Present and Active: Unpacking The Negotiated Logics of Container Street Traders in the Governance of a Ghanaian city

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Abstract

This research addresses a gap in contemporary scholarship on street trading and its governance in Ghanaian cities which predominantly focuses on the exclusionary policies that limit and, in some instances, aim to eliminate street trading. Container street traders play critical roles in the everyday governance of city streetscapes in Wa, a city in the Upper West Region of Ghana. In negotiating access to space by either renting, perching, buying, or constructing container stalls and setting up their trade, they shape the street and its built environment. Providing access to goods and services, container traders contribute to the street economy. Traders encounter and engage with a range of city actors in their everyday trading lives. They negotiate access to space, comply with regulations that govern the building of trading space and trade itself. In this thesis I examine the roles traders play in city governance, the logics which shapes the ways traders are legitimate actors, present and active in the city's streetscape. By examining street traders' negotiated logics (NL), the vital and diverse roles they play in city governance, I reposition the dominant conceptualisations of street traders, by portraying the varied ways container traders shape the city's streetscape and the regulations governing their trade. I draw on in-depth interviews and participant observations with traders and various city actors including land and container owners, city officials, and their representatives, I analyze the varied micro-practices that sustain trade, shape traders varied negotiated logics, and their roles in the city governance. Some traders enter street trading to make do, to survive. Others do so to move up, build a business, and become entrepreneurs. Some traders in their quests to reorganise their lives use street trading as a way of building an anchor and refuge in the city. These varied negotiated logics shape the ways in which traders engage with city officials and regulations, specifically how they navigate paying tolls, fees, and rents. Some traders participate and comply with

regulations to maintain the rights to trade and not to worry. Some traders work to re-negotiate to postpone and delay compliance, while some dodge regulations by being strategically absent. In making this argument, I contribute to calls in current scholarship to acknowledge the heterogeneity of street trade and its varied roles in city governance. Rather than victims, street traders are critical actors whose varied and negotiated trading logics shape city governance, its built environment, and the street economy.

Key words: Container Street Trading, Negotiated Logics, Informality, City Governance, Wa, Ghana.

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This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes (Psalm 118: 23)

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List of Abbreviations

ACC	African Centre for Cities
AAUD	African Academy of Urban Diversity
CBD	Central Business District
CEPS	Customs Excise and Preventive Service
CST	Container Street Traders
EGS	Environmental and Geographical Science
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FDA	Food and Drugs Authority
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LUSPD	Land Use and Spatial Planning Department
MOMO	Mobile Money
NL	Negotiated Logics
NUP	National Urban Policy
PGFO	Postgraduate Funding Office
PVLMD	Public and Vested Lands Management Division

REC	Research Ethics Committee
SDD-UBIDS	Simon Diedong Dombo University of Business and Integrated Development Studies
SPC	Statutory Planning Committee
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TtMd	Trading to Make-do
TtMu	Trading to Move-up
TaR	Trading as Refuge
UCT	University of Cape Town
USD	United States Dollars
UWR	Upper West Region
VAT	Value Added Tax

Chapter 1: Introduction

In contemporary African cities, street trading is one of the most consequential attempts deployed by urban residents to eke out a living in urban spaces. To this end, the place of street traders in the economies of Ghanaian cities has been an important object of scholarly concern. Frequently invoked in relation to the regulation of informal trading and use of urban space for trade, street traders' presence, activities, and importance in cities are acknowledged by scholars and practitioners alike. As key actors in the use of urban space for trade, the traders encounter and engage with a range of city actors in their everyday trading lives. Due to the high demand for trading space, it is "tightly guarded", making it difficult for traders to secure access (Sowatey, Nyantakyi-Frimpong, Mkandawire, Arku, Hussey & Amasaba, 2018: 331). So, traders negotiate access to space and comply with regulations that govern the building of trading space to conduct trade in the city. However, they remain relatively invisible in city governance debates, often overlooked as legitimate and active actors in the city's streetscape.

Following Hart's theorisation on the prospects and importance of the informal economy in Accra, Ghana (Hart, 1973), a rich and expansive body of scholarship has widely described and acknowledged street trading and its contributions toward the functioning of cities in providing access to goods and services, as well as an important source of revenue for city governments. Yet, current scholarship on street trading in Ghanaian cities has been predominantly preoccupied with the analysis of the state's exclusionary policies that regulate (Steel, Ujoranyi & Owusu, 2014), and in some instances attempt to eliminate street

traders' activities (Gillespie, 2017). Key to this body of work is the framing of street traders mainly as victims of urban governance in the street trading governance debates. This positioning down-plays key facets of the traders' logic, their lived experiences, and micro-practices that shape their relationships with various actors in their trading spaces.

This research addresses this gap in contemporary Ghanaian scholarship on street trade governance. In doing so, I present street traders as active actors in both the formulation and application of regulations governing their trade. In this research, I set out to make visible the vital, yet diverse roles the street trader plays in city governance. To this end, the overarching question of this thesis is how do the negotiated logics of container street traders shape and reshape their roles in the application of regulations governing their trade in the city of Wa? By focusing on traders' negotiated logics and their role in city governance, I bring together an analysis of their trading spaces, the micro-practices that sustain their trade, and the encounters with the city and its regulators. To do so, I describe the relationships between the container street traders and various city actors, the relationships as well as processes that regulate their trading. I set out to track traders' varied capacities to negotiate, establish, and sustain trading work. In making this argument, I seek to reposition the conceptualisation of the street trader by portraying the varied ways they are key actors in the city's governance.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that container trading is the dominant form of the informal economy, which shapes streets across Wa's central business district. On the face of it, container traders sell goods in similarly fabricated metal containers, built on cement

concrete foundations, roofed with aluminum sheets, painted in assorted colors. But underneath this seeming uniformity, their literal placement, the materiality of their containment, the logics that shape their trading lives, and micro-practices are varied. It is these varied logics and roles that shape the application of regulations that govern their trading practices in the city. Although container street traders in Wa's central business district are considered 'informals', they follow a formalised and bureaucratic process to secure permits to build their trading space and to conduct their trade. They do not build clandestinely or encroach. On the surface, what may look like 'informality' in other contexts, is regulated in Wa. Container trading is a formal part of the city's governance, an object of regulation, and a key site of this study.

Although the insights arising from scholarly works on street trading governance in Ghana have been enormous and valuable, these studies often overlooked the ways in which street traders are legitimate actors. In doing so, they downplay their critical role in shaping the application of regulations governing street trading practices in the city. To address this gap, this thesis investigate how traders negotiate their diverse trading logics with various city actors and how these negotiated logics and roles co-constitute the governance of container trading.

Using in-depth interviews and participant observations with traders and other city actors including city officials and their representatives, landowners, and leaders of traders' associations, this research, examines the negotiated logics of container street traders and their roles in governance in the city of Wa in the Upper West Region of Ghana. I examine the

critical role street traders play in governance through the building of their trading space and their encounters with the city and its regulators. In doing so, First, I contribute to the calls to recognise the internal differences among street traders in their everyday trading practices (Crossa, 2020) by examining traders' histories, the lived experiences that shape their decision to become container street traders and the logics that contoured their experiences of street trading. Here, traders' unique stories provide insights into how their varied backgrounds and experiences led to their decision to become container street traders as well as the dynamics that shaped everyday practices of street trading in the city.

Second, to open up a theorisation of street traders' role in city governance, I unpack their negotiations of access to urban space for trade (Hackenbroch, 2011). I examine the diverse ways container street traders negotiate access to space and mobilise resources to secure access to trading space and/or build their trading spaces. Traders' have varied capacities to negotiate access to space, which reflects in the complex negotiation practices they deploy and builds on the particular relationships, trading conditions, and forms of regulations that bring together traders and city officials.

Third, I map out the diverse regulatory practices that govern everyday street trading (Roever, 2020) in the container and the varied strategies traders use to navigate these regulations to maintain their rights to trade in the city. In unravelling traders' strategies, I show that maintaining the rights to trade is enmeshed in dynamic and locally embedded

networks hinged on 'local arrangements'[1] primarily based on traders' informal social networks and more formalised regulations that entwine traders and authorities as they endeavour to collaborate in the use of the city's spaces for container trading. In doing so, I show the relationships between the trader and various actors in maintaining their rights to trade, examining how traders establish such relationships, maintain them, and work around them to sustain trading in the city. To theorise container street traders' role in city governance, I show how their diverse negotiated logics shape their negotiation practices and regulations governing their trade and spaces in the city.

Building on this analysis, I argue that traders are active participants in the city's governance at different levels and moments. I further argue that container street traders' diverse negotiated logics that shape their everyday trading lives are key to understanding their critical roles in city governance, through which they are active actors in the city's-built environment and street economy.

An overview of the chapters

This thesis is organised into eight chapters. This first chapter has set out to introduce the street trading and urban governance debate, particularly in the Ghanaian context, and positioned as the research object street traders and the critical role they played in city governance.

[1] Local arrangement refers to the informal relationships and ties container street traders establish, maintain and deploy in their everyday trading practices. It include traders association with political parties, traders' associations and the use of a culturally accepted norm termed "*Te zaa bunyine*" to wit, "we are all one"

In chapter two, three debates shaped this thesis. The first section engaged with the vast body of literature on urban informality, tracing how the idea has evolved in the past decades. The second section drew on the informal work and entrepreneurship debates to discuss the actual practice of street trading, proposing the need to pay attention to street traders' diverse and complex motivations and their use of urban public spaces for trade. In the third section, I turned to debates on the governance of street trade, which focused on the politics and regulations of street trading and the state's diverse approaches to the use of urban public spaces for trade. Drawing on a literature on urban informality and the state, I proposed that we examine how street traders engaged the state in multiple ways to shape governance. I concluded by showing how paying attention to street traders' role in governance offered an important entry point into understanding urban informality by bringing into view the street trader as an active actor, rather than marginalised actor in urban governance.

In chapter three, the arguments made in the literature in the previous chapters shaped the methodological framework which guided how the research was conducted. I made a case for why container street traders in an emerging Ghanaian city was a relevant research location and traced my research journey.

I then focused on the research approach I deployed, including the step-by-step procedures used for selecting the traders and various city actors, from which I conducted in-depth interviews and participant observations. I reflected on official policy documents, the secondary data which I drew on to understand the debates around street traders and their

place in the broader urban governance context in Wa. Lastly, I explained the ethical considerations, the complexities which shaped the way I conducted this research and some limitations of the study.

Chapter four set out the empirical section of the thesis by presenting an overview of container trading as part of the city's streetscape. It introduced the unique and precise backgrounds, motivations, and aspirations of traders and their trading practices. I categorised the various trajectories to becoming container traders in the city of Wa. The illustrative narratives of traders demonstrated the complexities of becoming a container street trader in the city and how their diverse histories influenced traders' decisions to participate in the container trade. Finally, this chapter showed that even though container stalls dominate the city of Wa's streetscape, and looked similar and homogeneous, their literal placement and containments are not. The diverse motivations and experiences of traders determined how they found spaces to trade, the focus of the next chapter.

In chapter five, I present the varied ways traders get access to the container stall to set up their trade. The chapter disaggregates the different forms of spaces that are available for traders who want to build their container stalls. It shows how traders negotiate to secure space and permit to build the container. The chapter provides detailed accounts of the processes traders used to assemble building materials and craftsmen to build the container. It traces how traders coordinate various craftsmen and engage other city regulators in the building of the container stall. It substantiates the different relationships, micro-practices, and trading conditions which underlie these processes. But regulation does not only happen

at the moment of securing access to the container to set up the trade, it is a regular reality of day-to-day trading, the focus of the next chapter.

In the sixth chapter, the diverse regulatory practices governing everyday trading in the container are discussed. By examining these different regulatory practices, the chapter shows the creative ways traders navigate these regulations to maintain the right to trade in the city. In doing so, the chapter describes how traders negotiate their encounters with the city and its regulators in their everyday trading practices and governance experiences. This is essential for substantiating practices that shape the varied ways traders maintain the rights to trade in the city.

I draw the thesis together in chapter seven. From the Wa case, I argue for the ways that street traders are closely regulated. In these processes, I demonstrate the integral roles traders play in regulation and their active presence in processes that co-constitute the governance of trading in the city. In doing so, I propose that street traders negotiated logics and their roles in governance are productive and should be conceived as processual, diverse, and relational.

In chapter eight, I offer the notion of street traders' negotiated logics and their roles in governance as an important entry point into the urban informality debates, specifically governance of street trading. I conclude by proposing that we focus not only on street traders as an object of governance, but as active actors in the governance of trading in the city.

Chapter 2: In and Beyond Urban Informality: The place of street traders in governance

Introduction

Urban informality encompasses the economic activities and service provision that dominate most Southern cities in general and African cities in particular. Street trading constitutes an important component of the urban informal economy, operating across public and private spaces, shaping city spaces for trade. As a key economic reality in most African cities, street trading has increasingly become a mediating pathway for many urban residents to eke out a living. However, traders' presence and practices in urban public spaces are often considered problematic for city planning and governance (Morange, 2015). As a result, street traders have become an important research object, particularly in African cities. Their presence, practices, and activities preoccupy the minds of researchers and city regulators alike.

As a distinctive feature of African cities (Morange, 2015), the debates on street trading interrogate interrelated topics including the visibility of traders in many urban public spaces (Benit-Gbaffou, 2015), people's diverse motivations for participating in street trading (Igudia, 2020), their contributions to the urban economy by providing jobs as well as a wide range of goods and services (Roever & Skinner, 2016), their critical role in food security (Food & Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations., 2016) as well as their substantive contributions to revenue generation to cities through the payment of taxes, fees, and levies (Adamtey, 2014; Anyidoho, 2013). A special issue on 'informality and spaces of popular agency' explores the politics of street trading, particularly the resulting contradictions,

tensions, and conflicts which are a product of policies that too-often focus on excluding and in some instances eradicating informal traders. This body of scholarly works examines the varied spaces and forms of popular agency in relation to the implications and characteristics of the 'citizenship' and 'voice' for street traders as well as traders' associations and their influence in cities (Lindell, 2010). These bodies of literature demonstrate street traders' contributions to everyday lived experiences and practices in the urban spaces.

Yet, with few exceptions, most African city authorities have framed street trading as encroachment, illegal occupation, hazards to planning, health, and the environment as a blight on the city's image (Lindell, 2008b; Okoye, 2020; Roever & Skinner, 2016). Consequently, there is a rich literature that demonstrates municipal officials' diverse responses to street traders' use of urban space for their livelihood (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2018; Kamete, 2013). In Ghana, the debate shifts and demonstrates the complexity of the relationships between informal workers and the state (Bob-Millar & Obeng-Odoom, 2011). These pieces of literature demonstrate how although informal workers are often forcibly evicted, they regularly engage the state in multiple ways to maintain or reclaim urban space; engagements that usually sit in tension with the plans and aspirations of city authorities. These rich accounts of the complex relationship between the state and traders offer an important grounding for my work on street traders' engagements with regulations as well as with city officials who regulate them. In this thesis, I argue that although there is a preoccupation with the portrayal of street traders mainly as the object of governance, there is the need to pay critical attention to the role of street traders in shaping urban governance.

To engage this work on which I build, the chapter is organised into four main sections. The first acknowledges the conceptual shifting of the concept of urban informality, tracing how ideas have developed in the past decades. The next section focuses on street traders' actual practices, paying attention to traders' motivations and their use of urban public spaces for trade. In the third section, I turn to scholarly works on regulation of street trading as a lens on the state's dominance in debates on governance. In the final section, I draw together the literature which helps bring into view street traders as active actors in governance.

Shifting debates on urban informality

The economic activities in the informal economy are diverse, ranging from 'street trading to domestic service, from home-based enterprises to the informal employees of formal enterprises, and from waste picking to urban agriculture' (Brown & McGranahan, 2016: 98). It is important therefore to trace the ways in which the concept has been used and debated.

Discursively, there are two major characteristics of informality in African urban areas. It manifests either in both the literature and policy as an economic sector or as a form of shelter (informal settlements) and service provision (informal work) (Skinner & Watson, 2020). Therefore, the informality literature allows us to better understand many aspects of work and shelter production as well as the politics of spaces. This study focuses on the economic dimension of the urban informality phenomenon: informal work with specific reference to urban street trading.

Informal trade has been central in the development of the concept of economic informality across the 1970s (Hart, 1973; Moser, 1978) and 1980s (de Soto, 1989). Although earlier conceptualisations of informality placed informal workers outside the state's regulations and formal economic structures, more recent studies have highlighted the role of the state and other social institutions in constructing and governing urban informality in the case of street trading in particular (Roever, 2016; Roy, 2005; Watson, 2009; Xue & Huang, 2015). Keith Hart's seminal work in the 1970s in Accra, Ghana first coined the term "informal sector" to connote unaccounted employment opportunities. Although as Douglas Rimmer has argued, the so-called informal sector "doubtless exist[ed] already" (Rimmer, 1992: 36). Nonetheless, Hart's work set in motion the interest to investigate and theorise the increasing varieties of economic activities and practices outside official regulations in urban areas (Hart, 1973; International Labour Organization (ILO), 1972). Hart's study did not only distinguish self-employment from regular wages earned in the formal sector which he defined as rational, planned, organised, and regulated, but he also emphasized the potential productive value of "this world of economic activities outside the organised labour force" (Hart, 1973: 68). He raised questions about the desirability of conventional economic policies focused entirely on the formal sector. Hart's scholarly work was later extended by the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Nairobi and the ILO in Kenya (International Labour Organisation (ILO), 1972).

As scholarly understanding of urban informality continues to expand, the binary economic logic inherent in Hart's conceptualisation has come under intense scrutiny (Bromley, 1978; Rakowski, 1994). The question of urban informality has therefore emerged as a space for

mapping different social relations, structural hierarchies, and various economic realities. The arrangements that are locally stitched together to facilitate activities and processes of urban informality in this context of street trading reinforce the need for context specificity to enhance the understanding of the nuances of these processes.

The remarkable interest and increase in the informal economy, particularly street trading in most developing economies such as sub-Saharan African cities have been attributed to the weakness of the formal sector to generate sufficient employment opportunities for the increasing urban population caused mainly by rural-urban migration (Sethuraman, 1997). The informal sector is considered important because it provides opportunities for the poorest and neediest, particularly in the cities to earn a livelihood (Hart, 1973). Although our understanding of urban informality including street trading is gaining depth, Kudva & Benería (2005) have argued that there is a lot to learn about urban informality.

Owing to the categorisations of urban informality that creates the following contentious dualism between formal/informal, order/disorder, whiteness/blackness, planned/unplanned among others (Kamete, 2013b, 2019), it is suggested that those whose activities are largely considered outside the purview of official regulation either because the regulations do not apply or a combination of weak enforcement and evasion are often open to sanctions (Sinha & Kanbur, 2012). It is critical to locate empirically conceptual debates on urban informality. A debate on street trading, for instance, helps move beyond these generalities and broad conceptual debates.

In the contemporary debates on urban informality, Obeng-Odoom & Ameyaw, (2014) observed new actors in the informal economy who were mostly university-educated young people, seeking professional integration and recognition. With the evolution of research interests at the global level, studies on urban informality in many African cities have mostly addressed issues ranging from explaining the urban informality concept and its relationship with other concepts to measuring it, as well as using the concept to frame the discussion about development (Roever & Skinner, 2016). There has also been an increasing volume of scholarly works examining various aspects of urban informality including informal workers the politics of the poor and the rights to the city (Brown & McGranahan, 2016; Kamete, 2013, 2019; Lindell, 2008, 2010).

Although some studies (Sinha & Kanbur, 2012; Wilson, 2011) suggest that the conceptualisation of urban informality continues to differ in countries, the concept has been used as a prism to understand the dynamics of the urban economy (Roever & Skinner, 2016), the politics of urban space (Kamete, 2013b; Benit-Gbaffou & Oldfield 2011; Benit-Gbaffou, 2018) and also deployed to describe all kinds of urban practices that are considered unplanned but locally stitched together into makeshift arrangements of provisioning (Amin, 2014; Thieme, 2018).

Conceptualising street trading in African cities

Street trading which usually involves the use of urban public spaces has become a remarkable part of the informal economies of contemporary cities in Global South in general and African cities in particular (Brown, Lyons & Dankoco, 2010; Crossa, 2016; Roever &

Skinner, 2016). Evidence abounds in the literature that shows that in large cities throughout the Global South, street trading is one of the most explicit and/or visual expressions or elements of urban informality (Brown et al., 2010; Donovan, 2008; Roever & Skinner, 2016). As a form of urban informality, street trading has been described as a category of particular groups, for instance, "informal labour", or forms of structured versus unstructured organisation; as rule-based versus unruly as well as a form of practice (McFarlane & Waibel, 2012). In recent years street trading has become an object of growing policy and scholarly concern. In policy, it is frequently considered in relation to informal uses of public space and the informal economy.

As a key part of the informal economies of cities in the Global South (Brown et al., 2010; Crossa, 2016), the modernist account that views street trading as a traditional activity has attracted intense debate, challenged by a postmodernist view that regards it as a thriving phenomenon in the global economy (Cross, 2000). Crossa, (2020: 170) points out the need to pay attention to the internal differences among street traders by "recognising the heterogeneity among street traders, rather than only seeing them as a homogeneous and cohesive body". Tafti (2019b) proposes how the embedded relationships between different actors and street traders, shape geographically uneven and spatially differentiated forms, intensity, and distribution of street trading. She argues that a better way of understanding street trading practices is to move beyond the dichotomised analysis of state-trader power relationships including seeing beyond the lens of antagonism and struggles between the state and the trader in urban governance.

In the view of some commentators, informal work - in this case, street trading - connotes unaccounted employment opportunities which are viewed as marginal and transitory that inevitably would be absorbed by the modernising urban industrial sector (Brown & McGranahan, 2016). Notwithstanding this view, street trading continues to grow persistently, and is an important source of livelihood for much of the world's population (International labour Office, 2013; Roever & Skinner, 2016; Vanek, Chen, Carré, Heintz & Hussmanns, 2014).

Definitions of street trading can be categorised into two broad strands. In the first strand, a defining theme is the location or setting of the trade. Bromley (2000) recognises the location of such trade as the streets and other related public spaces such as alleyways, avenues, and boulevards. Bhowmik (2005: 2256) defines a street trader as a person trading from the street "who offers goods for sale to the public without having a permanent built-up structure from which to sell" and Mitullah (2004: 5) describes street trade as an activity which takes place "outside enclosed premises or covered workspace" on street pavements, sidewalks, but also at bus stops and in other public places. These definitions have increasingly dominated the description of street trade in urban spaces for several decades. But moving beyond these definitions calls into question the forms, nature, and process of producing these urban spaces which opens up the question of generating knowledge on new sites of street trading to appreciate the nuances therein. Those engaged in street trading were labeled as people with less education and predominantly migrants with low-skilled employees featured prominently in the extant literature (Hart, 1973; International Labour Organization (ILO), 1972). These claims have been contested by Obeng-Odoom & Ameyaw

(2014) and (Bhowmik, 2015) who observed highly educated and skilled people working in the informal economy and a special issue on informal economies also acknowledges this fact (Sinha & Kanbur, 2012).

A second approach, more akin to definitions of street trading employs and highlights a broad range of legal infringements as the key defining criterion. Scholars like Cross (2000) and Hays-Mitchell, (1994) define street trading activities to include the production and exchange of legal goods and services which involve the lack of appropriate business permits, violation of zoning codes, failure to report tax returns, non-compliance with labour regulations governing contracts and work conditions and/or lack of legal guarantees in relations to suppliers and clients. The above-listed characteristics have however been seriously questioned by many writers (Asiedu & Agyei-Mensah, 2008; Skinner, 2008). In this thesis, I draw on both approaches to imagine street trading as variegated activities exhibiting diverse features and shaped by these perspectives.

Contemporary scholarships have established that street trading is highly segmented (Chen, 2012; also see Martínez, Short & Estrada, 2018) in respect of their activities, place of operation, and types of goods sold. Based on their mode of conducting their activities, that is form and dynamics, three main modes of street trading have been identified in the existing literature: itinerant or walking traders, stationary or fixed traders, and semi-stationary traders. Itinerant or walking traders conduct their trade at different locations as they move around trading locations. Fixed or stationary traders trade at a specific location or fixed stall or kiosk where they can lock up at the close of work, pay rent or daily fees. Semi-stationary

traders are traders who normally occupy a particular trading space but dismantle or cart away their goods after the close of a day's business. In some instances, they may also pay some rent or fee for the space they occupy, even for spaces on the sidewalks or at the frontages of stalls (Adaawen & Jorgensen, 2012; Cross, 1998; Iyenda, 2005; Jellinek, 1991).

