenue	1
	Lumumba Avenue	1
Mixed residential and office space	Kyadondo road	1
	Bukoto street	2
	Kololo Hill Drive	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>Streets 30</b>	<b>respondents 90</b>

Table 2: How vendors acquired street spaces in Kampala city for private enterprises

Question	Type of responses	Frequency	Percentage
How did you acquire space on the street (s) for your business?	Spontaneous allocation (I found space and occupied it)	35	38.9
	Allocation by Kampala Capital City Authority	3	3.3
	Social capital	38	42.2
	Rent space from private 'owners.'	14	15.6
How do you retain the street space for your business?	I occupy the same street space every day, daily practice	38	42.2
	Social capital (cooperation, good relationship)	25	27.8
	Market (I sell specific products to clients who know and frequent this space)	12	13.3
	I pay rent to space owners	15	16.7
How is the street (s) you have mentioned favorable for your business? Responses to this question provide street vendors' perception of streets and why the streets were selected for vending	Market availability	46	51.1
	Availability of Space	4	4.4
	Presence of supporting facilities, services, and security	15	16.7
	Street product specialization	6	6.7
	The behavior of Kampala capital city authority law enforcement	4	4.4
	Social capital	15	16.7

their spaces. In certain instances, vendors shared spaces, where they worked in shifts to safeguard spaces in the absence of others and for a small fee. So, in this case, the 'quality of resources' was the strategic location of vending spaces that had adequate protection from harsh weather, a steady supply of customers, and minor disturbance from law enforcement officials.

Similarly, social capital can also mean "a 'quantitative' one that refers to the objective associations between individuals, and a 'qualitative' one that refers to the type of associations, which must be reciprocal and trusting" (Paxton, 1999, cited in Gannon & Roberts, 2020). Street vendors have strong bonds that they use to warn one another in-case law enforcement officials are seen. They also gang up in solidarity to protest against frequent harassment and all forms of injustice. Therefore, they built trust among one another, where they can sell goods on behalf of others and lean on each other for various forms of reciprocity. Although social capital plays a role in the choice of location for street enterprises, the initial impulse to locate an enterprise on the street is equally attributed to spontaneity and personal intuition.

Concerning workspaces, 38.9% of vendors interviewed did not have specific workplaces where they established their enterprises. They just occupied any street space they found

vacant and kept shifting when the space owners came to reclaim them or when law enforcement conditions became unbearable. Moreover, shop owners resented vendors that sold goods similar to theirs. Hence they placed pressure on KCCA to evict them from the streets. This is because, for retail shop owners, street vendors are competitors. After all, they sell small quantities. However, wholesalers support and benefit from street vendors as small-scale distributors. Regardless of their social capital, sometimes the uncertainty brought about by various actors that contest the location of street enterprises prompts spontaneous reactions by vendors where they would locate where they are likely to face the least resistance.

According to the survey, securing a street space is another hustle in Kampala central. Tom, a snacks vendor on Sebaana Kizito road, exclaims, "It is not easy to acquire a permanent street space for vending on the streets of Kampala city if not connected by someone who has a big say in a given place. Tracing it on your own can take time and encountering challenges with the space owners and fellow vendors who acquired the space sometime back." Some areas have got caretakers to watch over them. These require a vendor to go through the proper application procedures to start vending. For example, in front of Shree Swaminarayan temple on Sebaana Kizito road, most spaces are on Nasser road,

Dewinton road, and Nile avenue. "You have to target where there is no security threat; some places near offices are totally out of bounds and under full camera surveillance," said Jogo, a vendor on Buganda road. Therefore, selecting a space for vending depends on its availability, which stimulates the spontaneity it occupies for vending purposes.

Meanwhile, 15.6% of street vendors acquired spaces by paying for them. Sometimes, some shop attendants and building owners allow street vending on the pavements in front of their shops for a fee. However, even among those who paid for spaces, 50% did not occupy the spaces permanently. They still shifted to other spaces depending on the terms of payments with space 'owners' and law enforcement conditions. Yet, about 3.3% of street vendors obtained permission from KCCA to carry out their activities. Among those licensed by KCCA were newspaper vendors, cobblers and shoe shiners, watch repairers, key cutters, phone repairers, and mobile money agents. This was a small number that had the benefit of occupying spaces without routine change of working areas.

#### **How Street Vendors Retained the Spaces They Acquired for their Street Enterprises**

Investigations revealed that 42.2% of respondents retained their street space through daily practice about how they retained their spaces. They had to be physically present every day so that their spaces were not taken up. Some of the responses concerning daily practice included, "I do the business every day," others replied, "I make sure I have stock every day," others said, "we use the same space to work in shifts." However, there were conditions for the use of street space; for example, some said, "I ensure that the place is clean daily," another said that "I do not make noise here." In addition, some keep space "through perseverance" such that "when KCCA comes, I run away" and that "when KCCA confiscates my stock, I look for more capital." Thus, even when the choice of location was spontaneous, managing one's space mattered, especially concerning keeping a good reputation with neighbors, paying their dues, and having a daily occupation of the space. Besides occupying space, it mattered how the space was retained.

Subsequently, 27.8% of respondents mentioned that social capital was why they could retain their street spaces. Some of the responses to social capital included; "I cooperate with my neighbors," "my friend helps me to secure the place," "I pay the security guard," "I am a friend to the manager," "I befriended the vendors I found here," "we work cooperatively as vendors." Similarly, vendors who kept their street space were perceived as "trustworthy, have discipline, good conduct and maintained good relationships." Hence aside from spontaneous allocation of enterprises, social capital through various forms of proper conduct re-enforced

their ability to keep their spaces.

Yet when 19% of respondents said they were allocated the space they currently occupy, they retained them; the question was how they maintained it. Specific responses included "I pay rent in time," "once you get a place here, it becomes yours for good until you give it out," "I pay something daily," "I always pay taxes." Hence monetary forms of exchange for space were cited. Meanwhile, 16.7% of respondents paid rent directly to space owners of the vendors who were allocated spaces. The payment arrangements were in cash and kind, exchange of goods and services, and acts of reciprocity with space owners.

However, one of the factors to retain acquired street space was the availability of the market, which accounted for 13.3% of respondents. The market was both a motivating factor and a force that drew them to the spaces. Selected responses include; "I bring good products that customers want," "I sell at cheaper prices," "I have original products," "everyone on the street knows that this place is for beads," "I know what my customers want," "I serve my customers well," and "I sell fresh goods." Therefore, vendors targeted a specific market in their areas of operation. Hence, a relationship was formed between vendors and buyers. Consider that even when the market was one of the reasons to retain street space, social capital was the main force that protected an individual from losing their spaces. The bonds that vendors create on the street enable them to protect and defend one another. It was noted in a similar context that "The other aspects of their social network include trust among particular sub-groups, habitual exchanges of favours, and mutual support among the vendors and their friends" (Saha, 2011).

#### **Why the Selected Streets were Favorable for Vending**

Investigations revealed that 51.1% of respondents observed that choosing a street for vending purposes depended on the market and the potential to purchase their goods. Indeed, "the market for street vendors is largely the pedestrians who pass by on their businesses" (Mitullah, 2003). Similarly, street vendors had perceptions of the kind of market they targeted on specific streets. They said that the "street has office people who buy my goods." Thus street vendors decide the types of goods to be located based on expected customers' preferences.

Vendors also targeted streets with specific activities such as parking, loading, and offloading to attract people. For example, they observed that "vehicles offload from here, so the street brings in many people," that "it is favorable for my business." Street vendors served the loaders, off-loaders, parking attendants food, and other related services during that period.

Some streets favored vending practices due to the presence

of a large number of pedestrians. In addition, vendors attached time to the lucrateness of a road, especially when traffic was anticipated on the street. They selected the street because it "is hectic during the day" and "has high traffic volumes in the evening." The mode of vending is also attached to a street; as a vendor reports, "when I walk, I get customers, especially when people stop and buy." Vendors observed that there is also the certainty of business on a particular street where "you cannot leave without selling." The certainty of doing business raises stakes on those particular streets such that contestation of street space use with pedestrians and law enforcement is highest. Similar studies have confirmed that "the key reality here is that the street remains the stage of a constant struggle between private and public interests and the moral is that when public control falters, private abuse becomes endemic to appropriate this space for one's purpose" (Kostof, 1992, 191).