Paying attention to the diverse *modus operandi* of street traders, it is argued that eviction tends to favor itinerant traders over their stationary counterparts. The threat of eviction becomes a disincentive for investment and growth of street trading, a view that may not reflect all cases. Jacobsen (2004) and Nirathron (2006) also observed that street traders begin their trade as itinerant traders, selling few goods on the streets or in small stalls, and then move on to operate as fixed or stationary space traders. Once they successfully nurture, sustain and stabilise their business the latter earn more income than the former. This body of knowledge on street trading enhance our understanding of the nature of traders operations, their everyday strategies of adapting to the city's form, organisation, and exclusionary policies (Palacios, 2016; Turner & Schoenberger, 2012) as well as the ways these policies impact their activities (Huang, Xue & Li, 2014; Roever & Skinner, 2016). In this section, I have established the argument that street trading as an important form of urban informality is highly segmented in respect of their activities, place of operation, and types of goods they sell. While these insights are critical in shaping the way street trading is conceptualised at the same time as to how street traders are governed in the city, street trade shapes public spaces in African cities in particular ways as discussed in the next section.

Street trade and urban public space

Street trading is an important economic activity on the street that redefines the meaning and limits of public spaces through innovative and unplanned uses of streets, pavements, squares, and public parks and gardens, thus crystallising the debates around the politics and policies of access to public space and the right to the city (Steck, Didier, Morange & Rubin, 2013). The majority of studies that analyze street trading and public space either focus their attention on the dialectical organisation of street traders (Kamete, 2018; Roever, 2016; Turner & Schoenberger, 2012) or focus their arguments on the geolocation of street traders through fixed points in space and/or through paradigmatic photography of specific street traders (Bromley & Mackie, 2009; Martínez, Rennie & Estrada, 2017; Palacios, 2016). Some studies analyze the relationship between individual and collective space used by street traders and the city public space (Charman, Petersen, Piper, Liedeman & Legg, 2017)

The contributions of street traders have been well documented (Roever & Skinner, 2016), particularly the varied forms of regulation of street trade in cities due to concerns such as congestion in public spaces, competition with off-street businesses, and health (Bromley, 2000) as well as sanitation challenges (Yankson, 2007). Street traders eke out a living in urban public spaces, a common interface in which they encounter local government officials charged with the responsibility of governing public spaces (Donovan, 2008; Holland, 2015; Roever, 2005; Xue & Huang, 2015). Urban public spaces are vital for the everyday trading life of street traders, as well as a site of regulation and contention.

The literature demonstrates that accessibility of urban public spaces is not free to everyone at any given time largely because different actors usually lay claim to such spaces from elite and powerful people and organisations to subaltern individuals (Hackenbroch, 2011). Due to the different interests of stakeholders who lay claim to urban public spaces, it takes negotiations to get access to such spaces to serve the everyday purposes of individuals. Considering the space as a 'product' (Lefebvre, 1991), it is argued that the arrangements involved in negotiating access to public spaces reflect the way that society is organised, making the urban public space a social product that is negotiated between different users (Hackenbroch, 2011). The negotiation process and the "mode of production of [such] spaces entail some "organising logic" (Roy & AlSayyad, 2004: 5).

Street traders engage the city and its regulators in the use of urban space for trade. Kirsten Hackenbroch conceptualised three interwoven spaces to explain how accessibility and use of public spaces by street traders are established and produced; surfacing the active role of street traders. The spaces are "statutory space, informal space, and negotiated space" (Hackenbroch, 2011: 60). Explaining these intertwined spaces, while "statutory space refers to any arrangements that are laid down in statutory rules and regulations, the informal space is used here to point to the institutions, norms, and social relations that may be similarly binding as "statutory" rules. On the other hand, negotiated space determines the mode of the production of space as it facilitates the aforementioned spaces to be interlinked and coexist without eliminating each other's existence. To her, the 'rules of access are negotiated between traders and other users' (Hackenbroch, 2011: 59). These spaces surface how traders negotiate access and produce the urban public space for trade. In this thesis, I

propose that beyond traders negotiating access to space, there is also the need to pay attention to how they negotiate their trading logics with various actors in the city.

Hackenbroch's conceptualisation of street traders and the urban public resonates with Lefebvre's triad of production of space (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]) and the constitutive concept of "thirding-as-Othering" or "Third space" by Soja, (1996). Here, how spaces are accessed and produced by street traders transcend the conventional informal-formal continuum and are rather viewed as hybrid relations because the processes permeate each other in the mode of producing such spaces. To move beyond the state's dominance in city governance, the critical question that continues to linger on is how to conceptualise urban informality in such a hybrid relation with formality where the street trader is seen as an active actor in shaping governance. To this end, insight into situated experiences and dynamics provide a privileged view and understanding of the way in which specific urban public spaces in this case the streets are creatively negotiated, constructed, occupied, and used by street traders.

The urban streets are, of course, ever-evolving quintessential public spaces (Mehta, 2019), public spaces which through street trade become sites of economic activities, and at the same time, they can foster social cohesion and civic engagements (Deore & Lathia, 2019). However, contemporary studies have highlighted streets as highly contested spaces due to development pressures and increasing demands for space for trade (Jain & Moraglio, 2014). According to Kamete (2008: 1721) two main factors trigger these contestations: "First, taking over of urban spaces that residents do not hold title to for which they have no valid leases. Second, when owners and/or occupants, legal and/or illegal put urban spaces to uses

outside those stipulated in official land use plans, guidelines and regulations". These situations present daunting challenges for city authorities in many cities especially in the global South to balance and manage the diverse uses of streets including supporting livelihoods by often prioritising automobiles over other users (Roever & Skinner, 2016). The contested nature of streets as public spaces has resulted in city authorities often criminalising street traders, and excluding the urban poor more generally, through urban planning and governance practices (Kamete, 2013a; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2015).

Urban planning is usually adopted as an interventionist tool to ensure that "modern urban life is carried out in a planned society" (Perry, 2003: 143) in the 'public interest' for the long-term benefit of all residents (Campbell & Marshall, 2002; Meyerson & Banfield, 1955; also see Kamete, 2008). Deploying planning in the quest to manage change comes along with contentions and pain which are largely occasioned by the argument that 'the planned or created city is necessarily superimposed' (Kamete, 2008: 1722) on the 'lived' city (Lefebvre, 1991) where "everyday practices, 'ways of operating' or doing things dominate… and constitute the innumerable practices through which users [*such as street traders*] reappropriate the space organised by techniques of sociocultural production" (De Certeau, 1984: xi, xiv). A key argument that drives planning emphasizes its "rational modernist dimensions" (Kamete, 2008: 1722, 2013a, 2019) aimed at creating a "good city" which can be realised largely through "good planning" (Cherry, 1988; Kamete, 2013b; Yiftachel, 1998).

In the African context specifically and global South cities in general, there is a dominant view that these 'ways of operating', that is the usual everyday ways of doing things [such as trading

in the streets] do not fit well with planning's supposed "progressive concepts" (Yiftachel, 2002: 536) that focus on maintaining spatial order. This position is reinforced by the view that "city planning principles and practices in urban Africa has created a hostile environment for livelihood practices that do not fit into the official framework of orderliness" (Kamete, 2008: 1723). Scholarly works abound about how other actors in the public space especially city authorities and elite business owners see street traders as flag-bearers of chaos and nuisance (Anjaria, 2006; Kamete, 2013b; Turner & Schoenberger, 2012), impoverished and dirty (Joshi, 2018), illegal encroachers as well as tax evaders (Bayat, 1997, 2000; Salès, 2018) who must be removed from the street and public spaces of cities (Kamete, 2008, 2013b; Watson, 2003).

Echoing this position, Mitullah's study of four cities in Africa concluded that the authorities "are a major obstacle to the development of informal sector activities [*including street traders*]" (Mitullah, 2003: 10). While recognising the inescapable fact of this stance – a feature visible in cities in diverse forms, the critical question is how can we also conceive and reframe the narrative of innovative forms of urban every day livelihood practices such as street trading that fit well in urban planning contrary to the highly held view that planning produce spaces that is hostile to difference (Kamete, 2008).

To move beyond a binary of contestation or cohesion in the use of urban public spaces, Crossa (2016) calls for the recognition of difference. By this, she argues that we see "street trading as an extremely diverse activity, comprising individuals and groups who are internally differentiated, resulting in different degrees of exclusion, power, resources,

mechanisms of exclusion, and practices of negotiation and resistance" (Crossa, 2020: 170). In making this argument, she hopes that we might approach street trading – and so-called informal activities like it with more nuance. Although street traders are considered key elements of a vibrant and thriving urban economy and space (Benítez, Grice & Harvey, 2018), they are usually subjected to constant hostile negotiations with both state and non-state actors including the police, clientele, private developers and real estate agents, shop-owners, affluent resident organisations, or vehicle-owners in public spaces (Kamete, 2013a; Ray & Mishra, 2011).

A few studies (Deore & Lathia, 2019; Roever & Skinner, 2016) have shown a cordial and symbiotic relationship between street traders and shop-owners in public spaces which manifest in the form of the latter renting out their shop frontages to the former. Yet in this body of literature on the politics of negotiating for trading spaces in urban public spaces, the nuanced processes and relationships between everyday trading and governance practices are minimally explored. A more complex rendering of street trading and its diverse and varied practices can help untangle and nuance research on its governance.

An examination of street traders and their role in the use of urban spaces for trade surface the multiple ways they engage the city, its regulators, and regulations. These are critical for understanding how the trader shapes governance. Perhaps due to the emphasis on the contestation of street trade by the state in urban public spaces, what remains less understood are street traders' motivations. In this thesis, I explore trading motivations to understand what shapes traders' use of urban space and how trading practices, in turn,

shape city governance. I build on a literature that examines street trade as a practice, the focus of the next section.

From survival to entrepreneurship

Street trading contributes significantly to the economies of developing countries and remains an important source of entrepreneurship and employment (Adom, 2014; Herrera, Kuépié, Nordman, Oudin & Roubaud, 2012). It is also a means of survival in the city for many (Roever & Skinner, 2016). Motivations for becoming street traders take diverse forms, some are rooted in entrepreneurship (Chu, Kara & Benzing, 2008), a means to address economic needs, in the possibilities of self-realisation of individual's needs, and family security (Robichaud, McGraw & Roger, 2001). It is argued that peoples' quests to navigate their livelihood challenges and poverty issues influence their decision to become informal entrepreneurs.

From the urban informal work and entrepreneurship literature, four dominant schools of thought are discernible - the structuralist, dualist, legalist, and voluntarist (Chen, 2012; also see Rakowski, 1994). The structuralist school conceives urban informality including street trading as a by-product of contemporary capitalist restructuring whereby due to deregulation and liberalisation people's working conditions, incomes, and social benefits are eroded. As a result, it is argued that such economic activities thrive when there are unfavorable conditions in the formal economy such that to reduce costs and sustain economic growth, labor conditions must be modified (International Labour Organization

(ILO), 1972; Portes & Haller, 2004). The dualist school explains the existence of informality as a parallel and marginal sector that provides income for the poor. It attributes the sustenance and prosperity of the informal economy to the inability of the formal economy to create sufficient job opportunities to absorb the urban labour forces (International Labour Organisation (ILO), 2002).

The third school, legalist school considers urban informality as a response by informal workers to the effects of the excess procedures, regulations, and costs imposed by the State on micro- entrepreneurs (Becker, 2004; De Soto, 2000). Finally, the voluntarist school of thought focuses on informal workers' deliberate decision to engage in self-employment as they pursue the benefits associated with informal trading which outweighs those of the formal economy. These benefits include the following: flexibility, autonomy, and freedom as well as the ability to avoid institutional costs in order to balance their income-earning and non-work responsibilities (Chen, 2012; Perry, Maloney, Arias, Fajnzylber, Andrew & Saavedra-Chanduvi, 2007). These different perspectives inform, rather than replace each other although none of them is comprehensive (Adom & Williams, 2014; Williams & Round, 2010).

Until recently, analysis of informal entrepreneurs or workers' motivations was limited to either Western and post-socialist economies or Latin America (Castells & Portes, 1989). Such exercise had not gained much attention in other developing regions such as Africa generally and Sub-Saharan Africa in particular including Ghana. It is argued that informal workers/entrepreneurs in these areas are either driven by necessity or opportunity (Adom,

2014). In the Sub-Saharan African context, motivations for participating informal trade [*street trading*] also show variations. For example, independence, satisfaction, growth, increasing income, and past training/experiences were the findings of a study conducted in Nigeria (Chu, Kara & Benzing, 2008). The key motivation in Chu, Cynthia & Charles, (2007) study was to improve poverty level and living conditions. In Uganda, the most essential drivers were 'making a living' or 'making money' and autonomy, freedom, and independence (Bewayo, 1995).

Broadly, motivations for participating in informal trade [*street trading*] are viewed through a dualistic lens – necessity-driven (determinism) and opportunity-driven (free-will) motivations (Buttner & Moore, 1997). While the necessity-driven motivations include insufficient family income, frustration with a formal job, joblessness, or the need for a flexible job schedule due to other family commitments, the opportunity-driven factors include independence, self-fulfillment, entrepreneurial drives, desire for wealth, and social status (Duchenaut, 1997). It is argued that whereas lack of alternatives motivate drive necessity-driven people, opportunity-driven people do so out of their will and desire to have their businesses and be independent (Aidis, Welter, Smallbone & Isakova, 2006; Harding, Brooksbank, Hart, Jones-Evans & O'Reilly, 2005; Minniti, Bygrave & Autio, 2006; Reynolds, Bygrave, Autio & Hay, 2002; Smallbone & Welter, 2004)

In the view of Williams, (2008) many 'individuals engaged in the informal economy are pursuing entrepreneurial ventures'. It is argued that people who work in the informal economy like street traders are driven by necessity (Aidis, Welter, Smallbone & Isakova,

2006; Harding, Brooksbank, Hart, Jones-Evans & O'Reilly, 2005). Nonetheless, instead of presenting people who work as informal workers like street traders as universally necessity or opportunity-driven, it has emerged that there is a more nuanced third school of thought that evaluates the ratio of necessity-to-opportunity driven entrepreneurs similar to formal entrepreneurs as reported in the literature (Harding, Brooksbank, Hart, Jones-Evans & O'Reilly, 2005; Minniti, Bygrave & Autio, 2006).

Huang, Zhang & Xue, (2018) observed in their study in Guangzhou in China that people's motivations for participating in street trading are heterogeneous and driven both by their responses to multiple socio-economic forces including unemployment, low quality of waged jobs, rural poverty, the difficulties of maintaining a formal business as well as the poor remuneration of jobs in cities, and by their desire to achieve autonomy and flexibility. This constitutes a shift from necessity-opportunity dualism to a more complex conceptualisation of street traders' motivations which involve a more detailed and broader analysis.

In the case of Ghana, the literature demonstrates that as a result of inadequate opportunities in the economic sphere, the extant literature on informal entrepreneurship in Ghana describes such entrepreneurs as being necessity-driven and participating in such trade because of their exclusion from the formal economy (Dzisi, 2008). However, Adom & Williams (2012) argued that some informal entrepreneurs engage in entrepreneurship mainly out of choice rather than necessity. For instance, they argue that the people of Kwahu in the eastern region of Ghana are well known to be 'born' entrepreneurs who with little formal education or training in entrepreneurship, they are known as being the most

successful entrepreneurs in Ghana, and they do this willingly. Chu, Cynthia & Charles (2007) also suggested that entrepreneurs engaged in informal entrepreneurship because of the inflexibility in the formal business environment and the unduly complex national registration and tax systems for private enterprises.

According to a study in Koforidua (Adom, 2014), findings from 150 informal entrepreneurs interviewed revealed that not only do most people (approximately 65%) work as informal entrepreneurs because of necessity due to the difficulties in obtaining a formal job, but also a little over one-third (35%) decided to operate in this way as a matter of choice, because people who operate in this way have more independence, flexibility, the potential for making more money, and so on. He argues that the percentage of informal entrepreneurs who are necessity-driven is greater than those who are driven by choice partly because the formal economy is smaller in size and partly because some formal private businesses in Ghana tend to subcontract at many stages in the production process to the informal economy (Adom, 2014: 119). By examining the results further, he observed that informal entrepreneurs could not be placed on either one side or the other of the necessity-opportunity-driven categorisation. The reason was that there were some entrepreneurs who shared *both* motivations (Adom, 2014). Although progress has been made towards trying to understand the varied motivations of informal entrepreneurs and workers, the fourth school of thought considers the fact that both necessity and opportunity-driven factors can be co-present in an individual's motivations which can vary and change over time (Salès, 2018) and sometimes from more necessity to opportunity-driven (Williams, 2008; Snyder, 2004).

In this vein, Kamete, (2018) observes that critical reflection on the urban contexts in much of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) reveal that most people who engage in urban informality such as street trading do so not as a result of their voluntary exiting of the formal economy as suggested by the voluntarist school of thought. Rather, such decisions are driven by necessity largely due to the fact that those people either do not have access to state benefits and/or have been "excluded from . . . the circuits of the modern economy" (Perry, Maloney, Arias, Fajnzylber, Andrew & Saavedra-Chanduvi, 2007: 1). The International Labour Office noted that about 53% of non-agricultural employment in SSA is in the informal economy where people engage in such economic activities including street trading live in urban areas with limited job opportunities due to the underperforming formal economy leading to its inability to create the needed wage employment opportunities to absorb these people. As a result, they engaged in the lone livelihood alternative available (ILO (International Labour Office), 2013). In many cities in West Africa, street trading is therefore the most dominant and visible form of the urban informal economy and also contributes a significant share of about 55 percent of the total number of informal traders (Budlender, 2011; Herrera, Kuépié, Nordman, Oudin & Roubaud, 2012; Roever, 2016). Nonetheless, how the different motivations manifest to shape the practices of entrepreneurs [street traders] and their role in governance is shaped by regulations, the varied consultative and coercive forms of urban policy that shape the governance of urban trading.

Regulating street trading

Different regulations are deployed by the state to regulate the spatial activities of street traders in urban spaces (Kamete, 2008; Yiftachel, 1998). The state often adopts formal

approaches (such as local authorities' issuance of licenses) and informal approaches (such as access/extortion of money) to govern the activities of street traders (Moatasim, 2019; Roever, 2016). Austin (1994) suggests that if the regulations do not explicitly ban street trading, they hamper it from growing. Here, I discuss forms of regulations of street trade that have gained research attention in the past decades (Roever, 2020), from licensing regimes to taxation and enforcement provisions such as low-level harassment, merchandise confiscations, and arbitrary evictions (Roever, 2016).

The licensing regimes are regulatory practices used to regulate street traders. Licensing and permitting systems are ways by which street traders' activities are regulated. However, the main difference between a licensing system and a permitting system is that a licensing system regulates the right to undertake the activity, while a permitting system regulates the space in which the activity takes place (Horn, 2018). So, licensing of space is one of the administrative practices or tools that the state adopts to regulate street trading activities (Coleman, 2005). This tool is used to "control the number, location, and visibility of those activities thereby shaping a specific legal geography of the authorised (dis)order" (Hubbard, Roger & Jane, 2009: 190).

Licensing is also viewed as a formal legal control on street-level economic agents [such as street traders] and their activities whose static presence on the street is framed as a problem (Hall & Smith, 2012). Licensing entails a well-cut out formal process meant to be followed before one can secure the license to occupy and operate. Traders with licenses operate without facing sanctions from local authorities while those without authorisation hide or

remain in constant motion to avoid sanctions from authorities. According to Roever (2020), historically, licensing regimes have been deployed in efforts to control economic activity under centralised planning paradigms, but there is a shift under present-day norms of deregulation where licensing and enforcement practices often are informed not so much by a planning paradigm as by political expediency.

There are shared characteristics in terms of the ways these licensing regimes operate. These practices, and the policies and political coalitions behind them, are well documented in cities as diverse as Guangzhou (Xue & Huang, 2015), Bogotá (Donovan, 2008), Mumbai (Anjaria, 2006), and Johannesburg (Benit-Gbaffou, 2015) among others. But generalising the approach and motivations that drive the licensing regimes implies that street traders operate in the same fashion and city authorities apply the same regulation regardless of context. This is simplistic and problematic because it down-plays context-specific scenarios which might offer some nuanced understanding in terms of the logic that drive how the street trader is regulated using these forms of regulations. In this research, I propose the need to pay particular attention to the geographies of the licensing regimes that regulate street traders that might shed more light on the particularities of the context within which these traders operate, how the licensing regime play out in the city of Wa and the role of the trader in all these.

The next regulatory practice is taxation. Notwithstanding earlier theorisation that suggested that street traders do not pay taxes (Cross, 1998), regulatory schemes often incorporate some mix of taxes, levies, and fees (Roever, 2020). Research into street traders and taxation

revealed that in West African cities where there is a high density of market trade, there are high rates of taxes, fees, and levies collected from markets on a daily, monthly, and/or yearly basis (Adamtey, 2014; Horn, 2018). Owusu-Sekyere et al. (2016: 916) observed in the second-largest city in Ghana – Kumasi, how city authorities generate an estimated 70 percent of its internally generated funds from street trader tolls annually.

Studies in recent times have focused on unpacking the different kinds of taxes, levies, and fees and their applicability to different kinds of street traders (Roever, 2020). Examples are entitlement and valuation fees written into national tax laws which can shape the way authorities charge street traders for the use of public spaces (Roever, 2016). It is observed that low-income street traders rarely pay income tax because their earnings fall under the required threshold for income taxation. However, it is documented that many street traders pay value-added tax (VAT) on the goods they buy but have no way to pass on the cost of the VAT to their customers (Skinner, Reed & Harvey, 2018). While studies have documented a broad range of efforts to "tax the informal sector" (Dube & Casale, 2016), in recent times, other researchers have also examined street traders' perceptions of the fairness of those taxes (Rogan, 2018) within the broader literature on municipal finance and tax justice (Roever, 2020). From the discussions in this section, it is clear that the street trader is a key source of revenue generation for authorities, a role that continues to attract the attention of researchers in the literature.

Finally, enforcement provisions to regulate street traders' use of public spaces are recognised in the literature. The gap between the ubiquity of street trading regulations and

their enforcement in practice has been well documented by many researchers around the world. At the root of this gap are the associated electoral costs of enforcement (Bob-Millar & Obeng-Odoom, 2011; Holland, 2015); the regulatory spaces that allow local officials to use their privileged positions of power over traders to undertake discriminatory enforcement (Roever, 2016) and the considerable required monetary and human resources to enforce the complex regulatory structure (New York City Independent, 2010). These practices have significantly varied impacts on street traders' income, assets, and productivity (Roever & Skinner, 2016).

Recent studies have also documented how unlicensed traders weave through the city's often overlapping officials and unofficial realms of authority producing varied and contradictory relationships with state institutions (Anjaria, 2011). These debates shift and demonstrate the complexity of the relationships between informal workers and the state (Bob-Millar & Obeng-Odoom, 2011). This research shows how the state does not only see informal trade such as street trading as a nuisance or a source of livelihood for urban residents to eke out a living but also as an avenue to reward and punish political supporters and opponents. It also demonstrates how although informal workers are often being forcibly evicted, they regularly engage the state in multiple ways to maintain or reclaim urban space. This rich scholarly account of the complex relationship between the state and the trader offers an important grounding debate on the role of traders in shaping governance through their engagements and interactions with the state.

Recognising the varied forms of regulations and the ways traders engage with officials help reveal how traders navigate and shape these regulations that govern their trading practices

in the city. While traders negotiate with various actors in the city to maintain the rights to trade in the city, the state is most often dominant in these processes, the focus of the final section.

Punitive Regulation: A dominant state responses to street trade

The state actively regulates street traders, as well as sanctions the illegal practices in which traders might engage when pursuing their activities (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2018). The modernist thinking in most cases invoked policy debate around formalising or restricting the use of sidewalks for trading with the justification that there is a limited number of spaces to support such trading in cities. They normally call for the need to relocate informal traders particularly street traders into markets (Mitullah, 2003; Roever, 2005). This literature often surfaces the hegemonic perceptions of the state in the management of urban space and urban development with a resultant outcome of repressive and/or ambivalent responses with the conviction that informal trading is either "swept away" (Watson, 2009) because it cannot be accommodated or tolerated in planned modern African cities (Kamete, 2008, 2013). Kamete (2020) notes that the seemingly tolerant strategies aimed at accommodating informal trading result in stripping its 'lifeblood" (Kamete, 2020: 167) in terms of the unique characteristics that make it attractive to the poor and create opportunities and possibilities for them to enter and remain in the sector (Potter & Lloyd-Evans, 1998).

Focusing on the approaches usually deployed by the state to regulate the use of urban spaces for trade, the literature demonstrates how the politics of resistance against the state's

revanchist and exclusionary policies by traders sit in tension with national agendas in developing countries (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2018). The national agendas often resonate with that of global institutions and shift towards integrating informal trade, particularly street trading as a permanent feature in global South cities (Kamete, 2019; Pezzano, 2016). However, these national agendas usually see informal trade mainly through an economic lens – considered as an emerging economic activity and poverty alleviation strategy that requires intervention and regulation (Benit-Gbaffou, 2015). This economic stance limits the relevance of city authorities, which are faced with the challenge of managing the conflict that occurs as a result of the use of urban public spaces for which national or global economic visions are unable to provide support (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2018).

When thinking about the state's responses toward street trading and the use of urban space for trade, they swing between benign neglect and heavy-handed crackdowns (Brown & Mackie, 2018). Locating these into the broader debate by synthesizing existing knowledge from literature and interrogating more the framing and the use of the state's approaches in cities provide an understanding of the way it governs informal trade and urban spaces. The politics of governing informal trade in general and street trading in particular, has become a vast field of research that focuses on the traders' livelihoods, micro-economic activities, local economic development, and poverty alleviation strategies (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2018). In this thesis, I deploy Bénit-Gbaffou's 'governance approach' which analyzes the complex interface between traders and city authorities (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2018: 398).

Most African city governments with few exceptions have framed informal trade, particularly street trading as encroachment, illegal occupation, hazards to planning, health, and the environment, as well as visual eyesores (Okoye, 2020). Because of this, city authorities have employed evictions, confiscations, demolitions, and relocations as revanchist urban management mechanisms to dispossess informal traders from the public space of streets, sidewalk pavements, and open spaces (Bob-Millar & Obeng-Odoom, 2011; Gillespie, 2017; Obeng-Odoom, 2011; Owusu-Sekyere et al., 2016; Steel et al., 2014).

In many ways, modernist planning policies conceptualise urban informality as an inherited phenomenon of the past that depicts backwardness and overtime expected to disappear with modernisation (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2018). Important aspects of the discussion that these policies fail to sufficiently paying attention to are the challenges and ramifications of mass poverty, chronic unemployment, and large inequalities which mark the contemporary world, particularly cities in the South (Kamete, 2013a). In most cases, officials tasked with governing sub-Saharan Africa's emerging cities are obsessed with the ideals of modernity characterised by order, orderliness, and conformity (Kamete, 2013b). This pursuit often results in governance practices aimed to purge and/or exclude certain ways of life and livelihood practices such as informal trading that bear no resemblance to the modernity agenda in cities.

Amin Kamete demonstrates four forms of approaches that the state predominantly deploys to regulate the use of urban spaces – "eradication, upgrading/de-informalisation, relocation or doing nothing" (see Kamete, 2008, 2013b, 2020). Kamete draws on these approaches to

question the biases against informality [in this case street trading] in the desire of city authorities to develop urban modernity. Eradication entails the violent and heavy-handed reaction which is usually characterised by the demolition of informal settlements and the hounding and eviction of traders off the streets. One typical example is the 'Operation *Murambatsvina*/ Restore Order' (OM/RO), the 2005 urban 'clean-up' campaign of mass evictions, detentions, and demolitions that targeted informal businesses and housing in Zimbabwe (Kamete, 2008). This exercise resulted in the eradication of some 38,065 illegal residential structures – home to more than 35,000 families in addition to 8,945 informal business structures (Tibaijuka, 2005). Notwithstanding, it is argued that attempts to eliminate, control, or tame informality have been "a losing battle for the state" (Simone, 2004: 169).

Upgrading or de-informalisation is the second dominant response that is usually deployed mainly in connection with informal settlements (Pugh, 1991). This approach involves the state's control of the use of urban spaces by registering residents using the space while simultaneously imposing a freeze on further use of the space and improving the quality of the use of urban space by addressing the infrastructural and community service deficiencies. The approach aims to 'help' regularise and/or legalise what is termed informal practices to take on desirable aspects of formality.

The third strategy shows how officials adopt relocation as a response to manage informal economic activities such as street trading. This approach usually results in street traders being moved into designated spaces including planned and modern built markets with

requisite facilities. This strategy allows traders to pay their dues to the local authority. Typical examples include the case of the Metro Mall Municipal Market, for instance in central Johannesburg which was intended as the centrepiece in a strategy to gradually encourage informal street traders to move off the street and into formalised stalls (Wafer & Oldfield, 2015). Or, the case of Lusaka's New City Market which is the first, and so far only market in Zambia to be managed by a private management company rather than the municipal council to host street traders (Hansen, 2004). In parallel, Malawian authorities' have attempted to provide "fenced flea markets, fixed kiosks … [and] pushing … street traders to overcrowded … markets" (Jimu, 2005: 45). In this body of work, street traders are usually presented as ordinary people who are often "marginalised", unseen, sidelined, and considered outside of the formal economy and systems of governance (Bayat, 2004; Kamete, 2013a).

In the case of Ghana, under the decentralised system of development administration instituted and implemented in Ghana since 1988, the various levels of administrative systems including Metropolitan/Municipal/District Assemblies have been created as the basic administrative, political, and planning units of the country incorporating typical local government functions and powers (Crook & Manor, 1998). The focus of the policy includes creating an enabling environment in which economic activities, including both formal and informal economic units, would flourish (Zanu, 1996). Here, city authorities largely manage and govern public spaces, particularly the central business district by operating within the framework of the National Urban Policy Framework and the Ghana National Urban Policy Action Plan (Spio, 2011). A typical example where city authorities employed a relocation approach occurred in 2015 during the construction of a modern market in Kumasi, the

second-largest city in Ghana. This resulted in the relocation of 1,000 market-stall vendors and 5,000 street traders who operated at the lorry park in the first phase of construction (Okoye, 2020).

The fourth approach entails city authorities' indecisive response to the activities of street traders. In the view of Xue & Huang (2015), the state's ambivalence refers to the inconsistency in policies that fluctuate between soft and hard approaches and a mix of contradictory measures applied in different urban spaces. To them, ambivalence is generated because the state addresses street trading in ways that attain the overall objective of building a good city image that attracts capital. These approaches are designed and used to keep street traders out of certain public spaces. They are often linked to the prevailing urban governance more than licensing systems.

All the approaches discussed here demonstrate the dominant state engagements and multiple interventions in its bid to govern the use of urban space. According to Claire Bénit-Gbaffou, the state's responses toward street trading show a mix of repressive and laissez-faire approaches in the use of urban space for trade, which bring into view the understanding that different stakeholders are involved– thus, not solely the state. This marks a paradigm shift away from the focus on local government to understanding how urban spaces are governed (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2018). This is premised on the study of complex relationships between various actors with different interests, implying that power exists both inside and outside the formal authority and institutions of government (UN-Habitat, 2002). I propose in this research the need to pay more attention to the complex relationships between street

traders and various actors with different interests in the use of urban space for trade which rarely preoccupy the minds of researchers and policymakers alike.

In this section, the literature on state responses to street trading shows various, largely punitive approaches to governing street traders which involve a mix of regulations including relocations, exclusionary and repressive policies. I build on this work but propose the need to focus more centrally on the multiple engagements that shape relationships between traders and the state. I frame such engagements as complex relationships between street traders and various state and non-state actors with different interests, motivations, and logics that shape the use of urban space for trade.

Conclusion

I have demonstrated through this literature review that the urban informality debates particularly in African cities privilege the lived experiences of state-trader encounters. They highlight the state's dominance and different approaches in the context of using urban public spaces for trade. The engagements between the state and street traders highlight the state's dominance and its quest to eradicate or exclude street trading activities. Yet, this focus on state-trader encounters overlooks the traders' critical roles in shaping governance and regulation of trade.

To address this limitation, I build an analysis of negotiated logics of street traders in this thesis. I draw on literature that documents the motivations of informal workers and entrepreneurs. In this research, I take interest in this and aim to interrogate how traders'

lived experiences shape their trading logics. To do so, I build from a body of scholarly work that substantiates the diverse and complex factors that shape peoples' decision to participate in street trading (Huang et al., 2018), which transcend and mix together necessity and opportunity driven factors (Adom, 2014) which change over time (Salès, 2018; Salès, 2016). These theoretical arguments are central to the analytical framework which I draw from to research street traders' negotiated logics and their role in governance in this thesis.

To make visible the role of street traders in urban governance, I build on the urban informality and planning debate to bring into view the multiple ways the state regulates street traders and their use of urban space for trade. This literature suggests the diverse regulatory approaches deployed by city authorities to regulate the use of space for trade (Benit-Gbaffou, 2015), and in some instances restrict, eradicate and/or exclude street traders from using urban spaces (Kamete, 2013a; Roever, 2016). What prompts me to pay attention to the diversity of regulations is that its context specificity might offer a useful basis for thinking about street traders' role in city governance through their encounters with these regulations and city regulators. To describe the compliance of traders with regulations, I also build from a body of scholarly work on regulations of street trading (Roever, 2020; Schindler, 2014) to substantiate the rationales and ways that traders' roles are shaped and shape regulations governing the use of urban spaces for trade and trade itself.

To understand the street traders' role in governance, I build on the informality and the state debate that reveals the complex relations between the trader and regulators as well as traders' negotiation practices that play out in the use of space for trade. This literature

suggests that the rules of access to space for trade are not determined by a single actor [in this case, the state], rather they are negotiated among multiple actors (Hackenbroch, 2011; Schindler, 2014; Sowatey *et al*., 2018). To describe how street traders negotiate access to space, I deploy Hackenbroch's (2011) notion of "negotiated space" to show how accessibility and use rights of public space are negotiated and established. I also build on the notion of "negotiated space" to show how street traders negotiate not only for space but also negotiate their trading logic with various actors in the city which shape their role in city governance. The negotiation practices and their diversities are key elements that shape the traders' negotiated logics and roles in governance, which I substantively focus on in this thesis.

Taken together, street traders' negotiated logics and their roles in governance are critical in our understanding of urban informality and continue to attract research attention. By positioning street traders as active actors in city governance in this thesis, I focus on the street trader as the object of this research. This allows me to examine the street trader to unpack how they shape and are shaped by regulations governing their trading practices to make visible not only their role but also how their negotiated logic shape their role in governance in the city of Wa. In the next chapter, I turn to the research methodology which is key to the analytical framework and objectives that guide this research.

Chapter 3: Researching Street Trading in Wa: The methodological framework

Introduction

In researching street trading and traders' role in the application of regulations which relates to their everyday lives in this Wa research, the container street trader is welcomed and regulated in the city by various city actors. They have woven themselves into the everyday governance fabric of the city by shaping the architecture, materiality, and use of the city's streets which add vitality to the built environment of the street, and the street economy**.** As a way of creating economic opportunities for the city's residents, anecdotal evidence suggests that these traders are one of the predominant economic activities mostly located along the major streets and shaping the rhythmic tempo of economic activities in the city's streetscape. Container street traders exhibit a spectrum of interactions with various actors in the city, and their diverse forms of everyday trading experiences with these actors extend and play out differently, the research object and focus of this study.

In this chapter, I sketch the historicity of container street trading in Wa. In the following section, I explain the analytical design and philosophical perspective underpinning this research, part of a broader project of making visible the critical roles of street traders in urban governance. I motivate my qualitative research approach. I then trace the research journey to explain how this research emerged out of my personal lived experiences in Wa, which motivate my desire to provide an in-depth empirical understanding of the role of the street trader in urban governance. Many years of engagement with traders in the city of Wa gave me the impetus to think deeply about the already mounting interests and conversations

among researchers and city residents on issues relating to the activities of street traders in Ghanaian cities. I then describe my positionality and how I used my networks to navigate fieldwork encounters, particularly for the selection of the traders and various actors in the city for this research. In essence, I demonstrate the realities and experiences of undertaking fieldwork on a city's streets and the practical issues I encountered and resolved. I then provide a detailed step-step explanation of my data collection methodology that was purposefully selected and deployed in my quest to generate rich empirical data to achieve the overarching objective of this thesis, which included in-depth interviews and participant observations and how the data were analysed. I conclude by reflecting on some limitations of this study and the processes through which I integrated and analyzed the data gathered, which forms the body of the thesis itself.

Sketching the historicity of Container Street Trading in Wa

Container street trading, understood as a form of trading that are operated in a metal constructed structures. Under the local authority bye-laws of the Local Government Act, 1993 (Act 462), container stalls are classified as temporary structures. Container stalls are predominantly the largest form of temporary structures in urban centers in Ghana, *where Wa is not an exception* (Anim-Odame, 2011). A temporary structure or accommodation in here refers to any structure (including kiosk, container stalls, shed, sign post among others) constructed on a piece of land under the authorisation of the Assembly for a particular period, at a fee and can be removed by the Assembly at any time they deem it necessary to use the space for other purposes. These structures are common as they are visibly spread across the city's streetscape; mostly along the major streets. History shows that the term

container stall derived its name from the fact that it resembles the hauler containers that are used at the ports to import and export goods. Understanding the emergence of container street trading and its regulation regime require a recognition of the way in which traders rework, recreate and use spaces to facilitate their trading practices. According to an official of the Municipality, principally, the emergence of container street trading in the city of Wa can be traced to four key events.

First, discussions at the Assembly on temporary structures in Wa can be traced to the 1970's. At the time, temporary structures mainly referred to kiosks [wooden structures] which were mostly used by lottery vendors, table-top and petty traders. However, there was a shift in the way table-top and petty traders conducted their trade over time compared with the lottery vendors. As their capital increased, these traders begun to construct structures that were durable and could store their wares after the day's business. So, although they copied from the architecture of the lottery vendors, instead of constructing wooden structures which deteriorated easily due to the harsh weather conditions, they opted for a more durable structure that could last longer as well as safer for storing their goods – thus the building of container stalls.

The redevelopment of the city's main lorry station located in the central business district in the 1990's is the second. This project among other objectives sought to rehabilitate and improve the infrastructure and services in the city. This resulted in the relocation of traders who were operating at the lorry station at the time of the project. According to the city official, the original relocation plan was for traders to move temporary from the lorry station

and return after the construction works were done. However, some of these traders found spaces they considered to be more suitable along the major streets in the city center to set up their businesses mostly in container stalls. Most of these traders failed to return to the redeveloped lorry station and so continued to operate in their container stalls. Third, in their quest to give special attention to the operations of container trading in the city, in the year 2013, the Spatial Planning Committee which is responsible for granting permits for the construction of temporary structures including container stalls at its sitting delegated the authority to allocate and regulate the spaces for container stalls to the Building Inspectorate Division, a unit of the Public Works Division. According a city official, this decision marked the momentous increase in the numbers of container stalls in the city.

The fourth event associated with the emergence and regulation regimes of container street trading shows that in 2018 the Municipality through the advice of the planning actors decided to relook at the ways the municipality and its residents can benefit from locations and operations of container traders particularly those in the central business district. The regulators viewed container trading as an important source of job creation and revenue generation for the city dwellers and Assembly respectively. The Municipality through the support from the Ghana Secondary Cities Support Programme developed a guideline document titled 'Local Economic Development Plan: 2020-2021' to among other things i) reclassify container trading in the city ii) identify and allocate specific streets to host container street trading and iii) develop a model to guide the type of containers to build and use in the city. These plans in the local economic development plan remain the aspirations of the Municipality.

Analytical Design

This study is informed by the interpretivist and constructivist stances of epistemology and ontology respectively which reveal the plurality and social construction of reality (Charmaz, 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). While the former highlights the individual perspectives because they present valuable data for the development of theoretical understanding, the latter has a pragmatist ontology with a relativist epistemology. That is to say that this perspective operates with the notion of multiple constructions of realities. This situates research in the historical, social, and situational conditions of its production (Charmaz, 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). This research is interested in making visible the role(s) of the street trader in urban governance through their lived experiences, everyday micro-practices, and interactions with various city actors which present a complex mix of realities and encounters for street trading. Doing so, the overarching question that guided this thesis as stated in previous chapter was how do the negotiated logics of container street traders shape and reshape their roles in the regulations governing their trade in the city of Wa? Moving away from the dominant notion that portrays street traders as a nuisance, and victims of urban governance (Asiedu & Agyei-Mensah, 2008; Bob-Millar & Obeng-Odoom, 2011; Owusu-Sekyere et al., 2016; Steel et al., 2014), street traders are recognised in this research as active actors in urban governance.

The social constructivist approach is very useful because it enables the 'researcher to rely on the participants' narratives on the subject matter under study to construct the meaning of situations and practices' (Creswell, 2009). This considers the contextual construction of knowledge which allows for a better understanding of the differential nature and active

agents of social actors (Bryman, 2012). This perspective is in line with appreciating the histories and micro-practices of container street traders, in terms of "how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others" (Patton & Cochran, 2002: 104), which finds expression and fits well in the methodology outlined in the research approach used in this research. I used participant observation which is an important method of qualitative research because it offers first-hand opportunities to experience and understand the everyday practices of my research participants. The in-depth interviews I conducted were also designed so that in a similar vein my research participants are given the opportunity and space to theorise and narrate their views and experiences. The selection of both methods which I have discussed in detail in subsequent sections in this chapter was largely based on the currency around their ability to construct rich empirical research materials.

The selection of the social constructivist approach was based on the fact that it allows for an in-depth "understanding of the research participants' views and actions from their perspectives" (Charmaz, 2014: 115). This approach also takes into account and does not throw aside the researcher's status in terms of his/her "background, values and actions" (Charmaz, 2017: 299). The researcher's connection and ability to understand and appreciate the meanings that the research participants made of their experiences helped in generating theories that may have been used when transferred across contexts related to the area of interest (Farragher & Coogan, 2020). It is suggested that the researcher's acknowledgment of his/her influences is critical so that it prevents it from steering the focus of the research, rather strengthen the overall quality of the research (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). These above

characteristics find expression and fit well in the methodology outlined in the research design used for this study.

Notwithstanding the strengths of the interpretivist or social constructivist philosophical approach, it has some shortcomings. Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2016) argued that the axiological consequence of this perspective is that the researchers acknowledge how their beliefs, values, and influence on the interpretation of the empirical data plays an important role in the research process. This explains why there is a belief that the researcher that deploys the interpretivist approach can be biased in interpreting the social world of the research participants (Mensah, 2015). Relatedly, Stake, (2010: 37) suggests that "interpretations can be faulty". To manage the shortcomings, I used multiple sources of data including the narratives and experiences of traders, landowners, private business owners, leaders of traders associations as well city officials, and their representatives. I also deployed different methods [interviews and participant observations] for collecting the data to reduce the flaws in the observations I made as well as the conclusions reached. This mix was done to ensure that my interpretation is ultimately a true reflection from the narratives of the research participants, the social context as well as the object under study (Stake, 2010).

A Qualitative Approach

The first methodological choice to make as a researcher in the research process as argued by Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2016), is whether to follow a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods research approach. This decision is very important in the research process because it "is a description of all the research processes from the conception of the topic of

investigation through [gathering of the required data and analysis] to the presentation of study results" (Fuseini, 2016: 44). The overarching objective of this study is to provide the understanding and empirical analysis of the role(s) of container street traders in governance with particular reference to their ability to negotiate access to space to build and sustain their trade. Based on the research objective and questions of this thesis, I was guided by a qualitative approach that allowed close and face-to-face interaction between me and the research participants through individual interviews and observations (Bryman, 2004) which were the main data collection methods used in this study.

The choice of qualitative research approach for this study owes to the currency it offers in gaining in-depth insights on emergent social phenomena such as the street traders' role in governance which become visible through a range of interactions, participant or non-participant observations, and dialogues. That is to say, the qualitative methodology made it possible for me to gain access to observe and capture the research participants' perspectives through their stories, fined grained experiences, words, descriptions, and feelings. The qualitative approach also made it possible for me to utilise the research participants' verbal or non-verbal modes of expressing themselves which are equally important in understanding their social worlds (Bryman, 2004). The qualitative research approach offered powerful means of capturing varied experiences, perspectives, and narratives from different research participants which are not based on discrete facts or figures as in the case of alternate quantitative research methodology (Cameron, 2001). It is important to note that selecting a qualitative research approach over a quantitative research approach does not

mean to suggest superiority of the former over the latter; but it is largely a matter of epistemological and theoretical focus of this thesis (Babbie, 2007).

In line with the qualitative research approach, this study employed a case study research strategy. The case study strategy was mainly useful for this study because I aimed to gain an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of a complex phenomenon or process (Creswell, 2009; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). Given that the street trader and their everyday micro-practices are complexly nuanced in the city, there is a tendency to either gloss over or oversimplify the emergent dynamics if the appropriate research strategy is not used. Merriam (2009) argues that a case study strategy is a productive and appropriate design for understanding and interpreting observations of social phenomena [*in this case, the container street traders' role in city governance].* This is with the understanding that it is difficult to separate the phenomenon's variables from their context (Merriam, 2009). I analyze the realities and encounters of street traders and their capacity to interact and negotiate with various powerful actors, their varied capacities and logic for negotiating access to space, building, and maintaining the trading spaces and trade which bring into view their role.

Additionally, I deployed a case study approach because of its ability to generate critical questions of 'why', 'how', and 'what' which are usually descriptive and exploratory (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). In this thesis, I posed 'why' and 'how' questions. These critical research questions facilitated an in-depth understanding of the role(s) of street traders in governance in the context of container street trading in Wa's central business district.

Another important reason for using the case study approach is the point that it is grounded in deep theoretical generalization and varied sources of information (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). It has been argued for many years by positivist epistemology that owing to the use of small samples, purposively selected single case studies [*such as this current study*] are limited to generalise beyond their settings and contribute little to scientific advancement (Akaateba, 2018; Asante, 2020). However, according to Flyvbjerg (2006), it is a misunderstanding to suggest that one cannot generalise from a single case study and that such a single case study is unable to contribute to scientific development. Instead, he argues that "the advantage of large samples is the breadth, whereas their problem is one of depth. For the case study, the situation is the reverse" (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 241). What this means is that the strength of such a case study strategy lies in its deep, logical, and analytical generalisations about a particular theory (Akaateba, 2018). Furthermore, generalise the findings from a case study depends on its strategic choice, the problem under study, and its circumstances (Asante, 2020). Given this, while I am cautious in generalising the study findings of this research to other cities in Africa and the global South, I propose that a contextual understanding of how the container street traders' role is shaped by and shape governance in Ghana is possible in other cities alike through the rich empirical analysis of this case study.

Mindful of the aim of this research, I consider it worthwhile to use a case study method that aided the understanding of the "uniqueness" and "complexities" of the lived urban experiences in an African context as espoused in this research (Creswell, 2009; Duminy, Andreasen, Lerise, Odendaal & Watson, 2014; Yin, 2009). This approach emphasizes the importance of context and responds to the recent calls for urban studies research to

understand how the dynamic lived experiences of urbanites are shaped by contextual factors. The selection of the qualitative research approach influenced other choices including the methodological decisions that fit well with the ideals of this approach as well as the philosophical perspective that guides the study.

Tracing the research journey

This study was undertaken in the central business district (CBD) of Wa; located in the north-western part of Ghana (see Figure 3.1) in West Africa, considered one of the few urbanising countries in Africa, where more than 50 percent of the total population is permanently residing in urban areas (Cobbinah & Erdiaw-Kwasie, 2016; Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2012). It is important to note that the majority of Ghana's urban population is mainly concentrated in the two major cities - Accra and Kumasi, where each of these cities hosts more than two million people (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019). This situation largely explains why many of the studies on street trading in Ghana were conducted in these two major cities.