However, other vendors selected streets because they had fewer competitors. A respondent observed that "whereas I sell edible goods, there are many people on the street who sell merchandise that is not edible. I want to be away from competitors". This statement contrasts with the location theory that provides "advantages gained through the clustering of various sectors and economic activities" (Dube et al., 2016). Otherwise, street vendors isolated from the rest either occupied low-traffic roads or carried out their activities for specific hours. For example, those who sold breakfast snacks for office workers on-street locations in the morning or those that sold dry assorted grain fries and fruits on street corners within predominantly institutional land-uses often held onto their spaces for relatively long periods without eviction. Again, vendors in residential areas tended to cluster and sell similar products; they utilized the same spots over a long period, building relations with customers to supply essential goods such as fruits and vegetables, and hence they were rarely evicted.

Yet, 16.7% of respondents noted that the proximity to supporting facilities and services favoured the choice of the street for vending. They observed that the "street is near the taxi park which brings in many passengers, it is near Owino market" that the "street has several arcades which attract customers to the city." Others said that the street they chose for vending "has many streets that connect to it," that the "street is near a busy area," that "I am always at the junction where people stop and buy," "that businesses along the street are compatible with my businesses." Others said that "my business fits here" and that the "street is near where my products are manufactured from." Some respondents attributed their choice of the street to "where I pass when am going to the market to sell, hence I used the opportunity to sell while walking." In addition, such facilities as toilets,

pavements, shaded veranda, wholesale goods, storage, food vendors, and street recreation were attractive. These observations concur with Bromley, who noted that "Outside the category of street vending, but closely cognate with it, are such services as public transport through taxis and buses, garbage collection, street cleaning and maintenance, and the numerous activities of security guards, janitors, and night-watchmen" (Bromley, 2000).

Vendors opted to trade from a street because of the perceived security on the street. Secure streets favoured business since one avoided losses arising from theft. A vendor said that a street is deemed secure if "it has fewer thieves if it has people who work at night." The issues that vendors mentioned related to security included; that the "street has fewer thieves," the "street has many people who work at night." The presence of people reinforces the sense of security on the street, which is conducive for working, unlike isolated streets. The notion of security is extended to mean those streets deemed "safe, quiet and peaceful." This is in agreement with other scholars who observed that "a well-used city street is apt to be a safe street. A deserted city is apt to be unsafe" (Jacobs, 1992, 4) and "Moreover, there should be many different kinds of enterprises to give reasons for crisscrossing paths" (Jacobs, 1992, 36).

16.7% of respondents said that the street was favorable for their business because of the social capital derived from the road. A vendor observed that "my friend who brought me showed me this street, I have people who know me here," while others said, "Here vendors are cooperative." These responses were consistent with Eidse and Turner (2014), who argue that "Conventional vendors, for example, are deeply reliant on strong networks, trust, and collective efficiency, based on flexible and fluid methods, and facilitated by access to support networks and a shared sense of community" (Eidse & Turner 2014, as cited in Malasan, 2019). Thus, street vendors hired for a wage obtain working spaces from shopkeepers but later adapt to street life through social capital. It has been similarly observed that "the first important and necessary condition for establishing informal relationships in the market is that of making friends" (Saha, 2011). Respondents alluded to the goodwill of landlords and shop owners. For example, some said, "the landlord does not ask for rent; the landlord is good." Hence the need to relate with others and the perception of landlords influenced their choice of a street for their enterprises.

Meanwhile, 6.7% of the respondents said their chosen streets were favorable for their businesses due to product specialization. Vendors specialized in goods on certain streets. For example, vendors on Allen road specialize mainly in fruits and vegetables. In contrast, on Sebaana Kizito Road, vendors sell mainly kitchenware and clothing because it lies adjacent to the clothes market. Therefore

preference for a street depended on products that the vendors wanted to sell. However, it was also true that in situations where street vendors clustered similar goods, they had regular customers who specifically sought their goods at a particular space. So, regardless of their number in a particular space, they all gained due to the clustering of their products.