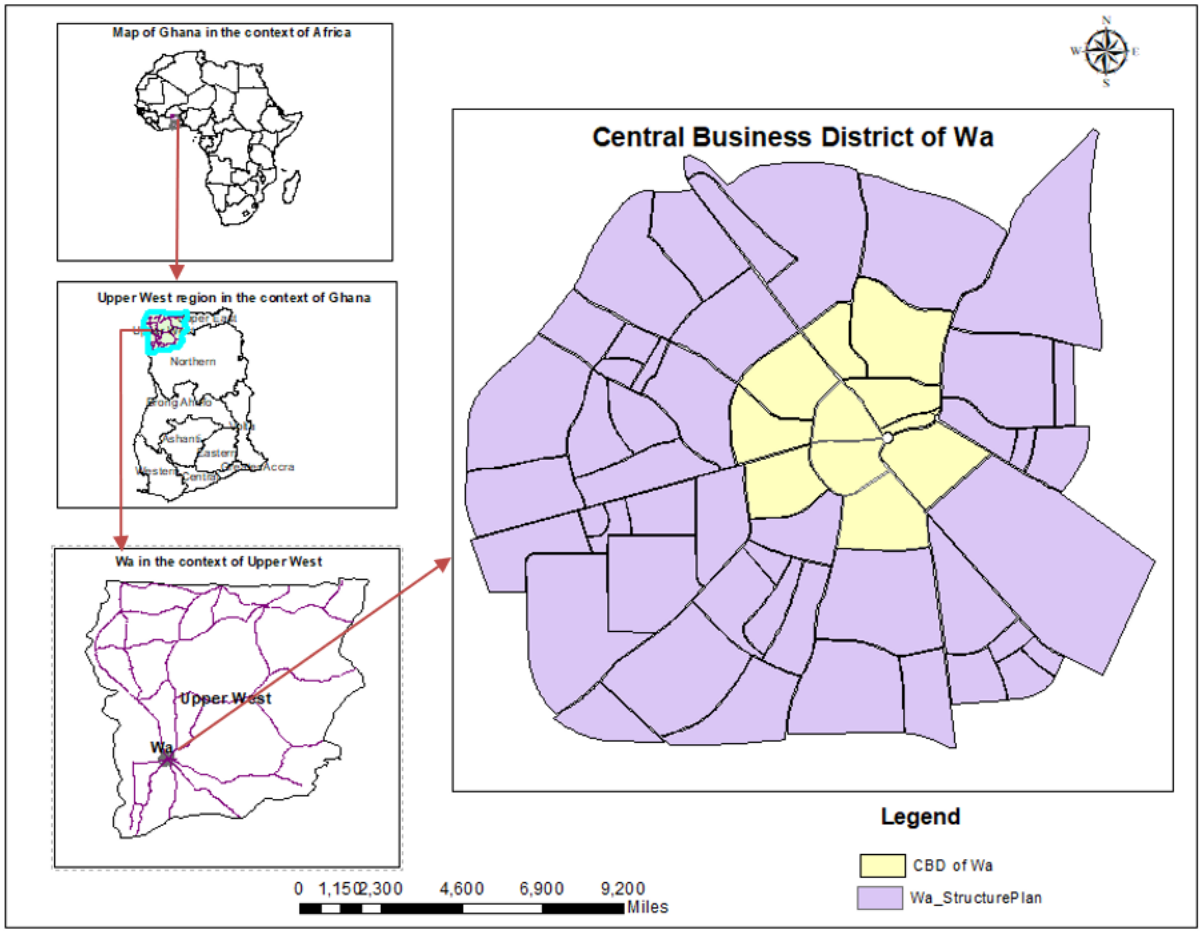

Figure 3.1: Maps showing the study location

Source: Author's construct (2022)

Several reasons informed my choice of the city of Wa as the research site for this thesis. To start with, considering the complex nature of the street trading phenomenon, there is a probable tendency to simplify and gloss over the emerging heterogeneity, complexity, and dynamics if the right case study is not selected. The selection of Wa, therefore, makes a strong case for the study of street traders because as an emerging city, it provides a useful context to enhance an in-depth understanding of container street traders. Wa is a rapidly urbanising city that serves as the political and administrative capital of both the Upper West Region and the Wa Municipality. The city has witnessed significant growth in population since the 1970s.

With a total population of 13,740 in 1970 and 36,067 in 1984, the city in the last population and housing census recorded a population of 71,083 at a growth rate of 4% per annum (Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2012; Wa Municipal Assembly, 2012). In Wa, the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) estimates 80 percent of the labour force are private informal workers or self-employed who operate in the informal economy (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014).

As the most urbanised city in the Upper West Region and one of the rapidly urbanising cities in Ghana, the central business district provides an excellent research location because it hosts street traders, daily markets, shops, banks, public offices, and main transportation hub coupled with the heavy human and vehicular traffic congestions (Amoah & Kosoe, 2014). Knowledge of the everyday experiences and activities of street traders, and their day-to-day micro-practices in the city are very helpful and insightful in understanding how they interact and negotiate with various actors to secure access to space to build and maintain their businesses in the central part of Wa.

The selection of the streets of Wa's CBD as an ideal study location arises from the position that it has the potential to shape street traders' roles and everyday micro-practices. Wa is also an emerging city with dynamic and transforming streetscapes that are not observed in the major cities that presents an important and relevant case for understanding street traders' role and their everyday micro-practices in governance. In addition to the fact that it is the most urbanised city in both Upper West Region and Wa Municipality, it hosts huge numbers of street traders that existing urban planning arrangements continue to create

space to accommodate amidst observed transformations that are being spearheaded by city authorities. The key interest of this study is to employ an in-depth case study to understand the container street traders' role in governance; thus, how traders' roles shape and are shaped by governance. I approached this study by considering street trading as a complex mix of traders' everyday strategies, micro-practices, and capacities in addition to the multiple logics that traders negotiate with various actors in the city. This study involved many months of fieldwork to examine and unpack container street traders' roles in the city's governance regarding their capacity to negotiate for access to space to build and maintain their trading space and trade in Wa's central business district. I triangulated a range of materials drawn from in-depth interviews, participant observations, and secondary data.

In the process of deciding on my doctoral project, two critical considerations stimulated and facilitated the conceptualisation and formulation of this idea that resulted in this current research. First, before my doctoral studies, I had the opportunity to work with some researchers on understanding city authorities' internal practices and how street trading activities were handled particularly in the central business district of the second-largest city in Ghana – Kumasi, also referred to as the "Garden city". I was compelled through this research to engage with a vast body of literature on street trading which exposed me to establish that there was a paucity of literature on issues relating to how traders negotiate their everyday trading logic, practices, and experiences with local authorities and other actors in the city. Through my considerable engagement with some key literature on street trading in Ghana, I became aware that there were already conversations among dominant urban geographers on this phenomenon. The scholarly works have mostly focused on the

tension between street traders and city authorities and the strategies they both deploy in the use and management of trading spaces (Asiedu & Agyei-Mensah, 2008; Okoye, 2020; Owusu-Sekyere et al., 2016; Steel et al., 2014). A parallel emphasis of some scholars views street trading as an essential urban livelihood (Adaawen & Jorgensen, 2012; Anyidoho, 2013). While these studies have gained currency and have provided a great source of contextually rooted insights and problematized the phenomenon to become more visible, I endeavor to provide a critical understanding of street traders' role in governance with particular reference to traders varied capacities to negotiate for access to space to build and maintain their trade and trading space in an emerging Ghanaian city – Wa.

From these studies, it became evident to me that most of the studies on the street trading phenomenon were conducted in the major cities in the Ghanaian context. As a result, not much attention had been given to the study of street trading in emerging and secondary cities such as Wa. This generated countless moments of critical thinking, reflection, and questioning which led to my interest in researching what I would consider as a fairly understudied field.

The second consideration relates to the fact that I have lived in Wa for almost two decades. In this period, I have witnessed how container traders have emerged, evolved, and developed along the major streets in the city. The trading practices of these traders have over the years been recognised because they have become part of the city's trading economy. So, the current study was also conceived and emerged out of my own lived experiences in the city and my many years of considerable interactions and engagements with traders and key

city officials. As a key economic feature visible in the city and playing a critical role in the everyday lives of people, it encouraged me to think deeply about the discursive narratives and conversations regarding their presence and operations, particularly in the central business district. My lived experiences have been a great source of inspiration that has shaped the conceptualisation of this study.

To explore the heterogeneity of street traders, their internal differences, and dynamics that influence their role and everyday practices in the city, my research has focused on the micro-level, the interactions, and relationships that shape trading. I have drawn primarily on an ethnographic analysis of the everyday practices and experiences of the traders to understand the spectrum of interactions and power relations that comprise negotiations to seek and secure, build, and maintain trading spaces.

Making use of networks: Selecting traders and city regulators

The empirical data for this study were gathered from container street traders across the central business district of Wa, and other key state actors such as officials from the planning, lands commission as well as toll collectors and non-state actors such as landowners, private business owners, and leaders of traders associations (see Table 3.1). Taking into account ethical considerations, to seek their consent and build trust, I informed all potential research participants about my study and the objective and the majority willingly accepted to voluntarily participate. However, while some traders were willing to answer questions regarding their operations, others referred me, the researcher to seek permission from their trader association leaders before they could answer some questions.

Table 3.1: Participants' characteristics (n=30)

Research Participants (Pseudonyms)	**Age (Years)**	**Sex**	**Status**	**Livelihood Type**	**Additional notes on participants**
Fawzy	37	Male	Indigene	Container Trader (Grocery stall)	He owns a container stall and sells variety of goods including canned and bottled foods such as milo, milk, fish, water, soft drinks, soap, sugar, shoes, and sandals among others
Abraham	27	Male	Non-Indigene	Container Trader (Airtime)	He is a university graduate who sells airtime by the way-side and has been in this business for the past five years.
Yussif	35	Male	Indigene	Container Trader (Motorbikes)	Trained motorbikes mechanic but now sells different brands of motorbikes including Luojia, TVS, Dyun and Savvy.
Sam	33	Male	Non-Indigene	Container Trader (Stationaries)	A civil servant who also sell stationaries
Latif	27	Male	Indigene	Container Trader (Airtime)	Prospective university graduate who sells airtime to generate income to pursue his tertiary education
Maame	45	Female	Indigene	Container Trader (Grocery stall)	Sells groceries and allowed an airtime trader to use the frontage of her stall.
Abu	43	Male	Indigene	Container Trader (Motorbikes)	Sell motorbikes and spare parts. He is a returnee who travelled through the Sahara desert to Libya and continued to Spain but was deported after spending over a decade in his quest to seek greener pastures abroad.
Eka	39	Female	Indigene	Container Trader (Grocery stall)	She owns a container stall and sells variety of goods including canned and bottled foods such as milo, milk, fish, water, soft drinks, soap, sugar, and shoes.
Tina	40	Female	Indigene	Airtime Trader	She sells airtime at the frontage of a container stall in the CBD
Seidu	37	Male	Indigene	Container Trader (Motorbikes)	He owns a container stall and sells motorbikes and spare parts.
Fati	44	Female	Indigene	Container Trader (Grocery stall)	She owns a container stall and sells variety of goods including milo, milk, water, soft drinks, soap, sugar, slippers and shoes.
Hajia	67	Female	Indigene	Container Trader (Grocery stall)	Retiree who operates a grocery container stall along one of the major streets in the CBD.
Hafsat	29	Female	Indigene	Airtime Trader	She sells airtime at the frontage of a container stall along a major street in the CBD

Kate	51	Female	Non-Indigene	Private shop owner	Operate retail and wholesale groceries stall and allowed a yam and airtime traders to sell at the frontage of her stall.
Hardi	38	Male	Indigene	Private shop owner	Operate bottled drinks depot and allowed his frontage to be used by an airtime trader.
Habiba	43	Female	Indigene	Private shop owner	Sells cosmetics and allowed an airtime trader to use the frontage of her stall.
Shamsia	39	Female	Indigene	Private shop owner	She owns and sells dresses, cosmetics, and allowed an airtime trader to use the frontage of her stall.
Rashid	54	Male	Indigene	Traditional Landowner	He owns a parcels of land in the CBD which has rented out to some container traders.
Razak	45	Male	Indigene	Traditional Landowner	Landowner who has leased his land to container traders in the CBD
Rasheeda	41	Female	Indigene	Container Trader (Grocery stall)	She owns a container stall and sells variety of goods including canned and bottled foods such as milo, milk, fish, water, soft drinks, soap, sugar, and shoes.
Lardi	42	Female	Non-Indigene	Container Trader (Grocery stall)	She sells variety of goods in her container stall. These include canned and bottled foods such as milo, milk, fish, water, soft drinks, soap, sugar, and ice creams.
Aba	47	Female	Non-Indigene	Private container shop owner	She sells stationary and allowed an airtime trader to use the frontage of her stall.
Issah	38	Male	Indigene	Planner: Staff of Town and Country Planning Department	The Planner is a staff of a state institution responsible for the spatial planning and development of the city.
Mike	36	Male	Indigene	Planner: Staff of Town and Country Planning Department	The Planner is a staff of a state institution responsible for the spatial planning and development of the city.
Akibu	39	Male		Field Officer: Public and Vested Lands Management Division of Lands Commission	The state institution mandated to manage public and vested lands and then registering of lands. Responsible for the day-to-day monitoring of lands in the Municipality.
Gyamfi	34	Male		Field Officer: Town and Country	Responsible for the day-to-day monitoring of lands in the Municipality.

				Planning Department	
Moses	42	Male	Indigene	Toll Collector	He is a toll collector who is recruited by the Municipal Assembly to collect daily, monthly and annual tolls from traders.
Alidu	38	Male	Indigene	Toll Collector	Collect daily, monthly and annual tolls for the Municipal Assembly.
Aziz	44	Male	Non-Indigene	Toll Collector	Collect daily, monthly and annual tolls for the Municipal Assembly.
Evans	42	Male	Non-Indigene	Staff: Public and Vested Lands Management Division of Lands Commission	The state institution mandated to manage public and vested lands and then registering of lands.

Table 3.1 presents the research participants who were purposively sampled, depicting their backgrounds of diversity and considerable variation. The intent of the selection of these participants with diverse orientations and backgrounds was to draw on their lived experiences to understand and extend the importance of street trading in everyday city governance.

Traders who were known to me willingly agreed to participate in the study by answering questions based on the pre-existing relationships between us. On the other hand, city officials who participated in this study generally requested an introductory letter as a way of making my request to interview the staff of their institution official.

During the fieldwork, I realised that although I had known most of my respondents, it was appropriate to reconnect with them and informally discuss the focus of my study before I formally scheduled meetings with them. Apart from that, it became evident that most traders who participated in this study were comfortable meeting me in the mornings when business was yet to commence. However, most city officials agreed to meet me during the late afternoon when the office workload was not much. Furthermore, it emerged that while market days were very busy days for traders, scheduling interview meetings were not feasible but it was good for participant observations. Similarly, the ending of the months was also not a good period for city officials because that was the period that they usually wrote official reports. In some instances, meetings were scheduled with respondents, and because they had a bad day we agreed to cancel and reschedule the meeting. There was an instance where a trader who had agreed to have an interview with me lost his mother at the dawn of the day we had scheduled a meeting. Because of the incident that had happened, she was not in the right frame of mind so I visited her to commiserate with her that morning and we agreed to reschedule our meeting. I encountered these dynamics because I wanted to have the interviews at the right time and in the working spaces of respondents to get a sense of the environment they operate in. These dynamics had implications for the duration of the

data collection process but I was able to contain and navigate them because of the flexibility of my research schedule.

Respondents were selected based on their willingness to voluntarily participate and share their lived experiences. There were particular instances where traders recommended their colleague traders because they considered them to be in a better position to answer the interview questions due to their rich experiences as traders. The socioeconomic geographies of the respondents were mixed and diverse. All respondents in this study including traders, state and non-state officials have had some level of formal education. However, while some traders have attained tertiary-level education, others were school drop-outs. The majority of respondents were married where the man is the breadwinner unless in peculiar circumstances of women-headed households. The decision to select the respondents for this study was informed by the study's objective of understanding in-depth, discourses and voices of container street traders about their roles and how they shape and are shaped by governance.

In-depth interviews and participant observations

One of the methods deployed in this study to gather the empirical data was in-depth interviews. Specifically, I conducted what Yin (2011) referred to as 'qualitative interviews' where no strict and structured list of questions have been used in the conduct of the interviews with the research participants. What this means is that the questions I posed to the research participants focused on the thematic areas of the subject under study. This followed conversational interactions which were varied in terms of the context and setting

within which these interviews occurred. The themes comprised issues relating to the participants' background, lived experiences concerning how they negotiated for access to space to build and sustain their trade, their encounters with various actors in the city, their trading logics among others which were mainly derived from the research objectives. Follow-up questions were posed to the research participants either to seek clarifications or for emphasis.

The choice of interviews as an appropriate method arises from the qualitative nature of the research objectives and questions set out in this study. One of the advantages aptly suggested by Yin, (2003: 89-90) is that the process enables the researcher to "follow [the researcher's] own line of inquiry, as reflected by the case study protocol, and ask actual questions in an unbiased manner that also serves the needs of the line of inquiry". I conducted two kinds of interviews – semi-structured and unstructured. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with container street traders, private shop owners, traditional landowners, officers of the Town and Country Planning Department (now Land Use and Spatial Planning Department according to the Land Use and Spatial Planning Act, 925 [2016]), officers of Public and Vested Lands Management Division of Lands Commission and Toll collectors. To ensure maximum variation in the sampling of container street traders (Patton & Cochran, 2002), the following criteria were used – gender, number of years of being a trader, the types of goods sold, and the nature of the container stall. These criteria were deployed in an attempt to facilitate the analysis of diversity among traders in terms of their capacities to negotiate for access to space, their micro-practices, strategies, motivations, and trading logic. Potential traders

were selected during the pilot study. The other participants were also selected based on their diverse involvement in the allocation, use, and regulation of trading spaces.

The interviews allowed me, the researcher to develop a "general plan of inquiry but not a specific set of questions that must be asked with particular words in a particular order" (Babbie, 2005: 314). As a popular approach in social research, it also had the advantage of generating more detailed data beyond what I had conceived, resulting in making important discoveries in the research process (Babbie, 2005; Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). For instance, the fact that container street traders were well organised and regulated by authorities was a great discovery.

To aid the interview process, separate interview guides were designed in advance for the traders and the other actors on the thematic areas relative to the research questions and objectives to provide a guideline for interviewer-interviewee interactions. Typically, most of the questions "were not structured or predetermined …but were asked in an open-ended manner" (Punch, 1998: 222). The questions thus focused on their demographics, geographies, histories, logic as well as rationales shaping their trading activities and practices. The unstructured interviews took the form of casual conversations with traders and other indigenes to understand their everyday practices and life as and when the opportunity arose during the fieldwork. The interview sessions were conducted at the workplaces of research participants and lasted between 45 minutes to 1hour 30 minutes. They were conducted between September 2017 and June 2018. Although conducting such interviews at the sites of respondents were daunting due to distractions such as noise and

trading activities, the interview setting was very important because it presented the opportunity for me to gather firsthand information as well aid in understanding ways in which knowledge is formed (Elwood & Martin 2000). The above processes provided enormous insights into the diverse attributes, motivations, and lived experiences of the research participants. These provided sufficient grounds for some theoretical, analytic, and/or logical generalisations to be made from the results.

Apart from the interviews, I also carried out observations which is one of the key data collection methods in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The participant observation approach is considered the practical approach to participate, observe, listen and understand everyday lived experiences and practices without imposing any obstructive changes to day-to-day routine and living environment (Lee, 2000). In conducting street studies, participant observation was identified to "cover events in real-time" as well as "cover context of events" (Yin, 2003: 80). This made it very appropriate for me to study "what goes on in the subculture or organisations of what is being studied and insights into their operations as well as how they function" (Berger, 1998:105). In this study, participant observations were conducted for two main reasons. First, to give me a feel of the everyday experiences of the trader to appreciate the context and setting within which they operate and interact with various actors. Second, to complement and confirm the data gathered earlier from the interviews.

The participant observation was carried out during selected weekdays and weekends in March, April, and June 2018. In practice, I observed and took an active part in the trading

activities. I specifically spent time assisting the traders to arrange the goods in the store before business commences in the day as well as helping serve their customers. During the interviews with traders, it emerged that they negotiated and interacted differently with various actors in their everyday trading activities to sustain their trade. So, as I observed and participated in the trading activities, occasionally, I asked questions relating to how they sustain their trade and interact with other traders, toll collectors, landowners, and city officials. The observations conducted in this study entailed "systematically watching people [container street traders] use their environments … [to] generate data about people's activities and the relationships needed to sustain them" (Zeisel, 1984: 111). Guided by these advantages suggested by Zeisel, I observed and participated fully to understand the heterogeneities, the everyday trading practices of traders to capture events in real-time within its unique context. These observations occurred at the workplaces of container traders' stalls. These occurred at regular intervals lasting between 3 hours to 6 hours. I acted as a sales assistant helping the traders to serve customers and arranging goods in the stalls as stated earlier.

Throughout my assisting roles, I engaged traders to understand the rationale and logic driving their practices and probing their experiences which influenced their everyday routine. In the case of city officials, I attended official meetings to understand the decision-making process and the background motivations that influence regulations governing the activities of container street traders. I also followed field officers from the planning and lands departments in their routine field exercises to understand the implementation process and to what extent traders resist and respond to regulations. To capture and record data during

the participant observations conducted at the workplaces, occasional notes taking was adopted to record important events and discussions. The Photography technique was also used to capture photos of trading sites and events. The combination of direct participation and photos provided a snapshot of the everyday practices of traders and regulators at different periods ranging from the mornings to late evenings over selected periods within three months.

In sum, the participant observation sought to unravel the day-to-day trading and official activities of actors and their interactions with others in their operation sites. These participant observations offered the practical practices and encounters arising from traders' interactions, their lived experiences, and encounters with various actors in their everyday trading practices in Wa's central business district.

Making use of secondary data to situate street traders' role in governance

In addition to conducting interviews and participant observations, I made use of existing official data by reviewing these documents to gather data that were relevant to the study research questions (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). To contextualise and gain an in-depth understanding of the regulations governing and shaping the activities of container street traders, these official documents were sourced from state institutions, visiting libraries, and deploying online search engines to gather the relevant documents. The relevant official policy documents included the Local Government Act (Act 462 of 1993), the Town and Country *Planning* Act of 1958, Act 30, the Town and Country Ordinance of 1945 (CAP 84), the Lands Commission Act (Acts 483 & 767), the Local Governance Act (Act 936 of 2016),

census data from the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), the Land Use and Spatial Planning Act (Act 925 of 2016), and the National Urban Policy Framework of 2012. These documents were useful in providing a clearer understanding of the legislative frameworks mandating state institutions and guiding the allocation, use, and regulation of urban spaces in Ghana, including Wa. Relevant portions of these documents were used as the basis to discuss and provide detailed regulatory analysis in subsequent chapters [see chapters 5 & 6].

Integrating the empirical pieces and teasing out themes and threads

I developed an appropriate analytical framework that ensured that the divergent perspectives and discursive accounts among the study respondents were taken into account in the analysis. This analytical process involved carefully listening to the audio recordings of interviews several times to distill the key themes in the various interviews. Most of the first stage of this process entailed transcribing the audio-recorded interviews verbatim into English to make meanings of the catalogs of discourses among respondents, typing, and organising the field notes containing observations and reflections. In transcribing the interviews, the exact words of the interviewees were typed without correcting grammatical errors made by the respondents. This was critical because as noted by Morris, 2015: (122), "often, it may be grammatically incorrect but rich in meaning and imagery. If you tidy it up, you risk losing the richness of the language used".

After carefully reading the transcripts of the interviews, I manually coded them by using the line-by-line method of coding transcripts while retaining some key quotations in the local dialect for illustrative purposes. The coding was conducted to "derive and develop concepts

from data" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008: 8) from the fieldwork. Strauss & Corbin, (1998) differentiate between two forms of conducting coding - open coding and axial coding. The former process entails breaking down the data and delineating concepts for blocks of data, and at the same time qualifying the concepts by assigning them with properties. The latter process provides the opportunity to compare cross-cutting concepts within the same piece of data or between different parts of the data. In practice, both coding processes occur simultaneously.

Thematic data analysis provided me with better knowledge of the heterogeneities, and understanding of the processes, lived experiences, micro-practices, and role of respondents in the governance of container traders in this Wa research. The thematic analysis is best for exploring areas that are under-researched because one of its tenets is that it strives to capture the qualitative richness of the data. This analytical process pays attention to diverse themes across the multiple sources of data in this case the in-depth interviews and participant observations that emerged out of the reading of emerging patterns of codes. The thematic analysis takes into account how different respondents make meanings of their lived experiences and realities and how the research setting and other realities shape these meanings.

In the process of gathering and coding data, Corbin & Strauss (2008) list the following questions that can be asked of the data. First, sensitizing questions helps to understand what is unfolding to aid in developing descriptive accounts. Here, data gathered traced the histories of how respondents became container traders. Second, practical questions guide

theoretical comparison and sampling. Questions in this domain focused on the everyday practices and experiences of respondents in this Wa research. The third relates to theoretical questions. In this study, questions relating to the processes of securing and building trading spaces as well as how traders interact with various actors to maintain their trade and trading spaces were posed to address issues relating to all three categories of questions stated above. I commenced coding and analysis after each interview to enable me to develop concrete themes and topic guides to enhance subsequent data collection. I employed a narrative structure that expresses the process of ethnographic knowledge I experienced myself during the months of fieldwork. In an attempt to record observations and lived experiences during interviews, I reproduced verbatim expressions as vivid exemplary quotations that serve as descriptors (Seale, 1999: 148) which represent the core findings of this study. Through this process and considering the researcher as an active participant in co-producing meanings out of the research respondents' discursive narratives, various interesting and relevant themes were generated and developed through an iterative process. The process of generating and developing the themes involved back and forth between my coding frame and the empirical data set. Apart from relying on the field notes, photographs were also taken to capture important moments and sites. Essentially, combining the different information is a powerful approach to uncover hidden and unnoticeable facts which help to derive emerging themes, patterns, and effects.

To verify the field data gathered for this study to establish the quality, credibility, rigor, and replicability of the research process (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016; Stake, 2010), I employed varied research validation and reliability techniques including triangulation –

where multiple methods and sources of data collection were deployed, prolonged engagement, and observation, member checking, thick description and peer review (Creswell, 2007). As stated earlier, the first triangulation approach used in this Wa research involved the use of both interviews, participant observations, and photographs has gained currency in qualitative research as a powerful technique for increasing the quality and credibility of research work (Creswell, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To do so in this study, I deployed triangulation in the following ways; first by gathering data from different respondents including container street traders, landowners, private business owners, state officials and their representatives, leaders of traders' associations; second, by making use of multiple data collection methods such as interviews and participant observations and third, by making use of secondary or existing data retrieved from authorized sources such as Ghana National Urban policy documents, research articles among others as stated earlier to complement the empirical data.

Prolonged engagement and observation are the second technique used to increase the credibility and quality of this research data. The fieldwork for this study was conducted for ten months; between September 2017 and June 2018. The fieldwork started with three months of the pilot study (see Figure 3.2) and subsequently seven months of the main data collection. This period afforded me enough time to engage with the study participants through direct conversations and observations of their everyday trading practices and to account for their perspectives on the subject matter of this study.

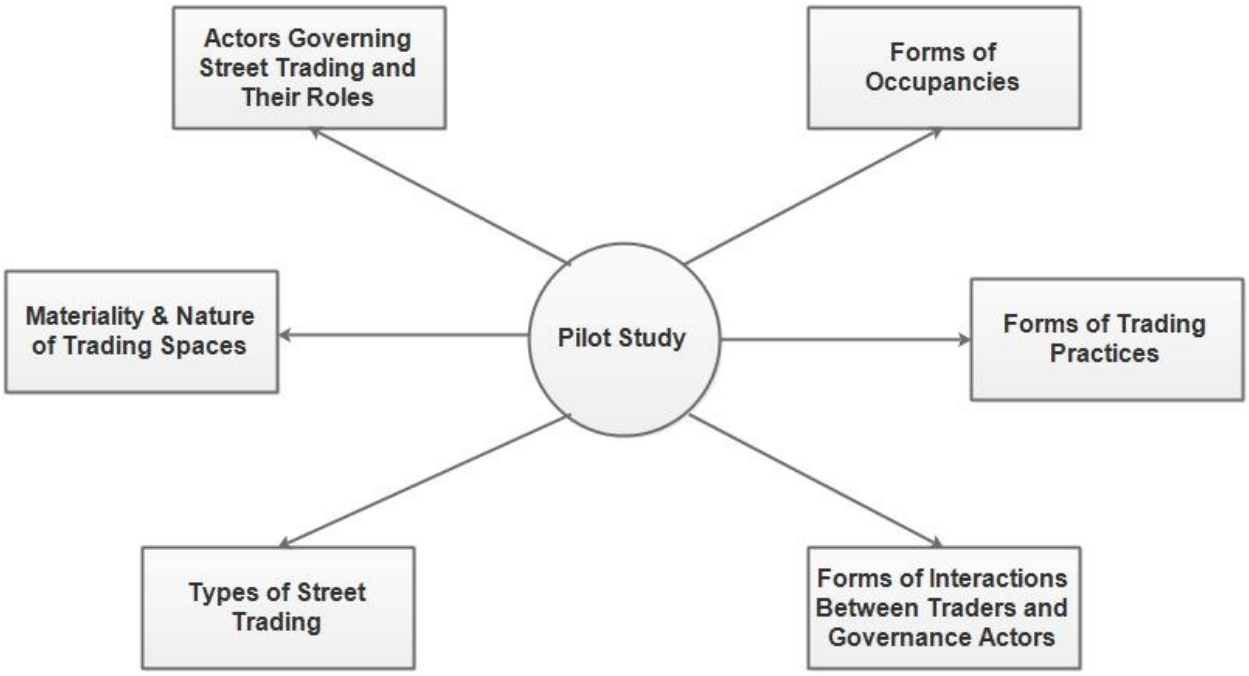

Figure 3.2: Showing the Focus of the Pilot Study
Source: Author

Engaging with the study participants for many months was important because it resonates with Creswell's assertion that "the longer researchers stay in the field or get to know their participant, the more they know what they know from firsthand information" (Creswell, 2007: 18). As indicated earlier, I used ten months for the entire data collection – including the pilot study and the main fieldwork. Notwithstanding, it is worth noting that the definition of prolonged engagement is subjective because it is determined by the study itself (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This is influenced by the period it took for me to reach data saturation; the point whereby additional data provided no new insight (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016).

Member checking which involves presenting a draft of the interview transcript to the research participants for correction and comments (Stake, 2010) was the third technique I

used to ensure the credibility and quality of this research data. This method was employed for both traders who were largely educated people who could read the interview transcripts that were transcribed in English. Research participants who could not read the transcripts listened to the recorded versions of the interviews and made corrections where necessary. The use of thick descriptions was adopted particularly in the empirical chapters to allow interested readers to make decisions about the transferability or replicability of the research process (Creswell, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). By doing so, in each of the empirical chapters in this thesis, I endeavored to describe in detail the dialogue, the actions of the research participants, and their contexts to make it easy for readers to incorporate my descriptions into their experiences (Stake, 2010; Yin, 2011). This is aimed to enhance readers to gain a complex, detailed, and nuanced understanding of the street traders' roles and how they shape and are shaped by governance in Wa. The detailed descriptions provided in my analysis shifts my analysis from a mere interpretation from a researcher-centric perspective to presenting and focusing on the people, their actions, and events within their locally meaningful contexts and reducing selectivity in reporting of events (Yin, 2011).

Last but not the least, peer review was an important strategy that was used in this study to ensure the validity of the research process (Creswell, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As part of this process, the researcher discussed the study's preliminary findings with senior colleagues in the university in the city of Wa who had lived in the city for many years and had engaged the traders in some earlier studies. Other practical strategies were also used to ensure the credibility and validity of the research process[2].

Researcher's positionality and ethical considerations

The researcher's positionality is central and critical in social research in general and qualitative research in particular since the data collection processes and final report of the research are significantly influenced by the relative position of the researcher to the respondents or research location (Fuseini, 2016). This explains why it is argued that "the nature of qualitative research sets the researcher as the data collection instrument … [and that] reflects the likelihood that the researcher's subjectivity will come to bear on the research project and any subsequent reporting of findings" (Bourke, 2014: 2). What this means is that the end product of qualitative research is largely contingent on the ability of the researcher (Golafshani, 2003). In conducting research, Visser (2001) notes that the researcher's insider or outsider position can influence his/her access to research respondents and/or information. It is against this backdrop that the researcher's socio-cultural context relative to the research respondents in addition to the political and temporal institutional settings should be carefully considered during the preparation and execution of a research project that includes fieldwork [such as this current study] (Bourke, 2014; Visser, 2001). For instance, it is in line with this proposition that Chambers (2012) highlights the need for researchers to pay attention to the way they dress so that it fits well in the cultural

[2] There was also a bi-weekly doctoral students' discussions platform which was set up by my supervisor where we presented our write-ups for peer review. Additionally, my supervisor also reviewed all the chapters of this thesis and made constructive and critical comments which shaped this thesis in many interesting ways. These engagements provided additional ideas and insights for my study. All these further reinforced the credibility and replicability of this study.

context of the research location. It is argued that it plays a critical role in facilitating communication and knowledge sharing between the researcher and the research respondents. This position explains why although I am an outsider because I am not from the research location, I had to wear a locally made dress known as a "smock" to send the signal to my respondents that I am part of them. Apart from that, it is culturally appropriate to exchange extensive pleasantries before any substantive discussions can commence. It was very important to observe this cultural norm to create space for free flow communication and knowledge sharing as well as build respondents' trust and confidence in me throughout the research.

Although I have lived in Wa, the research location for almost two decades, considering Visser's (2001) dualistic insider-outsider classification, I qualify as an outsider with a lot of lived everyday and research experiences over the years in the city. When I was planning for this research, one critical question that I had to contend with was how to navigate through the language barrier because I am originally not from the Upper West Region and for that matter not from Wa. For this reason, I recruited a research assistant who is from the region and could speak multiple languages including Dagaare and Wale which are similar and the major languages spoken in the region, and the majority of the research respondents, although some of them could speak English and my local dialect, thus Twi. So the data collection was conducted in four languages thus Dagaare, Wale, Twi, and English. The decision to use these multiple languages was to allow the research participants to freely and confidently express themselves during my interactions with them in order not to miss the

critical details of their unique experiences and narratives. Indeed, this created the opportunity for the research participants to easily switch between these languages when explaining particular experiences or concepts to highlight and make emphasis. For example, a trader in her attempt to explain a culturally embedded phrase ["*Te zaa bunyine*" to wit, "we are all one"] that normally evoked a sense of oneness easily expressed it in all three languages just to ensure that I and my research assistant understood the expression he was putting across. Language, therefore, did not present as many difficulties as anticipated. Rather, it provided deeper insights and explanations of the issues under discussion.

As stated earlier, living in the city for almost two decades puts me in an advantageous position that has helped me in building fairly strong networks that enhanced my access to respondents who provided very rich data for this study. More so, many of the research participants were people I have personally interacted with in one way or the other either an official or unofficial milieu. Accordingly, my established networks played out well to positively impact the data collection process as observed by Thuo (2013) experience where his previous institutional networks aided his research in Nairobi. Nonetheless, it is important to note that there is largely a limit to how much already established networks can aid in terms of actual fieldwork as observed by Visser (2001). This is where my positionality as living in the city for a long period thereby helping me to know many of the respondents placed me in a better position to get respondents' time and attention during the research process. On the other hand, the introductory letter of the researcher was used to establish relationships with research participants, particularly city officials who were not known to me.

Despite the benefits that I realised due to pre-established networks, what I experienced during the data collection process agrees with Visser's argument that timing can distort the insider-outsider consideration. During one of the days of data collection, although the trader had earlier agreed to sit in for my interview session, I went there on the said day and he told me that he has just received a message about the passing of his mother so he is not in the right frame of mind. Disappointed because it was not anticipated, it made sense that the timing was just not right to conduct the interview. Relatedly, there were several cases where interview sessions were canceled and rescheduled although it had implications for the duration of the fieldwork and the budget of the data collection process. This raises a critical need for qualitative research methods such as what was employed in this current study that is flexible and amenable to be able to manage such unanticipated eventualities. Overall, being an insider and an outsider was experienced as an advantage for the research process, not only in terms of getting access to traders and other key stakeholders but also the mutual knowledge transfer.

Lastly, during the fieldwork, the agency of being reflexive became very critical. This imperative of being reflexive played out during the formulation of questions and preparation of a guide for my interviews and participant observations respectively in this Wa research. Its importance has been acknowledged and documented by researchers because it is critical in the formulation of the research questions (Agee, 2009). Here, it is argued that reflexivity is required to formulate a good set of research questions in qualitative research (Agee, 2009: 432). Agee further argues that reflexivity which entails continuous refinement and cross-examination of the dataset is essential for every rigorous research such as aiming to provide

in-depth empirical understanding of the roles of street traders in governance which is the focus of this Wa research. The process of continuous refinement and cross-examination of the dataset took place at various stages in the research process to enable me to ascertain, crosscheck and validate the dialogues, "intentions and perspectives of those involved in social interactions" (Agee, 2009: 432) including traders themselves, landowners and city officials. To this extent, reflexivity helped me to gain more knowledge about traders' roles in governance which is being studied in this study.

In this study, ethical issues were critical in upholding the integrity of the research. It is associated with the following principles: informed consent, voluntary participation, no harm to research participants, anonymity, confidentiality, respect for respondent's privacy, and avoiding deception in respect of the real intent of the research (Babbie, 2005; Bryman, 2012). Adhering to these principles is particularly important in social research where the researcher(s) often focus and interact directly with human subjects. As part of the protocols in this Wa research, all the research participants' informed consent - participants' right to be informed about the nature of my research and its risks and benefits to them before consenting to participation, were obtained since my moral integrity is a critical aspect of ensuring that the research process and the eventual findings are trustworthy and valid. Participation in this research was voluntary. Participants including traders, landowners, and city officials were specifically told about the particulars of what the study entailed. I acknowledge the fact that issues of people's livelihoods are sensitive so care was taken in the way participants were handled in the course of this Wa research, particularly, during data collection to reduce or possibly eliminate any potential risks. So before any form of

interaction regarding the research, participants were asked to give their consent to participate in the study. This entailed written informed consent that contained discussions on the purpose of the research, anonymity, confidentiality as well as how to go about citing insights from interviews, without exposing them to any form of harm to their reputations and their livelihoods. Given this, pseudonyms are used to represent participants' views and responses as a measure to ensure that their confidentiality and anonymity are protected.

I observed the above ethical considerations as an important requirement of the university by obtaining ethical clearance from the Faculty of Science of the University of Cape Town's Research Ethics Committee (REC) for the conduct of this study. The informed consent form clarified all the ethical issues to the prospective research participants including their rights to participate voluntarily and withdraw from the study, no harm to their person, no material benefits, and confidentiality as well as assuring them of anonymity of their responses. The informed consent form and in some cases student identification card helped to build trust and cordiality on the part of the researcher and the research participants. Interviews and interactions were always conducted at the convenience of the research participants. This exercise established trust and openness between the researcher and the research participant which enhanced quality interaction and generated quality information (Boeije, 2010). Generally, these created a conducive environment during interviews and participant observations and further provided the opportunity for participants to seek clarifications to clear their minds of any doubt in respect of the research and the information they provided.

Reflecting on the limitations of the study

This section attempts to reflect on the trajectories through which this thesis unfolded. At the same time, it outlines simultaneously some of the limitations and proposed areas for future studies. Throughout this thesis, I have deployed the interpretivist and constructivist standpoints of epistemology and ontology respectively as useful approaches to highlight individual research respondents' perspectives in order to reveal the plurality and social construction of street traders' negotiated logics and their roles in city governance.

By deploying the interpretivist and constructivist epistemology and ontology, I have provided valuable data for the development of empirical and theoretical understanding of the street traders' negotiated logics and their roles in city governance. Although there are many eclectic ways that this research can be conducted, limited time and space make it impracticable to do a detailed analysis of all the aspects of this phenomenon. I chose the pathway in this thesis that enables me to examine the street traders' negotiated logics and their roles in governance through the lens of container street traders and various city actors in one of Ghana's rapidly urbanising cities, Wa. I take this entry point of understanding the street trader's role in governance and how that feeds into the broader street trading governance debates in contemporary Ghanaian cities. Findings in this thesis speak to the nuances of street traders' negotiated logics and how they shape and are shaped by governance in Wa's central business district. I argue that taking container street traders' negotiated logics as an entry point is crucial in an attempt to understand their role in city governance.

By focusing on container street traders in itself is a limitation in this thesis which does not make it statistically logical to generalise. Findings from this thesis should therefore be read within the context of this limitation. Despite this limitation, the rich and rigorous empirical data from this thesis unravel important aspects of street trading governance linking to how container street traders' negotiated logics and their role fit in the discursive discourse of urban informality. An important aspect that the data from this thesis unpacks is the richly articulated nuances regarding the traders' negotiation practices, their different ethos of compliance, and how these are shaped and shape varied regulations governing their trading lives in the city.

Accounting for the limitations in this thesis and reflecting on the challenges I had to deal with without mentioning the complexity inherent in working across distinct languages during data collection will not be complete. While conducting the interviews in the local dialects is an important asset for an ethnographic study such as this because it helped the conceptualisations of concepts, vocabularies, and insightful ideas, I must state that translating the local languages (Daagare, Waale, and Twi) to English took enormous time and energy.

Conclusion

Research on varied experiences, practices and diverse interactions of container street traders provided a lens on the governance of street trade. The heart of this thesis explores how peoples' histories shape their decision to become container street traders in Wa. The

research examined how container street traders negotiated differently for access to the container and mobilise resources to build the same for their trade. I examined how container traders navigated the regulatory terrain to maintain the rights to trade in the city. Lastly, I investigated the spectrum of layers of interactions, negotiation practices, the forms of power traders deploy to engage and work with various actors in the city. This layered framing ensured that the divergent accounts of the research participants were critically considered - thus a perspective of traders from the bottom-up, a gaze beyond the dominant view of state policy and actions. The body of the thesis that follows substantiates container street traders' motivations, experiences, and practices, a productive way to recast street traders and state relations through the close study of traders diverse capacities and strategies to negotiate for access to space, their intrinsic forms of power they leverage to secure and maintain the trading spaces in the city.

Chapter 4: Stitching Together a Living: Container Street Traders and their motivations for trading

Introduction

Container street traders have precise and unique backgrounds, motivations, and aspirations in their quests of stitching together a living in the city that is not obvious at a mere glance. Stitching together a living encompasses a mix of traders' lived experiences, their trading motivations and aspirations, how traders conceive, nurture and establish their trading ideas, where they are in the city as well as what and how they trade. Drawing on the narratives of traders themselves, the chapter examines how they ended up participating in container street trading in the city of Wa. It explores the different pathways through which people become container traders. The traders' accounts described in this chapter show their varied experiences, the mix of their socioeconomic backgrounds, including their educational attainments, ages, places of origins, their status as indigenes or non-indigenes, their sex, as well as their employment history. I demonstrate that the process of becoming a container street trader is diverse, shaped by the traders' context-specific circumstances, varied factors (Huang et al., 2018) that change over time (Salès, 2016). These multiple factors are central to understanding what influences traders' decision to participate in container trade in the city.

The chapter focuses on the accounts of traders' stories, examining their backgrounds and life experiences. By paying attention to the details in the traders' stories, I consider the lived

experiences and dynamics they bring to the everyday practices of the trade. I build on traders' detailed and unique stories to understand the logics which shapes container street trade and the role of traders in the city. While traders conduct their trade in similar and homogeneous-looking container stalls and sell a similar range of goods, the motivations and containments of these containers are not the same. Based on traders' narratives, I show that the process of becoming a container street trader is diverse, infused with context-specific scenarios, and shaped by multiple factors that change over time. This is central to understanding the factors that influence people's decision to become container street traders in the city of Wa, the focus of the next section.

Traders Inside-out stories and voices: A focus on motivations and trading experiences

Anecdotal evidence suggests that container street trading is the most dominant form of trading in Wa, particularly in the central business district (CBD), shaping the spatial arrangements of the major streets and economic activities across the city's streetscape. As a key feature that drives the daily economic activities in Wa's central business district, all the major transportation routes are awash with container stalls. At a glance, these traders sell goods in similarly fabricated metal containers, built on cement concrete foundations, roofed with aluminum sheets, painted in assorted colors. But underneath this seeming uniformity, the materiality of their containment, the motivations and logic that shape their trading lives, and micro-practices are not the same. Thinking of these makes it imperative to pay attention to the nuanced traders' stories and their implication(s) in shaping their everyday trading activities. This section presents the illustrative cases of some traders I interviewed and

observed during the fieldwork to reflect their motivations and lived experiences in their journey of becoming container traders in the central business district of Wa.

From table-top business to becoming a container trader

The interview session took place at *Fawzy's* stall. My main aim was to produce a study from the lens of the trader. Before the commencement of the interview, he was waiting eagerly to respond to my questions because I had already briefed him on the objective of our conversation. To create a conducive atmosphere for smooth conversation, I started with casual discussions concerning issues in the city and occasionally answered questions he asked to make the conversation interactive.

Figure 4.1: An image showing a container stall along a major street in the CBD
Source: Author

The process of stitching together a living unearth traders' abilities and attitudes to conceive, organise resources to commence, nurture and sustain the growth of the business and in some instances transition from one form of business to another as the vignette of *Fawzy* portrays. In this process, the then, the now and the hereafter are critical and contingent on traders' motivation, logic and trading practices. The account below epitomizes *Fawzy*, like many traders whose trading practices are geared towards developing their trade to achieve greater success beyond survival. The everyday trading practices are therefore motivated by the urge to expand the business and the mode of operation as espoused in the following vignette. This interview took place after I have had series of engagements with *Fawzy*.

Fawzy, a 37-year-old man who is an indigene of Wa and lives in *Dobile*, a suburb which is about fifty meters from the central business district (CBD). He completed senior high school. He came across as an enterprising young man, full of enthusiasm and very welcoming as well. He owns a container stall located along with one of the narrow streets in the center of the CBD selling assorted goods he considers 'fast-moving consumable goods' including milo, milk, canned fish, bottled and sachet water, soft drinks, soap, sugar, bags of rice, detergents, shoes and sandals among others. His stall is a rectangular structure constructed with metal plates with concrete floor, roofed with aluminum sheets and plywood as its ceiling. This form of the stall is known as a "container stall". To make the stall a bit comfortable, a ceiling fan is fixed to aid ventilation. His normal working hours extend from 8.30 am to 10 pm daily translating into more than twelve working hours from Monday to Sunday. However, on Fridays, he opens the stall around 1:30 pm to allow him to observe his Muslim prayers in the mosque. This details present a more nuanced and extended work schedule. As I observed

him during the interview, although the goods are without price tags, when customers come to buy items, he can tell the various prices at ease without any difficulties; a skill he said he has mastered over the years.

By way of introducing himself to me, he started tracing his background from his childhood days. He narrated how he nurtured the interest and idea of becoming an entrepreneur right from his childhood days which he thinks he developed through his upbringing. Although his parents were public servants, they were both engaged in some form of retail business that yielded additional income for the family. As an indigene, he has lived in Wa all his life. He recounted his youthful experiences of selling confectionaries and sachet water daily after school to provide additional income to support the family. He explained how he started his business by indicating the contribution of his father by way of his encouragement when he expressed interest to engage in business for being unemployed after the completion of his secondary technical education. Initially, he started as a table-top petty trader operating at the frontage of their house which is located along a street by selling confectionaries, gari[3], roasted groundnuts, and sugar on a wooden table with initial start-up capital from his father. Through hard work, discipline, grit, and dedication he exhibited towards building a resilient and prosperous business, his business grew leaps and bounds to his current container stall where he now sells more expensive and assorted goods than before.

Fawzy recounted how he ensured that his money was safe when he started his table-top business by registering with a microfinance institution where he deposited his daily sales.

[3] Gari is the powdery granular flour obtained from fresh cassava.

His membership with the microfinance institution guaranteed him to secure loans to support his business. The loan helped him to rent his current container stall which was initially a tailoring shop located in the CBD. He attributed the success of his business to his decision to be disciplined in the management of his business capital by becoming a member of the microfinance institution to secure his business capital. The container stall he occupies belongs to a public servant who was on transfer to another city in the southern part of Ghana. The owner used to sell groceries but later rented it out to a tailor who also vacated it making the stall vacant and creating the space for *Fawzy* to rent. With the help of a friend, he got to know about the availability of the container stall for rent. He negotiated for the stall and it was rented out to him and this aided his relocation from the frontage of his house to his current location. Per the agreement he reached with the stall owner, he pays rent on monthly basis. The information, negotiation and eventual processes relating to acquiring the current space was facilitated by a third party who happens to be a friend emphasizing the importance of the social network in getting access to space. The narrative about relocating from the frontage of his family house and progressing from a table-top business to a container stall demonstrates conspicuous scale-up in terms of business growth and shift in his prior economic status which can result in a push in position on the prosperity ladder.

I also sought to understand how *Fawzy* gets access to goods, payment, and sale strategies so I explored *Fawzy's* approach. He explained how he gets his goods from his suppliers, Unilever Ghana Limited and Promasidol Company, which have wholesale offices in the city. Anytime he needs supplies, he places a call to make the request after which the orders are delivered to him right in his stall without attracting any transportation cost. He explained:

> I am given an invoice for the quantities of goods I request for and the payment arrangement is such that I either pay the full cost of the goods upon delivery or I pay after-sales, depending on my financial situation. However, I am allowed to pay by installment because of the trust we have developed over the years.