Yet, 4.4% attributed availability of space as a factor that favored their choice of streets and location of their enterprises. They responded that "it is where I got space for my business," that the "street is spacious and there is less congestion." Space requirements on the street can be viewed in two ways; whereas vendors require populated streets, they also need space that they can use to display their merchandise. Over-populated streets that do not permit free movement of traffic are not conducive for vending; high volumes of pedestrian and motor traffic that can move freely on the street are preferred. Therefore, it is common for street vendors to create paths that allow free movement of traffic, especially during peak hours. Hence, the design of the street ought to provide an authentic experience to the traveler and benefit them. A similar observation was made that "the path does not shoot for the destination but rests in itself. It invites loitering. Here, a man is in the landscape, taken up and dissolved into it, a part of it" (Bollnow, 1961). Indeed, when pedestrians loiter, they make sense of street opportunities, just as street vendors reconfigure uses of streets for their benefit, but in the process, redefine how they are perceived by other street space users such as pedestrians.

Conversely, some 4.4% of respondents said that KCCA played a significant role in determining how a street was favorable for their enterprises. They observed that KCCA law enforcement officials "disturb vendors in the center of the town," so they feel uneasy about vending their goods on the street. Similarly, some responded that streets are favorable for vending because "KCCA takes long to patrol the street" or the street is "less frequented by KCCA." Laxity in policing by law enforcement officials provides an opportunity to carry out trading along streets.

Investigations revealed that the large number of people employed in the informal sector and the demand for working spaces in Kampala city overwhelms law enforcement efforts. Similarly, street vending is an industry with mutually beneficial inter-linkages. It receives support from various actors who inadvertently promote its activities, making it harder to enforce laws against it. Meanwhile, the tendency for vendors to locate spontaneously wherever they find 'vacant space,' the boldness to do so, and the necessity to dare or even physically fight law enforcement officials, can be related to insurgent citizenship where "everyday acts of transgression and "dissing" in public space (in traffic for example) that indulge and in that sense celebrate the norm

of impunity" (Holston, 2009) are prevalent.

The rebelliousness of street vendors can be equated to the works of Lefebvre (1996), who promoted the notion of the right to the city. He saw "right to the city as a struggle to "de-alienate" urban space, to reintegrate it into the web of social connections. He talks about this de-alienation in terms of 'appropriation.' His idea of the right to the city involves inhabitants appropriating space in the city (Lefebvre, 1996, 174, as cited in Purcell, 2014). Accordingly, it may be sensible to relate the spontaneity of street vending practices to the "deregulation of state control over industry, assaults on organized labour, the downsizing and privatization of public services and assets, the dismantling of welfare programs" (Peck et al., 2009), as the 'roots' of the urban informal sector where citizens fend for themselves in an environment where their actions are misconceived. A similar observation was made that "while urban authorities in the cities view street vending as temporary, the vendors view them as permanent. That makes urban authorities not see the need to provide vendors with proper market facilities" (Mitullah, 2003). However, the spontaneous location of street enterprises may continue not only because it is an unemployment alternative but it has been part of our culture stemming from the perception that streets provide opportunities for social interactions with a potential for economic gains.

## CONCLUSIONS

The spontaneous location of street enterprises is evident on almost all streets in Kampala city. Several street vending starters do not tend to have prior knowledge of where they will locate their enterprises. The irresistible urge to earn a livelihood inspires them to spontaneously pick any spot of their preferred street and begin trading. However, several factors, such as the behavior of other street space use actors such as law enforcement officials, government agencies, landlords, organizations of businesses, politicians, and the general public, play a role either out of default or design to promote street vending. Yet, the ambiguity of government agencies towards street vendors and the audacity of street vendors as citizens with rights to urban space could promote more spontaneous locations of street enterprises and set a stage for further street space use contestation.

Thus, we recommend that the Kampala city administration support street vendors' efforts to acquire spaces for private use. Instead of forbidding any take-over of street spaces for private enterprises, city authorities should provide ways of making the space usable without interrupting other road users. Therefore, spaces identified by street vendors for their street enterprises should be assessed for feasibility and valorized by city authorities to allow them to take place and generate revenue for the city.



## ENDNOTES

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