The extract depicts the kind of interaction and relationship between *Fawzy* and his suppliers which is largely built on the mutual trust established and developed over time. The mutual trust between traders and their suppliers creates the avenue for negotiations that facilitate their interactions and business goals. A weekly payment schedule that spans one month is normally agreed upon. I consider that the trust exhibited in the business transaction occurs as a result of the continual process of interactions between *Fawzy* and the suppliers. Although what drives traders to engage in their day-to-day trading activities varies, *Fawzy's* container stall is the main source of livelihood he relies on to provide his needs and that of his household since he is the breadwinner. By implication, any misfortune on the business will directly affect himself and the wellbeing of all his dependents. *Fawzy's* story of how his business started and how it is evolving is a cross-cutting reflection and closely linked to other container stall traders I interviewed. The motivation to make additional income from container trading was equally crucial, the focus of the illustrative case that follows.

Looking for more income: Tale of a civil servant

I met Sam, a non-native from Kumasi, the second-largest city in Ghana one late afternoon in his container stall. The thirty-three-year-old is a civil servant who was transferred to Wa and has been working in the city for the past 8 years. Sam sells groceries. When I asked him about his motivation for engaging in the business, he smiled and replied "I want more money". His motivation to set up his trade in a container to earn additional income to supplement his salary re-echoes earlier positions in the literature. He decided to start the business when he realised that Wa is a 'business city'. He discussed with friends his intention to engage in a business and they advised him to construct a container stall and sell groceries because it is the most common business due to the high demand for such goods.

Figure 4.2: An image showing a container stall of a Civil Servant in the CBD
Source: Author

Engaging in street trading as a form of making additional income is not a new phenomenon. However, an individual operating within the formal-informal sectors concurrently per the *modus operandi* presents an interesting overlap that brings to the forefront the debate beyond survival and the formal-informal argument of urban informality. Sam's mode of operation as a civil servant who also owns and operates a container stall reveals that there are traders who do not just operate within the conventional informal sector but are themselves deeply involved in the formal sector as well. Following the first-hand history of Sam provides a deeper understanding of the complex way people mix their formal and informal work which complicates the binary formal-informal debate.

As a civil servant who goes to work from 8 AM to 5 PM, he has hired a twenty-two-year-old young man to manage the stall while he is away. Operating within the formal-informal sectors (overlap), he admitted how messy and chaotic the situation can be sometimes juggling his formal work schedule in his office and that of his stall. But, over the years, he has developed a skill to meld everyday activities very well without any difficulties. He always comes around to monitor and supervise his business and collect the daily sales which he deposits in the bank the following morning to secure his business capital as well as create the opportunity for him to have access to loans. Sam gets his supplies in the city and sometimes from Kumasi, his hometown anytime he runs out of stock. His decision to either take supplies from within or outside the city is influenced by the type of goods and their prices. To this extent, if the prices are cheaper in Kumasi, he travels to buy such goods but there are times that he will place the order and his suppliers will package it and send them

to him via OA transport (public transport) for him to pay the costs of transport and that of the goods. He has been selling these items for the past eight years.

Sam can earn about Two Hundred and Fifty Ghana Cedis (GH¢ 250)[4] daily. Although he complained that business has not been good lately due to the current economic hardship, he indicated how proceeds from the business are helping him to sufficiently provide for his immediate family and other dependents as well as bought land in his hometown to build his dream house. Sam's account shows the important role container businesses are playing in the lives and well-being of families who are engaged in it. An imperative to secure and sustain future endeavour in this discussion also shaped people's decision to participate in container trading, the focus of the next section.

Trading to support a future endeavor

Latif, a second-year university student is an indigene of Wa. The twenty-seven-year-old has been selling airtime for the past five years. From a humble beginning, he realised that considering the family's financial position, they will not be able to support him to pursue his university education.

[4] Equivalent to fifty-one "United States Dollars (USD) at November, 2018 exchange rate of 4.9 Ghana Cedis

Figure 4.3: An image showing a container stall where air-time is sold
Source: Author

With this in mind, he decided to start looking for business opportunities that can earn him some money so he can use that to support himself while he pursues his undergraduate studies. *Latif's* story reveals that he engaged in the business mainly to subsist as echoed by earlier scholarships (Asiedu & Agyei-Mensah, 2008; Owusu-Sekyere, Amoah & Teng-Zeng, 2016) as well as generate income to aid him realise his educational goal.

Latif identified space at the frontage of a stall along one major street opposite his family house which he saw to be a very strategic location because it is adjacent to a very popular restaurant patronised by many as well as a busy route people commute throughout the day. Using his small savings, he started selling airtime and within a short period, the business became popular such that MTN, one of the major telecommunication companies approached him to be one of their retail agents to receive constant supplies of airtime from them. He

gladly accepted the offer because it was a good opportunity that will trigger the expansion of his business in the long run due to the increase in his profit margin and flexibility in terms of getting the products and paying by installment.

He noted that at the beginning of his business, he was operating on a small wooden table under an umbrella which exposed him to the vagaries of the weather. As the business expanded over the period the owner of the space approached him and told him of his plan to use the space. I asked whether he sought the consent of the landowner before he commenced his business but his answer was "No" and when I asked why? He replied that he did not seek his consent because the man is a family member. When the landowner approached him, he formally sought his consent and he relocated Latif from his original location, thus about fifteen meters away, because he wanted to use the stalls along the street as a depot for his drinks business.

After the relocation, he was assured of the space and he could afford to construct a more comfortable structure. He is currently operating in a small metal container which is a bit comfortable than operating under the umbrella. I looked to understand how he is juggling the day-to-day business and his studies and he replied,

> I hired a young boy[5] to manage the business when I gained admission to start my university studies so that while I attend lectures he can manage the

[5] He was a 19 year old boy who had completed his secondary school education and awaiting his results to pursue tertiary education.

> business in my absence. But I make sure that he accounts to me before the close of each day.

What is clear in Latif's narrative is that, the decision to hire someone to manage the business in his absence has created a job opportunity for the young boy and at the same time sustained the business by not losing his customers while he goes for lectures. *Latif's* business has expanded such that currently beyond the sale of airtime he is also a mobile money transfer merchant. He can realise enough money to cater for himself and occasionally provide some money to support family expenses. Although his initial plan was just to generate some income to support his education, he has realised that after his university education he can continue to operate the business and even venture into other businesses because the current business is very profitable and rewarding.

Securing and supporting a better future endeavor which in turn creates opportunities for others remains one of the key elements traders such as *Latif* consider in their decision to engage in a particular form of trade to earn income to improve their lives. What this means is that, to accept ones' vulnerable support base in meeting current and future needs by weighing the unfavorable prevailing family financial stance against future plans influence peoples' decision to engage in container trade in the urban spaces as expressed in the story of *Latif*.

Reflecting on *Latif's* story, in the next section I present how the connection between the socioeconomic realities of the background of educated traders, their plans and expectations

that shape their businesses and trading practices differ from a trader with low formal education and different socioeconomic realities.

Building a trading practice: From motor mechanic to motor dealer

Yussif is a native of Wa who lives in "Jengbeyiri", a suburb in Wa. He is a junior high school drop-out who was a trained motor mechanic and had his mechanic shop located along one of the major streets in the CBD until he decided to sell motor bicycles. Understanding the practices of eking out a living presents a prism to understand how traders can move on from one informal activity to another. Significantly, traders such as *Yussif* draw on the experiences and skills from their previous livelihoods as his business journey portrays.

Figure 4.4: Image showing a container stall where motor bicycles and spare parts are sold
Source: Author

When I asked the 35-year-old businessman what informed his decision, he replied,

> My late father was operating the motor bicycle business in this space. When he passed on I decided to continue with the business because of the following reasons: First, the mechanic work didn't look promising to me compared to the motor bicycle business. Second, my expertise as a mechanic is an added advantage because I can easily assemble motor bicycles, a skill other traders lack. Last but not the least, there was high demand for the product by people due to the influx of hundreds of students from the University for Development Studies and the Wa Polytechnic each academic year.

In this case, the shift from one form of economic activity to another can largely be seen as a rational economic decision. The trader took this decision in the context of taking in account the present and future potentials of the former and current trade as presented in *Yussif's* account. To him, comparably the sale of motor bicycles is far more profitable. On a good day, he can make almost ten times the amount he would have realise when he was a motor mechanic. He can sell more than five motor bicycles in a day. *Yussif* sells different brands of motor bicycles including Luojia, TVS, Dyun, and Savvy. He receives the motor bicycles from his suppliers in dismantled forms packaged in boxes.

Drawing on his expertise as a motor mechanic, he can assemble them before they are displayed for sale. His business counterparts who do not have the skill of repairs and assembling engage other people at a fee to do that job for them. But in his case, he does it himself which he considers as an added advantage. I saw two young boys packing the motor

bicycles and going on errands for *Yussif* so I asked him who they were. In his response, he explained that they are his nephews who he has engaged as errand boys to help him in the day-to-day management of the business. In his view, engaging family members makes it easier to manage and trust them than engaging an outsider, a view some traders do not share.

Yussif's zeal to succeed to have a comfortable life underscores the logic for switching from being a mechanic to the sale of motor bicycles. He admitted that; his expectation of getting enough money to expand his business keeps his hope alive although he is sometimes very anxious because of the uncertainties in the business terrain. Reflecting on *Yussif's* story, I am seeking to connect and build based on his narrations an in-depth analysis that seeks to unpack and enhance our understanding of traders' reflections on their rationale and logic that influence their decision to trade, a theme that forms the main focus of the next sub-section.

Trading, a returnee's refuge

Abu is a returnee who traveled through the Sahara desert to Libya and continued to Spain but was deported after spending over a decade in his quest to seek greener pastures abroad. The 43-year-old was deported from Spain after spending five years working as an illegal immigrant. The reasons that informed *Abu's* decision to set up container business were: First, upon his return to his home town – Wa, he realised that his colleagues were doing well in their container businesses; second, it was easy to set up in terms of the capital requirement. Through a very good friend of *Abu*, he got to know that somebody was selling his container stall which was strategically located. His friend introduced him to the owner of the container

and after bargaining the price *Abu* bought it. This act saved *Abu* from the stress of securing space and the building permit as well as contracting various craftsmen to build the container stall.

He decided to sell motor bicycles and spare parts with the accumulated savings he made during his stay abroad in a container stall along one of the busiest roads in the CBD. According to him the sale of these products was occasioned by the fact that there is high demand for the product because it is a major means of private transport in the city.

Figure 4.5: An image showing the container stall of a Returnee
Source: Author

Abu gets his goods from an Indian man who owns a warehouse in Accra. He receives the goods on credit, sells, and sends the money through the supplier's bank account. Due to the flexibility in payments, he orders for goods as and when he runs out of stock. He places orders via phone call and the supplier packages the goods and sends them to *Abu* using public transport. When asked about his plans for the business, he had this to say:

> I have come to stay so this is the business I will be doing to take care of myself and my family. I look forward to getting another store preferably in the main market so that I have another branch of my business. I am looking forward to expanding my business threshold, he concluded.

The bid to expand the business as indicated by *Abu* pushes the agenda of progressive growth in the business in terms of size and coverage. This rationale is conceived to propel the once upon a time small capital-based business, operating on either a small table or corner to become a well-established one with branches dotted across the urban space as proffered by *Abu* in his narration. If that is the case, then unpacking the micro-practices that underpin the everyday activities of container traders and their operations will enhance our understanding of its possibilities and limitations in a more general sense.

The broader discourse on street trading creating a niche of opportunity to absorb the unemployed population, particularly in times of distress due to the flexibility regarding the entry modalities is a common manifestation in practice. This reality is in sync with the commentary of *Abu*, the returnee who considered and engaged in the sale of motor bicycles

and spare parts in a container stall as a way of reintegrating back into society. His failed attempt of seeking greener pastures in Libya and Spain and his subsequent repatriation to Ghana left him devastated so he saw his trade as a form of refuge to reorganise his life as demonstrated in this section.

Retiree's home away from home: A refuge to burning-out boredom

Hajia[6] is a 67-year-old retiree and a native of Wa who operates a grocery container stall in the central business district. She started the business one year after her retirement when she realised that life was becoming monotonous. She sells assorted canned and bottled food items, detergents in addition to crates of eggs she receives from a poultry farm located at the periphery of the city. The wholesale companies in Wa are her main suppliers. Currently, three different companies supply her with the items she sells.

[6] Hajia is an accolade ascribed to a Muslim woman who has embarked on the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Figure 4.6: An image showing the container stall of a Retiree
Source: Author

When asked about her motivation for becoming a container trader, she explained:

> As a retiree and a widow, I could not imagine how I was going to get through the boredom of always waking up, eating, and sleeping routine. So, to keep me active and save me from this stress, I decided to start this business with some of my pension funds to keep me busy and also to take me away from home. So my container stall is a home away from my home. This is because, I cook, watch television, listen to the radio and sometimes have naps in my lazy chair you can see at the corner of my container. Oftentimes, people are tempted to believe that everyone is in this business mainly for the economic benefits. What I want to point out to you and also emphasize is that I am not in this business

because of the financial gains but rather to 'kill boredom', she concluded.

Hajia's account is making a case for us to reimagine and see container trade as open, stretching with cross-cutting rationale which takes place out of diverse logics, daily practices, and performances some of which are fundamental while others are ancillary. Apart from the various home activities that take place in the container stall, the trading space also emerged as a space for taking care of her grandchildren. During the day her daughter brings her grandchildren for her to take care of them while she goes to work. Except for bathing, she does almost everything that makes her comfortable to feel at home like cooking, taking naps, watching television among others. Her friends usually visit her to share their burdens as a way of dealing with individual life issues.

Similarly, young traders sometimes consult her to seek advice and she gladly shares her life experiences with them which also has been very helpful to her friends and co-traders over the years. What is clear is that *Hajia's* container stall has created both economic and social spaces in her everyday activities. To her, the main motivation of setting up the business is to meet her social needs and considers the financial gains as an ancillary benefit as stated earlier. She has developed very cordial relationships with almost all the traders around her trading space. They are even operating a rotational fund which has proven to be beneficial because it is a major source of finance that helps her and her co-traders to finance very pressing issues as and when they happen. The monies that are given to members do not attract any interest and so it makes it economically convenient to access money from that

source. Putting these together illuminates how a single space hosts different actors and facilitates a myriad of interactions.

The economic logic of the street trading debate as to the key factor that influences traders to engage in their day-to-day activities as a survival strategy has been popular over the years. Conversely, the story of *Hajia* blurs this dominant notion. Although trading to "kill boredom" is not popular in the informality debate, the dominative rationale and logic of *Hajia* like hundreds of other street traders make stitching out a living worthwhile and ultimately determines their trading practices.

Sharing space to conduct trade: A strategy to eke out a living in the city

Hafsat is an energetic and enterprising young woman I interviewed one sunny Wednesday morning around 11:30 AM when her business for the day was briskly gathering momentum. She is a 29-year-old university graduate who hails from Nadowli, a nearby town that is about 42.5 kilometers from Wa and located in the Nadowli District in the Upper West Region of Ghana. She is an enthusiastic container trader who operates mobile money (also known as MOMO) and sells airtime in a small yellow metal container located at the frontage of another container at one of the busy tarred main streets in the central business district. In her smock[7] and blue jeans trouser, and locally made leather sandals, she sat on a metal chair long enough to reach the shelf in the container without any difficulty. As stated earlier, in addition to MOMO, she sells airtime from three different telecommunication companies (MTN,

[7] Locally hand-woven dress

Vodafone, and Airtel-Tigo). As a way of advertising her goods, she displayed already used airtime vouchers on the shelf in the container as samples to attract her customers. She kept the airtime on sale in a small cabin constructed underneath the shelf where her monies were also kept.

Hafsat's welcoming demeanor is a noticeable feature that will attract and welcome anyone to her. She has been in this business for the past three years. When I inquired why a university graduate of her caliber was selling airtime, she gave a very fascinating response in Twi[8]:

"*Adwuma bcne ye sene korono*" To wit, "bad job is better than stealing". This response from *Hafsat* evokes one of the considerations of traders in their pursuit to survive through their daily engagement in the economic activity they find themselves in.

[8] Twi is a local language spoken by the Akan ethic group in Ghana. It is one of the dominant languages spoken across the country.

Figure 4.7: An image showing a perching container stall that sells air-time
Source: Author

I probed further to know her motivation for engaging in the sale of airtime and she replied:

> I decided to start this business when I realised that there was no source of livelihood for me one year after my national service. I stayed home for about four months hoping to secure employment either in the private or government sectors. When this was not happening, I contacted a neighbor I had known over the years who owned a container stall at the central business district to bid for space to start my trade. My neighbor was kind enough to grant my request by allowing me to build my small container stall at the frontage of her stall. I started the trade with the savings I made during my national service

> period. Although we have been occupying this space together, I have not faced any difficulties with my neighbor in my everyday trading because we sell different goods. It has so far been a success story, she concluded.

The entrepreneurial ability of *Hafsat* is evident in the conceptualisation process and birth of her business. It entails a blend of necessity-driven logic as elsewhere in the literature (Adom, 2014; Williams, 2008) and the quest to make economic gains. Daily, traders like *Hafsat* often take advantage of difficult life situations around them and convert them to business opportunities to stitch together a living by solving a problem and making money out of such opportunities.

What is fascinating in *Hafsat's* story is that, to survive during the period that she was unemployed, she negotiated with her neighbour for her current trading space and took advantage to operate MOMO and sell airtime to meet her immediate needs. With a smiling looking facial expression, she recounted the benefits she had realised since the commencement of the business. She explained:

> From the proceeds of this business, I have been able to rent a room and bought a motor bicycle to facilitate my daily errands. I can tell you that I am now financially sound to at least meet my basic needs. My brother, I am surviving so I am keeping my hope alive for a better tomorrow.

Hafsat's account reveals her benefits for participating in container street trading. Thinking about the benefits accrued from the business produces the very nature of operation and motive driving the everyday trading practices which bring to bear the key subject of survival and sustenance which are echoed in the abovementioned statements of *Hafsat*. The claim of "keeping hope alive for a better tomorrow" brings to the fore insight into her lived prevailing condition and perceived future which leaves her to think beyond survival.

Operationally, her daily business routine commences at 6 o'clock each morning and ends at 10 pm which translates into 16 hours of work daily. With a show of surprise in my facial expression, *Hafsat* told me that the business is far better than staying idle and unemployed. When I asked about how she gets her supplies, she explained that: "The telecommunication companies have retail personnel who supply the airtime to retailers like me. Due to the relationship I have established with them, I place an order by calling the sales personnel and they deliver it to me at my business location".

From the narrative above, the relationship between *Hafsat* and the telecommunication personnel facilitated and made available the commodity she sells anytime she was running out of stock. She relied on established relationships to sustain the supplies of goods from her suppliers. In terms of her plan for her business, she noted that her initial plan for the business was a temporary measure with the hope of securing a full-time private or government job someday. However, over the period she has realised that the profit margins are good so she is looking forward to operating the business and even expanding his operations even when

she eventually gains full-time employment in the government or private sector. She thinks it will be an additional source of income for her.

Hafsat was very hopeful of getting enough money from the business and her full-time job in the foreseeable future to have a better and more comfortable life. The change in the initial plan from a temporary measure to a lasting income-generating source is a clear shift of the business dream, implying that traders' original trading motivation can change over time, depending on the benefits accrued from the business. The decision to switch from one trading logic to another is a product of trader's strategies of stitching together a living.

The story of *Hafsat*, as mundane as it may seem shed light on a different trading logic that can change over time from different trading spaces across the central business district. It brings to bear innovative strategies traders adopt to negotiate for access to space and navigate their survival in a rapidly urbanising city amidst the prevailing bulging unemployment situation. It leads one to think deeply about how traders conceive their trade, and negotiate for access to space to commence the trade as well as their short and long-term plans for the business which in turn influence their trading practices as discussed in detailed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

Container street traders stitch together a living through trade. Their trading practices reflect their unique backgrounds, their lived experiences, their trading motivations and aspirations, how they conceive, nurture and establish their trading ideas, where they trade in the city as

well as what and how they trade. At the heart of the discourse in this chapter is to gain insight into how the decision to become a container street trader is creatively shaped by peoples' varied histories and life experiences as well as their motivations and trading aspirations. I have demonstrated in this chapter that becoming a container street trader involves the process of stitching together traders' choices and aspirations including meeting their present and future needs as well as reorganising their lives to suit their prevailing circumstances. These choices are shaped by traders' lived experiences and practices.

I have shown what the illustrative cases of container street traders might specifically offer a conception of street traders as people who are "internally differentiated" with varied backgrounds, needs and trading aspirations (Crossa, 2016, 2020). In making this argument, I have shown how the process of stitching together reveals traders' unique abilities and attitudes toward the conception of the business idea as well as the organisation of resources to commence, nurture and sustain the growth of the business and in some instances transition from one form of business to another.

Following the rich traders' narratives in this chapter, it is clear that while some traders were motivated by different personal circumstances to become container street traders, others were influenced by various actors including family members and friends often emerging out of multiple interactions. The varied nature of traders' experiences enhances our understanding of the diverse ways by which they derived their source of motivation to become container street traders in the contemporary city of Wa. This is embedded in their

reasons for choosing to participate in container street trade and in their understanding and recognition of this trade and what it means to them.

Key to all trading is access to a container stall. While container stalls scattered along the streets of the city of Wa look similar and homogeneous, their materiality, placement and containments are not. In the next chapter, I focus on these stories of access that shape the varied traders secure access to set up their trade in the city.

Chapter 5: From Perching to Renting, from Buying Ready-Made to Building from Scratch: How traders access containers

Introduction

Traders securing a container for trade is not a simple task. It is much more than just getting access to the container. It is about access to the container, the conditions of getting it, the conditions of the container materially, where it is located, who you trade next to and where in the city the trader finds themselves. Traders secure access to space to trade through access to the container. Due to the high demand for trading space, it is "tightly guarded", making it difficult to secure access (Sowatey, Nyantakyi-Frimpong, Mkandawire, Arku, Hussey & Amasaba, 2018: 331). Traders draw on their personal and associational networks and relationships as well as their knowledge of the city to secure access to trading space. Container traders face a variety of options. Their financial resources and security also shape what options are possible and preferable. They can either rent from container owners, or perch by sharing the space in a container. In some cases, traders with more resources buy already built containers or build the container from the scratch. This variety is negotiated and built on different personal and associational networks and relationships, as well as trading conditions that bring together traders themselves, city officials and their representatives as well as land and business owners. In this chapter, the discussions bring into view and confirm that traders have 'different pathways of getting access into informal trading spaces' (Sowatey, Nyantakyi-Frimpong, Mkandawire, Arku, Hussey & Amasaba, 2018).

Apart from the factors stated earlier, the choice to secure a container through a particular trajectory is also influenced by the traders' capacity to negotiate successfully with the actors involved. Negotiations to secure access to the container are not simple. Traders have to persuade powerful landowners and business owners, and in some instances the City, to let them use a piece of land. If they do not have resources, they might have to argue for use of the container itself, negotiating rents and conditions of its use. This puts to test traders' capacity to negotiate and brings to the fore the strategies traders deploy. Sometimes they negotiate directly themselves, others draw on hired agents, some turn to leaders of traders associations. I demonstrate in this chapter that traders who decide to build the container themselves secure permits, mobilise their own materials, engage various craftsmen, coordinate and collaborate with city authorities in the building process. Access to a container and the positioning of its location fundamentally shape trading.

In this chapter, I explore the multiple factors and contexts that shape this access to trading in the container in the city of Wa. In doing so, I document traders' access to container to set-up their trade through perching, renting, buying and building. I start by discussing perching, a strategy which traders with less resources but strong personal networks resort to secure access to container. In the next section, I turn to renting because I encountered this practice in a large degree. In the subsequent sections, I show how those with the required financial resources secure access by either buying ready-made containers or build from the scratch. Doing so, I show the modes of negotiations and how traders' different socioeconomic factors influence their decision to select the trajectory through which to secure access to the

container. The subsequent sections present detailed discussions of the processes through which traders negotiate access space to set their trade in the container.

Negotiating to perch and trade

Perching by another trader's container stall is one way by which some category of traders gets access to a container to set up their trade in the city. This approach is complex but does not resonate with the practice of 'quiet encroachment of the ordinary' (Bayat, 2010), rather entry into the 'working spaces is contingent on trader's ability to establish, forge and nourish ties with acquaintances, kinsmen, middlemen and other traders (Sowatey, Nyantakyi-Frimpong, Mkandawire, Arku, Hussey & Amasaba, 2018).

Perching encompasses an action by a trader and a response by another trader to help the former secure a working space to set up a trade in the city. It is a context-specific practice that is consciously negotiated rather than an encroachment or an insurgent take over. In Wa, the practice of perching I encountered occurred after a successful negotiation between the occupier of the space and the percher. An equally important factor to secure a space to perch is largely based on the trader's established relationships and the knack to negotiate successfully with traders who already have trading spaces in the city as shown by *Karim* and *Hafsat*.

Most of the container traders I interviewed reported how they came to perch at their current location or perched at a particular time during their business journey. For example, *Hafsat,*

a 29-year-old university graduate explained, “I contacted a neighbor I had known over the years who owned a groceries container stall at the central business district to bid for space to start my trade. My neighbor was kind enough to grant my request by allowing me to build my small container stall at the frontage of her stall. As you can see, I am in good business”. In another instance, *Karim* – a 48-year-old container trader stated that “I now have my own container where I am operating my business. But I started my trade by perching at the frontage of a family friend’s container. But with the help of that family friend, I would not have been in business because trading spaces are very scarce in the city”. He indicated that “with hard work and determination, I now have mine. Indeed, setting up trade is always a gradual and difficult process” he concluded.

I also encountered at a very limited degree a category of traders who were perching by using the same container with the original owners. Here, the trader that is perching does not build their own container like the cases of *Hafsat* and *Karim*, but shared the same container space with the owner. For instance, Mercy stated that “my business was started in the container of my friend because at the time I didn’t have money to hire or build my own. But I was determined to start something that can put food on my table and I have succeeded. Now I have been able to construct mine”. This trader’s story illustrates a deep sense of agency and resilience which influenced the conception of the business idea, start and nurture the growth of the business to the point that she can build a container.

As documented in earlier studies (Baah, 2006; Obeng-Odoom, 2011), because informal traders including street traders operate in environments characterised by limited trading

space, the practice of negotiating for trading space to trade has been described as part of street trading (Jimu, 2005). This perching arrangement, therefore, creates an important avenue for traders who ordinarily would not have secured trading spaces in the city. The narratives of seven container traders resonated with the practice of perching. Whereas Shaibu, and three others started their trade in the containers of family members, Awuni and Hardi started theirs in the containers of friends, and Kwame secured a space in the container of trader he did not know personally but was introduced by a friend.

Shaibu approached his uncle to create space for him at the frontage of his container when he decided to start his business. “Hey, I was successful in convincing him largely because of our blood relations” he explained. Kwame on the other hand had to negotiate with someone he has no blood relations with to secure access to space to perch and set up his trade. He explained, “it was not easy for me to convince the owner of the container because he didn’t know me. So trust was a key issue for her. But eventually, he agreed and offered me a space”. Traders who perch do so mainly for survival and they sell goods that are different from the trader they are perching. Significantly, it is worth noting that in both cases, some form of negotiations occurred. In spite of the difficulties in securing access to space to set up their trade, the entrepreneurial zeal and the agency to eke out a living are central to the ways traders secure container access through perching.

Renting a space in the container to trade

Renting emerged from the findings as one of the ways through which traders secured access to a container to set up their trade. I encountered this category of traders to a very limited

degree. The huge cost associated with building one's own container is central to the narrative of a trader like *Fawzy,* a 37-year-old trader who rented an already built container stall to set up his trade; a transition from his table-top business to a container business. He explained that "it is less stressful and less expensive to rent a container particularly when you are starting your trade and your start-up capital is not enough to get your own container". He further indicated that although it is convenient to have your own container, renting saves the trader from going through the hassle of securing permits and mobilising building materials to build the container. In spite of the advantages, *Fawzy* also acknowledged some challenges associated with renting a container. For example, he indicated the stress the trader goes through when there is no money but the payment of the rent is due. He also pointed out that in some instances, renting is discomforting particularly when the owner of the container is not understanding and difficult to negotiate to reschedule payment of rents in times of financial difficulties.

Explaining how he got the container to rent, *Fawzy* had this to say "I heard in a radio announcement that an owner of a container stall is ready to rent it out. The announcement included the phone number and the location of the container. So, I copied the phone number and called the owner who is a public servant on transfer to express my interest in renting the container. After several meetings and phone calls, the owner agreed to rent it out to me. The rest they say its history" he concluded. The encounter that led to the trader getting access to the container is significant because, even though it involves informal arrangements, it is a generally acceptable way of securing a trading space in the city.

Negotiating to rent a container usually occurs between the trader and the owner of the container as shown in the narrative of *Fawzy*. However, there were other instances like that of *Abdulai* where he engaged a middleman to negotiate on his behalf to secure a container he is renting because he cannot afford to build his own container stall. The practice of engaging middlemen to help traders gain entry into trading spaces resonates with the study of informal traders in Accra - Ghana (Sowatey, et al., 2018), where middlemen played a critical role in facilitating traders' access to trading spaces. In the view of *Abdulai*, "it is best to use people who are well rooted in the city and connected to powerful actors to negotiate on your behalf to get a good deal regarding the cost of the rent and suitability of the location of the container". This in mind, according to *Abdulai* "I contracted a well-known former Assembly member who represented one popular electoral area in the city with very strong political influence in the city". *Abdulai* further explained "with his strong social networks and personal influence, he was able to identify a container that was up for rent at a very strategic location and negotiated on my behalf for a very good monthly rent. So, I was so grateful to him". Clearly, from these narratives the traders' capacity to negotiate themselves and / or pay for a middleman to do so on their behalf is central in securing access to space through renting to setup their trade in the city.

From these findings, negotiating for space involves much more than just the user(s) as suggested elsewhere in the literature (Hackenbroch, 2011). Here, the interviewee *Abdulai's* trajectory of contracting a middleman reinforces the point that negotiating access to trading space bring together both users and non-users. Interviewees cited how their financial circumstances largely influenced their decision to rent a container to set up their trade in the

city. The traders' views illustrate not only a sense of agency but also an incredible understanding of their working space. For this category of traders, renting is a vital strategy to gain access to the container to set up their trade. While it is generally acceptable to rent, my study findings showed that most traders occupied containers that belong to them, and those who are even renting considered it as a temporary measure to prepare and build their own container. This finding reechoes earlier studies of informal traders in Accra (Sowatey, et al., 2018) that observed that informal traders [*such as street traders*] have different pathways of securing trading spaces.

Traders consider renting as a temporary measure with the hope to have their own container someday. The decision to rent is predominantly influenced by the trader's financial resources and ability to afford. While some use their personal savings and support from family members, other depend on friends for financial support. Here, renting is one key way through which traders can get access to trading spaces in the city (Anjaria, 2011). Traders who are rooted in the city and have strong networks negotiate access themselves. Unlike the family and friends who usually provide information to the trader to locate containers that are for rent and in some instances help in negotiating access to the container at no cost, traders pay some fees to hired agents/middlemen who help them to identify, negotiate and secure access to the container.

Buying a ready-made container stall

The third category of traders I encountered are those who buy an already built container stall. Explaining how he got his container to buy, *Abu* – the returnee indicated that "hey, I got

this container to buy to set up my business through the help of a very good friend whom I had discussed my plan of setting up a business after my unsuccessful trip to Europe to seek greener pastures". According to *Abu*, in his quest to set up the trade, "I was looking everywhere to get a container to buy". This in mind, "a friend saw 'for sale' written on a container and informed me. My friend also helped me to follow up and I paid for it. The rest they say is history" he concluded. He elaborates that, "honestly I think I got to town at the right time to secure this container when I needed it badly to reorganise my life". He said so because, according to him, "the container is well located and I also had enough money to buy it". The key role of individual trader's ties and the use of middlemen is critical as highlighted in previous studies (Anjaria, 2011; Sowatey et al, 2018)

Located along one of the busiest dual carriage streets in the central business district, *Abu* sells motor bicycles and spare parts. For Abu, it is less stressful and productive to buy a container because it saved him from the hassle of looking for a space and its associated cumbersome process of securing a building permit from city authorities. Interviewee *Hamza*, is a 49 year old container trader who operate his business at the centre of the central business district. Sharing his experience in buying his container, he explained that "I bought an uncompleted container from a businesswoman who needed money urgently to pay her debt. I had enough money at the time, so I paid for it due to the strategic location of the container. I am very glad I bought it. I then contracted craftsmen including a carpenter, an electrician and a painter to complete the building of the container since it was just a roofed without the required fittings and furnishing, he concluded". While most traders wished to buy the container to avoid the cumbersome permitting processes, either they could not

afford it or some of the containers are not readily available for sale. In Wa buying an already built container is a long-standing practice. I encountered this category to a very limited degree during the fieldwork.

Traders who can afford to buy an already built container to set up their trade with the aim of growing it and possible expansion. Here, traders mainly used their personal savings. Buying the container usually insulate the trader from acquiring building permits and the costs of hiring of craftsmen, making it a possible and preferable option for traders. Traders leverage their relationships with friends and relatives to locate, negotiate and buy a container. The suitability of the location of the container influence traders' decision to buy a particular container.

No strict code governs the sale of the container and so the negotiations occur between the seller and buyer, and in some instances the involvement of middlemen. Container traders in Wa articulate the rationale behind their decision to buy instead of renting or perching. In doing so, these traders get the opportunity to own a container to set up their trade without going through the bureaucratic processes to secure access to space and permit to build the container. The practice of buying shows one of the varied pathways ways through which street traders negotiate to get access to trading spaces in the city (Jimu, 2005; Sowatey, et al., 2018).

Building a container stall from scratch

The fourth and last trajectory for securing access to space to setup trade in the container in the city focuses on building the container from the scratch by traders themselves using their resources but adhering to standards set by city authorities. This form of access is the most complicated, demanding a range of engagements with the city and with land owners and other key urban actors. Traders do so at suitable locations to establish and promote their trade. Other traders go for this option to support their long-term entrepreneurial and business goal as well as save money by avoiding the payment of rents. In doing so, traders are required to follow a formalised process to legitimise their presence and activities in the city. This trajectory entails the following processes: getting space to build the container stall, securing permits to build the container stall and acquiring materials and building the container stall discussed as below.

Getting space to build container stalls in the city

In this Wa research, discussing space within the context of container street trading, it was revealed through the in-depth interviews with traders and city officials that three different types of spaces were available and negotiated for by traders with their respective owners and in some instances with middlemen. The first are spaces that are owned by families, thus people who are related by blood. Such spaces cannot be leased to people for use without the consent of the family head. What this means is that negotiating for access for such space/land by the trader ends with the decision of the family head who is referred to as the "*Tindana*" if the family was the first settlers on the land. Such spaces are mostly inherited from

elders/forefathers of the family. The implication is that families who own such spaces are at liberty to lease their land whenever they consider it to be beneficial to them. The land is held in trust by the *Tindana*[9]. A 67-year-old *Tindana* explained:

> My fathers and forefathers have customary freehold rights to many lands in and around the CBD. Traditionally, I own the family lands in trust of my kinsmen. So, all land-related issues are referred to me including leasing, signing of land documents, and settling disputes.

From the foregoing, the functions of the *Tindana* in negotiating access and use of space is critical. The *Tindana's* narrative points to his key role in leasing space for use. Traders who are in need of family owned space to build their container are required to do so with the *Tindana* since he has the authority to grant such request. What this means is that traders who occupied family spaces secured the lease through the *Tindana*. The Tindana further pointed out how negotiations for space has evolved over the years. He explained:

> During the era of my forefathers, they gave spaces out without taking cash. People at the time were required to present some traditional items such as cola and cowries to get access to parcels of land. However, in recent times, there is a significant departure from the olden days' practice. Nowadays,

[9] The Tindana is an individual from the first family settlers on a land. The title is usually ascribed to the oldest male in the family or clan (Aapengnuo, 2013)

> monies are paid before a space is leased. I must indicate that the introduction of cash in the transaction for land has come along with a lot of tension and disputes, he concluded.

Tindana's narrative shows how the process of negotiating for space has evolved over the years to the current state of commodification where cash is paid in the transaction process. Admittedly, this has come along with high demands for space with associated peculiar challenges and tensions which include litigations that usually borders on land ownership and use.

The second are spaces that are privately owned. The implication is that for anybody to have access to the space, that person must necessarily negotiate with the private owner either by themselves or through a third party. The spaces that are usually available for container street traders to use are those that lie adjacent, at the back and frontage of offices, residential buildings, and other landed properties owned by the private owner. Here traders negotiate with these individuals to get access to such spaces in the city to build their container stalls. A private landowner stated, "I offered the frontage of my office to be used for container trading. I allowed it because I wanted to keep the space clean". On the other hand, another private owner explained "I wanted money that is why I gave the space at the back of my house to the trader to build his container and set up his trade". These narratives from the private landowners show that the rationale for offering their spaces is driven by both economic and environmental factors.

The third, statutory wayleaves are spaces reserved by the state for the construction, installation, extension, and maintenance works of public utility, and for the creation of rights of way and any other similar rights in respect of those works and related matters (see Acts 186, 1963). Such spaces are owned and managed by the state through the Municipal Assembly and its departments - Lands Commission (Public and Vested Lands Management Division - PVLMD). Access to this space is processed by the mandated state institution, in this case, PVLMD of the Lands Commission. According to a city official, "negotiating for access to this space requires bureaucratic processes involving different state departments".

My study findings revealed that it is difficult to secure access to trading space to build the container in Wa, particularly in the central business district. This is because there is high demand making it "tightly guarded" (Sowatey, Nyantakyi-Frimpong, Mkandawire, Arku, Hussey & Amasaba, 2018: 331). This made traders largely rely on their personal and associational networks to secure trading spaces as explained earlier. In some instances, traders relied on support from influential political actors. Sharing her experience, *Hajia* – the retiree explained:

> I decided to operate a container stall after retiring from public service because as a widow I couldn't cope with the boredom anymore. I am an indigene so I did everything within my power to get access to private or family-owned space to build my container. But I was not successful. So, I had no option but to resort to the state-owned space – statutory wayleave, which entails cumbersome bureaucratic processes. When the

> process was becoming frustrating I contacted an influential political friend who intervened.

Beyond traders' reliance on their social networks, traders either did the negotiations themselves, hired business agents also referred to as "market brokers" (Sowatey, Nyantakyi-Frimpong, Mkandawire, Arku, Hussey & Amasaba, 2018) to negotiate on their behalf for a fee, or through leaders of their traders' associations. For example, *Kudus*, a 46-year-old container trader who is a member of the motor bicycles and spare parts association indicated that: "as a way of supporting members of the association to set-up our businesses, the executive of the trader association I belong to spearhead the process of securing trading spaces for members who are in good standing, and I happen to be one of such members. They either secure the trading space from families who own lands in suitable locations or from the department that manages state-owned lands (PVLMD)". He further explained that "the space I am occupying was secured by the executive from a family". According to *Kudus*, the traders' association executive initiated the process of securing access to space and became the negotiator on my behalf. In this case, the trader only plays an active role when it is time to make payments to the landowner [either the PVLMD or families] as fees for leasing the space.

Kudus' narrative shows how traders' membership with trader associations is critical because it plays a role in facilitating the trader's access to trading spaces. The leadership of trader associations can negotiate on behalf of their members because they are recognised by city authorities and traditional landowners as key stakeholders in the city's governance. What this means is that, although city authorities are mandated by the existing legal framework to

govern traders' activities at their trading spaces, the lead role played by the trader association executive gives them the responsibility to ensure that their members obey existing regulations in the use of the trading space they have helped them secure. As a result, the responsibility to govern the activities of the trader is fragmented; that is to say, a shift from the state's sole responsibility to include trader associations' executive playing a complementary role to ensure that traders conform to existing practices that govern their existence and operation.

It became evident that the process of getting access to family and privately-owned spaces is facilitated by a locally embedded concept, thus *"Te zaa bongyeni"*[10] to wit, "we are all one". This cultural norm makes it easier for traditional landowners [who are mostly families] to lease their lands to be used as trading spaces without much difficulty. Normally, no official documents are signed. Rather, verbal agreements are made to seal the acquisition process. Negotiating for access by container traders themselves was dominant among traders who were mostly indigenes while leveraging on associational leaders and business agents was most frequently used by non-indigenes and those with weak social networks.

From the narratives of container traders in this study, different factors influenced their decision to negotiate for any of these identified spaces. These factors included availability of the space for use, suitability, and convenience for the growth of the trade as well as affordability on the part of the trader to secure the space. Availability of space emerged as an important factor that container street traders considered when seeking for space to trade.

[10] *Dagaare* version of "we are all one". *Dagaare* is the language spoken by Dagaabas.

This is because, considering the scarce nature of trading spaces particularly in the central business district, finding a space that is available to host the container stall is critical. The suitability and convenience of the space for trade were considered to be critical because location mattered to both the trader and prospective customers. Another aspect of the question of convenience involved the ease on the part of the trader to negotiate and secure the space. The last but not the least factor that container street traders considered in securing a particular space to build the container was the cost associated with securing and occupying the space. In the view of the traders, the process for negotiating access to space can be cumbersome for the state-owned spaces due to the bureaucratic processes, but less stressful when negotiating for family and privately-owned spaces to build the container.

Securing permits to build the container stall

To build the container stall, the trader is required to secure a building permit. The permit application process is determined and stitched together by a legal framework that spells out the supervisory roles of city regulators and what is required from the proponent – in this case, the trader. The application process entails a well-cut out formal process - thus from the traders' purchase and filling of the permit application form, the submission with supplementary documents including the site plan of the container stall and proof of land title, to review by a technical committee before approval is given.

Illustrating this process, a container trader explained "the permit application process is an important hurdle for every trader that wants to build a container to cross" [*Hajia*, 67-year-old retiree and a container stall trader]. *Hajia* draws attention to the importance of the

permit acquisition process. First, the commodification of the process manifests in the form of purchasing the permit application form. The second layer shifts attention to the formalise and administrative procedures which involves the filling of the permit application form and submission with the required supporting documents stated earlier to the Municipal Planner who is the secretary to the Statutory Planning Committee. This part of the process affords the opportunity of the state official to ensure that the proposed usage of the trading space fits into the existing planning scheme. The last layer in the process introduces the role of city authorities in the approval or otherwise of the permit and the subsequent renewal of the permit.

Following the issuance of the proof of land ownership document, the container trader is made to commence the permit application process by purchasing the permit application form (see attached form: Appendix 1) from the Municipal Assembly. After providing all the details on the form, the trader is expected to submit it to the secretary of the Statutory Planning Committee[11] (SPC) of the Municipal Assembly who is the Town and Country Planning officer with the following supporting documents[12]: proof of ownership of the space,

[11] The Statutory Planning Committee comprise the following: Municipal Chief Executive (MCE), Coordinating Council, Town and Country Planning, Municipal Development Planning, Lands Commission, Environmental Protection Agency, Ghana National Fire Service, Urban Roads, Works Engineer, Building Inspectorate, Environmental Health, Feeder Roads, NADMO, Volta River Authority, Ghana Telecom. This committee is chaired by the MCE who is appointed by the President of the Republic of Ghana.

[12] Section 3 of L.I. 1630, 1996: Title to land

Section 5 of L.I. 1630, 1996: site plans, architectural and structural drawings and other requirements

site plan and the design of the proposed structure which she contracted an architect to design. It is the responsibility of the secretary to ensure that applicants submit four (4) copies of the permit applications. After submission, vetting of documents is conducted to ensure that all the required information is provided by applicants and the necessary supporting documents are attached. The documents are submitted to a Technical Sub-Committee[13] who based on their expertise will recommend the approval or rejection of the permit for the SPC to take the final decision. The process as described (see Figure 5.1) has legal backing[14].

[13] The Technical Sub-Committee include officers from departments and agencies: Town and Country Planning, Municipal Development Planning, Lands Commission, Environmental Protection Agency, Ghana National Fire Service, Urban Roads, Works Engineer, Building Inspectorate, Environmental Health, Feeder Roads, NADMO, Volta River Authority, Ghana Telecom. The committee votes for the chairperson for a tenure of one year.

[14] According to Section 10 of Cap 84, (1945) and Section 49 of Act 462, (1993)
(a) No physical development shall be carried out in a district without prior approval in the form of written permit granted by the District Planning Authority.
(b) The procedure and manner for securing a permit under sub-section (1) of this section shall be prescribed by regulations

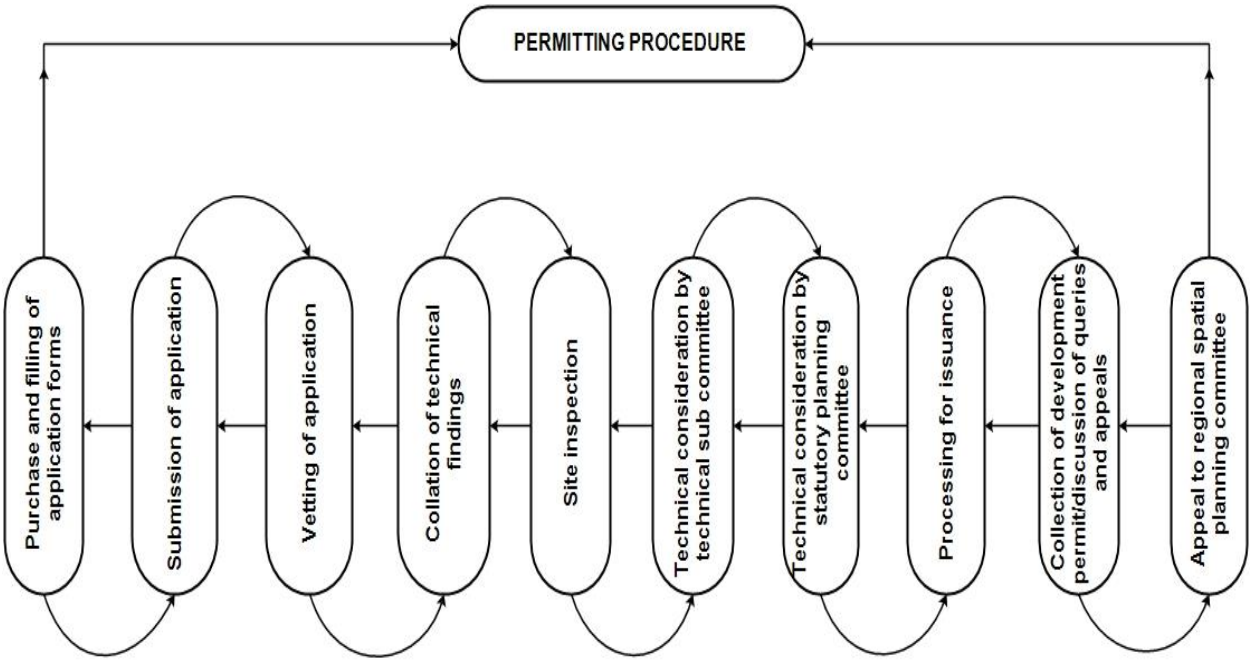

Figure 5.1: Theoretical Permit Application Process

Source: Author

One of the relevant Laws governing permits (see. LI 1630) require applicants to satisfy the District Planning Authority that they have good title to the land on which they intend to develop. The land title shall be under the certificate issued by the Chief Registrar of Land Titles or any other agency so authorised (in this case PVLMD). Per the permit regulation, the container trader is required to renew the permit every six months since the container stall is considered a temporary structure. The temporary status of the container stall implies that the trader will be required to vacate the space anytime the Municipal Assembly needs it for the original purpose of extending roads and/or other social services.

Different actors play diverse roles in the permit acquisition process. These diverse roles of actors offer the particular process of interactions that unravel the power dynamics and productive tensions ostensibly between landowners and city authorities especially in respect of the ownership and use of statutory wayleave. Traders in some cases avoid the process and its associated delays and frustrations by ignoring the permit acquisition. According to a city official, "traders who ignore the permit usually end up building the container stalls at unauthorised spaces. Such constructions normally happen during the night or weekends when city authorities are not working". A staff of the Municipal Assembly explained that people flout the regulations regarding the building of the container because there is a myth that "develop the space first by building the container stall before you apply for a permit"; an act which in the view of traders will coerce city authorities to issue the permit to them much quicker. On the part of city authorities, it is frustrating sometimes when people openly object to their technical recommendations meant to ensure order and compatibility in the use of public spaces, particularly in the central business district.

Following through the layers of applying and securing permits show the multi-layered governance arrangements and the concomitant interplay between the trader and various city actors. Here, city regulators which encompass both state and non-state actors collaborate and are in charge and superintend the entire permit acquisition process. My analysis attempts to shift focus from the dominant notion of state hegemony concerning allocation and use of urban space to a more collaborative interplay between and among various city actors including the trader.

Apart from individual traders following through the process of securing trading spaces, trader associations are important actors in terms of securing spaces and permits for their respective members whenever it becomes necessary as observed in a study of street traders in the streets of Accra (Yankson, 2007). Leaders of such association(s) spearhead the whole process by identifying the space and its rightful owner(s) for negotiation. Thereafter, they follow up with the permit applications. Situations like this mostly emerge when new members join the association and want to set up their businesses but encounter challenges. Working together for the common good of their members, the role that the leaders play is a way of showing their commitment to ensuring the welfare of their members. This discourse plays a critical role in the mobilisation, sustenance, and realisation of the associations' goal(s).

Acquiring materials and building the container stall

Mobilising the needed materials and craftsmen to build the container space is a major factor that influences the interactions that take place between the trader and other actors. How traders acquired the building materials emerged as an interesting but tedious process. The resource acquisition and mobilisation process sometimes require traveling to other cities to buy the needed materials. It emerged during the interviews that traders either acquired the building materials in bulk or tranches depending on their finances.

Hajia and Sam explained how they acquired building materials to build their container stalls. The former shared her experience "After receiving the permit to build my container stall, I bought all the needed building materials including the metal plates, cement, roofing sheets,

nails, paints among others in bulk in Wa because I had enough money from my pension fund. My eldest son who had the technical know-how supervised the resource mobilisation". However, Sam followed a different trajectory. Using his savings, he bought the building materials from outside the city of Wa where he considered the price to be cheaper. The materials were acquired in bits before he even applied for a permit from city authorities. He explained that "I deployed the strategy of buying in bits from a much cheaper source outside Wa because I was not financially stable at the time".

Different traders used various strategies and sources of funds to acquire building materials. Whereas some traders bought the materials with their savings, others used financial support from relatives and friends, borrowed money, or deployed a hire-purchase approach. Illustrative narratives of borrowing and hire-purchase were expressed by *Hardi* and *Issah*, who borrowed money from a microfinance institution and used hire-purchase to acquire the building materials respectively. With the latter scenario, *Issah* stated "When I decided to engage in this business and got convinced that I will need a container stall I started asking about the prices of the materials like the metal plates, plywood for the ceiling among others. I realised that the prices were much cheaper in Kumasi than in Wa. So, I started buying these materials gradually even before I applied for the permit". From the foregoing, it is clear that the strategies traders used to mobilise building materials are diverse and dependent on the traders' financial stance.

Per the existing arrangement, it is the trader that uses their resources to acquire the building materials. Also, it is the trader that hires and pays the craftsmen who build the container

stall. The traders usually considered either their relationship with the craftsmen or recommendations by friends and relatives to hire the services of such people. For instance, Sam told me "The welder I hired to prepare the building estimates and who eventually fabricated the container stall for me was recommended to me by a very good friend of mine". Hiring craftsmen who are personally known to traders, *Hajia* and her son hired people who they have known in one way or the other. In all these, the acquisition and mobilisation of the building materials and the different craftsmen are enabled and dependent on the varied practices deployed by the trader. Closer scrutiny presents the processes of sourcing for building materials and craftsmen as two connected processes.

Following the two connected practices of sourcing building materials and mobilising skilled actors is the practice of building the container stall. This positions the trader to hire, mobilise, coordinate and interact with different craftsmen including masons, carpenters, welders, painters, and electricians as city officials play a supervisory role. By doing so, the trader or their representative as in the case of *Hajia* also interacts with the municipal Engineer during the building process. Describing her experience, *Hajia* explained:

> During the process of building the container which brings together various craftsmen including masons, carpenters, electricians, and painters, the Municipal Engineer occasionally visited the site to supervise the building process to ensure that it meets the approved standards granted in the permit. Relatedly, my son also directly supervised the everyday building process and the various phases to ensure that the structure meets the

> approved standards in the permit. My son coordinated the entire building process for me [*Hajia* – a 67-year-old container trader].

From *Hajia's* account, the trader or his/her representative interact directly with the city official that is mandated to supervise the building process as well as various craftsmen who play complementary roles[15] in the building of the container stall. These interactions between the trader and city officials occur regularly as they perform their supervisory roles. The supervisory role of the city official shows that the building of the container is not hidden from city authorities, it is not done in isolation or a clandestine manner. Rather, it is well regulated by city authorities and forms part of the everyday governance of the city.

The practice of building the trading space – container stall, signals the configurations and enunciations of bodies, (non)material elements, processes, and strategies. It presents the nuances in terms of traders' modes of mobilising materials and managing/supervising the building of the trading spaces in the city. This shows traders' ability to organise themselves and the needed materials for the building of their trading space. In all these, traders use their financial resources. Building the trading space is born out of some 'organising logic' (Roy, & AlSayyad, 2004: 5). The interactions between traders or their representatives on the one hand and city officials as well as professionals or craftsmen, on the other hand, present a complex mix of collaborations towards the building of the trading space in the city.

[15] The roles include carpenters who do the wood works like roofing and shelves; masons who construct the concrete foundation of the container stall; welders who piece together metal sheets to construct the metal container; the electrician and painter who do the electrical wiring and painting of the stall respectively]

Conclusion

To understand the ways through which traders get access to the container, the chapter documents the multiple trajectories traders secure access to space to trade. Traders' quests to get access to space to set up their trade in the container are demonstrated either by perching – a practice where traders share the space in the same container or build their container at the frontage or the side, renting, buying, or building the container in the city. This chapter also demonstrates not just what these trajectories are, but how traders negotiate access to set up trade in the container which is infused with context-specific scenarios, and shaped by multiple factors that change over time.

The following chapter explores the ways people access containers shape the nature and degree of their regulation as traders. I examine the detailed and diverse regulatory practices used by different city actors to govern container traders and the varied ways traders rely on varied relationships to navigate these regulations. In doing so, the chapter shows that regulation does not only happen at the moment of negotiating access and setting up a trade in the container; it is a regular reality of day-to-day trading in the city.

Chapter 6: The Rhythms of Regulation: Maintaining a right to trade

Introduction

Diverse regulatory practices govern the everyday work of trading in containers. The regulatory practices bring into view the different engagements between the trader and various state and non-state actors that happen on a day-to-day basis. My analysis shows that maintaining the rights to trade is enmeshed in dynamic and locally embedded networks hinged on formal procedures and informal practices which I call 'local arrangements'[16]. These arrangements are built around traders' social networks and relationships, as well as a formalised process between traders and various city authorities and their representatives. Local arrangements are built-in varied forms of collaboration by traders to maintain the use of the city's spaces for container trading. These practices are instituted because, like Schindler's finding in the streets of Delhi in India, container street traders are recognised as legitimate users of the city's public spaces (Schindler, 2014). In this chapter, I explore the rhythms of regulation that shape container street traders' work, the official and unofficial relationships, and practices that visibly sustain informal trading, which in Wa are far from hidden (Whitson, 2007).

The chapter starts by discussing the various forms of regulations that traders are required to obey to maintain their rights to trade in the container in the city. I show that maintaining

[16] Local arrangement refers to the informal relationships and ties container street traders establish, maintain and deploy in negotiating their everyday trading practices and logics. It include traders association with political parties, traders' associations and the use of a culturally accepted norm termed "*Te zaa bunyine*" to wit, "we are all one"

the right to trade in the container requires some compliance with a range of regulations and obligations that have to be performed by the trader. The chapter explores these regulatory forms, tracking the ways landowners, city officials, and their representatives as well as traders themselves conduct routine checks on traders and their trading practices to maintain standards in the context of trading in the container. Evident in these routine checks are the different actors involved and the various forms of regulatory practices instituted to ensure that standards are maintained. The regulations are frequent and sometimes difficult for traders. The chapter concludes by showing how traders creatively navigate the different regulatory practices to maintain, nonetheless, the rights to trade in the container.

From tolls to fees, rents, and levies

Traders are regulated on a daily, weekly, monthly, and annual basis as observed in the study of street traders in Accra (Anyidoho, 2013). They are required to pay fees, tolls, and levies to city authorities through toll collectors. The fees and tolls form part of the business operating permits requirements issued to traders. To maintain the rights to trade in the container, traders interact with toll collectors, landowners, officials from different state agencies including the Food and Drugs Authority. They are checked to ensure they are selling legal and wholesome goods. While it is challenging to meet all the requirements, engaging in regulations is a means to secure their legitimacy. Traders, therefore, make conscious efforts to develop relationships and build conversations with toll collectors and other city officials. They also cultivate relationships with the landowner and private business owners who lease spaces to traders to build their containers and set up their trade in the vicinity of where they trade. The paying of tolls resonates with studies in other Ghanaian cities where street traders

pay tolls to the local government authorities (Adamtey, 2014; Owusu-Sekyere et al., 2016). Traders commit to these practices to legitimise and sustain their trade and their trading spaces. The payment of tolls, fees, and rents at different times reflect the different approaches to regulation of street traders in the streets of the city (Anyidoho, 2013; Budlender, 2011).

Traders strive to legitimise and maintain their trade and trading spaces for various reasons using different strategies such as establishing relationships with the key actors to create the platform for negotiations whenever it became necessary. The occasional interaction between the container stall owner and the trader comes to play in cases where the trader is renting the container. Recounting his experience in maintaining the right to trade, *Fawzy,* a 37-year-old container trader shared his experience:

> Because I did not have enough money to secure a trading space, acquire a permit as well as build a container stall, I decided to rent in the meantime. This meant that I was ready to pay monthly rents to the owner in addition to the fees and tolls I will pay to city authorities. Apart from that, I also paid the business agent who introduced me to the owner and negotiated for the stall on my behalf.

Here, the right to maintain the space in the container occurs between the trader on one hand and the container owner as well as city officials on the other hand. Relatedly, *Abu*, a 43-year-old container trader who sells motor bicycles and spare parts noted:

> I was advised by friends who were already operating similar trade that becoming a container trader requires paying some fees and tolls as well as establishing relationships and networks, particularly with toll collectors. Based on the advice, I was ready to engage with the key actors and follow the laid down procedures that can help me maintain the right to trade in the city. Because this container belongs to me, per the permit requirements, I am also required to renew my business operating permit every six months and pay the tolls and fees to the Municipality.

In the case of *Abu,* maintaining the right to space to trade occurs mainly between the trader and city officials and their representative because he owns the container. The accounts of *Abu* and *Fawzy* reveal the various ways by which container traders attain and reinforce legitimacy by committing to pay required fees, tolls and rents. While recognising the relevance of these practices in maintaining their rights to trade, the payments made to secure permits as well as the tolls are backed by legal frameworks [For example LI 1630; Section 10 of Cap 84, (1945) and Section 49 of Act 462, (1993)]. The necessity to sustain one's trade and maintain the trading space is key in traders' decision to pay required fees, sell legal and wholesome goods, and establish strategic relationships with actors who matter in this regard like the toll collector and landowners.

At the point of occupancy and daily trading activities, traders interact particularly with toll collectors who are representatives of the Municipal Assembly. Toll collectors are recruited

and assigned by the Municipal Assembly to collect daily, weekly and annual tolls from traders and in doing so they send daily reports to the Assembly. The toll collector plays a critical role in ensuring that tolls are collected because it is an important revenue generation avenue for the Municipality (Okoye, 2020; Owusu-Sekyere, Amoah, & Teng-Zeng, 2016). Additionally, the toll collector acts as a liaison officer between traders and the municipality, hence facilitating information flow between these parties. According to a city official, reports received from the toll collectors provide relevant information for city authorities at the Municipality to know the day-to-day happenings in the CBD which usually inform the design, adoption, and implementation of appropriate strategies to regulate traders' activities. Their activity is commission-based. This means that they are paid based on how much tolls they can collect. As a result, they go all out to collect the toll since there is a direct relationship between their sales and what is paid to them as their wages.

Traders interact most regularly with the toll collector. It became evident during the interviews with toll collectors and traders that while some traders are troublesome towards toll collectors by refusing to pay tolls sometimes, others established cordial relationships with them as a way to sustain their trade. Sharing his experience with *Alhassan* - a toll collector, *Fawzy* noted: "Most traders are of the view that Alhassan is a very difficult person when he comes to collect the toll. But I do not see him that way. This is because I have established a very good relationship with him such that because he normally comes to collect the toll during lunchtime, I sometimes reserve food for him which he appreciates so much. We sometimes have very personal conversations. As a result, it is not difficult for me to negotiate to pay at a later date when I do not readily have the money" he concluded.

Establishing a cordial relationship with the toll collector is a strategy that enables the trader to re-negotiate the payment of the toll with the collector without much difficulty. Allowing container traders in the city through permits issued by municipal authorities and payment of tolls are common official strategies that city officials deploy to regulate informal trade (Moatasim, 2019).

The role of the toll collector usually triggers a conflict between traders who decide to defy the order of paying the toll and the toll collectors. In parallel, three manners of traders are discernible: traders who comply and pay; traders who engage and comply, and traders who dodge and operate. In the second scenario where the trader is unwilling to pay the toll, the toll collector collaborates with the trader association leaders who impress upon their members to comply. This collaboration normally works well. *Alhassan*, a toll collector explained: "There are traders who are very stubborn when it comes to paying tolls. While some run away with my toll tickets, others will intentionally pick quarrels with me as a way to keep me away from collecting the money. But because my wage is determined by my daily sales I ensure that I go all out to get the money because my sustenance is at stake. This is what usually generates the tension, arguments, and misunderstandings", he ends his explanations. What *Alhassan's* explanation suggests is that beyond collecting the money for the municipality to develop the city, *Alhassan's* interest plays out as a key motivation for exercising his authority as an employee of the Municipal Assembly.

In this case, the interest of the municipality plus his interest collides with that of the traders. It is in situations like this that toll collectors collaborate with leaders of trader associations

to impress upon their members to comply which usually works well. In the scenario where traders dodge and operate, it was revealed during interviews with city officials and traders that a task force is usually used to ensure compliance either by stopping the trader from operating or making sure that the trader pays the toll. The former results in locking up the container stall to impress upon the trader to pay the toll. Traders who have the support of influential people, negotiate on their behalf for the opening of their container stalls without any serious sanctions although the trader will be made to pay the toll.

These processes in tandem demonstrate ways in which container street traders are entangled in relationships with a range of regulatory actors. Sustained in an ensemble of relationships, these practices show the ways in which traders build collaborations. Some of these relationships are drawn on regularly, others are only occasionally invoked. Some operate on the basis of individual relationships. Others are built collectively. All shape the work of trading and its collaborative encounters and practices. Analytically, this draws attention to the everyday social interactions that situate the regulation of trading and its governance. This perspective disrupts a dialectic view of state-trader power relations. As container traders stitch relationships and networks together, they interact with different state and non-state actors and practices that enable them to creatively maintain their trade and trading spaces to yield outcomes that facilitate their everyday trading activities in the city.

Routine checks to ensure standards

The first regulatory practice that emerged from the empirical data is the formalised practice where different actors play diverse technical and supervisory roles to ensure standards in the operations of traders in the city. The supervisory roles of state actors are to maintain order and protect public safety. According to an official, "generally, we conduct routine checks to ensure that traders conform and comply with regulations governing their trading practices".

There is a layer of regulating container traders that is led by the Food and Drugs Authority, a state agency whose core mandate is to ensure public safety in terms of monitoring and regulating the quality of goods in the market. One of its key mandates is to ensure that products that are sold in the markets including goods sold in container stalls are wholesome. This state agency executes its mandate in collaboration with other state agencies like the Police, Military, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as well as the Customs Excise and Preventive Service (CEPS). The regulatory exercise entails ad hoc and unannounced visits to stalls and the markets as argued elsewhere in the literature (Bénit-Gbaffou, 2018) particularly before, during, and after major religious festive seasons such as Christmas, Easter, Eid Fitr, and Eid Al-Adha where people do a lot of shopping and miscreants take advantage to sell smuggled and expired goods. They check the quality of goods by ensuring that they have not expired, or packaging is well done. The police and military are involved to maintain law and order during the exercise.

Goods found to be unwholesome are seized and taken off the shelves of stalls and destroyed to prevent anyone from consuming them. The Customs Excise and Preventive Service also look out for smuggled goods that have not gone through the ports and borders of the country and have evaded payment of required duties and taxes. Smuggled goods identified during the exercise are also seized from traders. *Yusif*, one of the container traders narrated his experience;

> Two years ago, during the week preceding the Christmas festivities, around mid-day, I was serving a customer when state officials from the Food and Drugs Authority, EPA, CEPS, and a police officer entered my stall. After introducing themselves to me, they indicated that they are on a usual monitoring exercise checking the quality of goods being sold in the stalls. They started inspecting the products in my stall to check the expiry dates as well as the quality of the packaging. None of my goods were seized because they found no issues with them. They thanked me after the inspection and left to other stalls across the street.

Yusif's experience with the regulatory team composed of various state officials depicts the impromptu nature of the visit by state officials to check the activities of traders and the quality of goods they sell. The purpose of conducting this exercise as explained above is to promote public health and safety as well as ensure order in the everyday operation of container street traders in the city. According to a state official, during the exercise "goods that are found unwholesome are seized and destroyed".

Another way of regulating traders entailed a scenario where container traders occupying either family or privately owned lands occasionally witness the land owners' visits to the site. Fawzy, a container trader shared his experience "the owner of the container occasionally comes around particularly towards the end of the month. This is because it is the period that I am required to pay the rent". These visits are also meant to ensure that the space is used for the purpose for which it was leased to the traders. Another motive for the visit is also an indirect but overt way of sending a message across to the trader that he remains the landowner, therefore the trader is just using the space temporarily and thereafter giving it back to the landowners. A similar scenario applies to traders who rent container stalls like *Fawzy*. Traders expressed how uncomfortable they feel during such visits.

Thinking about regulation in the context of container street trading in Wa's central business district shows the power dynamics and leads one to see how in one way or the other it affects the trader, the trading space, and practices that come together to create varied consequential outcomes. Following such consequential outcomes, city authorities' role in maintaining order in the city usually results in prohibiting non-conformist traders from operating, locking up stalls, confiscating goods, relocating, and/or demolishing trading spaces of traders who defy existing regulations (Kamete, 2013; Roever, 2016). In most cases, traders who want favours in the spirit of "*Te jaa bongyeni*"[17] to wit 'we are all one', rely on people who have influence. Normally, traders use these influential individuals who they know can

[17] Wale version of "we are all one". Wale is the language spoken by Wala or Waala people in Upper West Region of Ghana.

influence city officials. The ordinary trader who knows no influential persons bears the brunt of facing sanctions.

Deploying a particular regulatory practice, the power to act is determined by the actor that takes the lead role in such endeavor. For instance, in securing government-owned spaces, although the process involves different state departments it is the Public and Vested Lands Management Division of the Lands Commission that plays a lead role to issue the right of ownership document. However, it is the Town and Country Planning Department (now Land Use and Spatial Planning Department according to the Land Use and Spatial Planning Act, 925 [2016]) that plays a lead role during the permit-issuing process although the ultimate decision is taken by a legally mandated statutory committee of the Municipal Assembly. Additionally, the Food and Drugs Authority also plays a lead role and collaborates with other state institutions including state security services in ensuring quality and safety in terms of checking that goods that are sold by traders are wholesome. From the foregoing discussions, the changing and diverse roles of these state and non-state actors deviate from the binary notion of state-trader relations and highlight the multi-layered relations in regulating street traders in the city (Tafti, 2019a).

Taken together, the building and usage of the trading space – container stall, encompass the collective contributions of different actors including traders themselves, and practices as espoused in the analysis which either collaborate, collide, or conflict. All these practices are aimed at creating trading spaces for container traders to conduct their everyday trading activities in a space that enables the smooth functioning of the city's economy. The

illustrative examples in the above discussions demonstrate the building and usage of the trading space as a patchwork of different actors and associated power relations, interactions, and segregated practices driven by different interests; on one hand, the day-to-day politics of survival and meeting of other needs by traders, on the other hand, aimed to regulate the use of trading spaces in the city.

To ensure that traders adhere to the above regulatory practices, four strategies became evident in this study. City authorities used regularisation, relocation, overt tolerance, and demolishing in the regulation of container street trading in Wa. Informing the logic and adoption of a particular strategy is considered on a case-by-case basis. According to city officials, regularisation strategy is adopted in situations where the trader does not have a space acquisition permit but the location of the container stall and the conduct of trade does not pose any serious challenge to other residents in and around the location. In cases like these, the location of the container stall and activities of the trader fit well in the existing planning scheme for the area. In situations like that, the traders or owners of the container stalls are invited and allowed to apply for a permit to legitimise and regularise their operations. Second, the relocation strategy is applied when the existence of the traders, their container stalls, and conduct of trade pose some form of threat to other users of the space. Usually, city authorities allocate suitable spaces to aid the relocation process and accommodate such traders, although it is not always the case. Third, the overt tolerance strategy is adopted to accommodate traders whose activities do not distract the existing planning scheme. A city planning official noted, " my officers adopt these strategies mainly to ensure that traders operate within the regulations governing their trading practices in the city".

From the point of view of the city planner, the existing planning system accommodates container stalls because they are considered an important economic avenue to create employment for the residents at the same time aid local revenue generation for the Municipal Assembly. In effect, the aforementioned strategies are adopted to regulate trading practices that are deemed temporarily and tolerable because they do not pose threat to other existing urban users. Demolishing strategy on the other hand is employed to deal with trading practices that are considered to pose danger and threat to the urban order. In this instance, container stalls that are sited in locations considered to pose danger are removed or demolished following prior notice of about three months from city authorities. City officials usually use red paint to write "remove: order by municipal assembly" after the removal notice has been served to the affected trader(s), although some traders debunked the assertion about their engagement with city authorities before the notice is inscribed on their structures. A designated task force is usually put in place by the Municipal Assembly to remove traders and ensure they do not return to that space.

According to city officials, all the strategies discussed above are supposed to be collaborative and inclusive in their approach. Traders who are found culpable are engaged in discussions regarding the decision of city authorities before it is implemented. Traders who adhere to the orders of city authorities and collaborate with the designated state departments result in a fairly smooth exercise without any difficulties. However, traders who refuse to observe and cooperate with the orders are forcefully removed which usually results in confrontations. Such forceful demolishing and removals are conducted in the presence of

security officials such as the police and the military to protect lives and properties as well as maintain law and order. Oftentimes, the nature of the process of engagement and its results is determined by the response from the parties involved, in this case, traders and the regulators.

Located at the interface between the aspirations and practices of the trader on one hand and both state and non-state actors including city officials, landowners, and toll collectors, on the other hand, regulating the trading practices of container traders shows relational and dynamic power relationships among these actors. Regulation in this context involves the trader and various actors playing different roles at different times and with varied mandates, motivations, and objectives. The involvements of the trader and various regulators in regulations resonate with Schindler's (2014) study findings in the streets of Delhi in India where there are engagements between the trader on one hand and various state and non-state actors on the order hand in regulating street traders in the city. The relationships and interactions entail mutually constitutive collaborations between these actors in the bid to regulate trading spaces through the use of various regulatory practices to ultimately achieve varied objectives including maintaining order, generating revenue, securing trading space ownership as well promoting public safety in the use of spaces for trade. Both traders' and city authorities' deployed varied ways of engagement to negotiate their interests. My analysis reveals that regulation involves a range of actors and power is dispersed across a host of different state and non-state actors including city officials, landowners, and toll collectors (Schindler, 2014).

Leveraging association links and personal networks

Managing layers of regulation are not easy or free of friction. Some traders leverage their membership in traders' associations to navigate the demands and requirements of officials. They draw on the influence of their leaders. Other traders rely on the networks they establish and maintain to navigate these regulations governing their trading lives in the city. In the diversity of encounters that shape regulations, I show that there is space for negotiation between container traders and regulators in the city, (Asiedu & Agyei-Mensah, 2008; Jimu, 2005).

The container is highly regulated by both state and non-state actors, and this shows the extent to which power is dispersed across different actors where traders are ostensibly represented by the leaders of traders' associations. The empirical data revealed that as key stakeholders in the city's governance, these leaders of trader associations participate in the fixing of tolls, fees, and levies to champion their interests and that of their members. As stakeholders in the regulation of street traders in the city (Schindler, 2014), they ensure that amounts that are agreed upon, taking into account the interest of their members will facilitate their trade rather than retrogress their efforts. A leader of a trader association explained, "Whenever we meet with authorities to fix the various fees, toll, and levies, we the leaders know that we are there because we represent our members. With this in mind, we try to be fair but firm during the decision–making process to satisfy our constituents".

Apart from the role of leaders of traders' associations in the decision-making process at the municipality level, traders also rely on these leaders when there is the need to negotiate with city officials at their levels. For instance, Karim, a container trader shared his experience, "I fell sick for some time and so I was not operating my container stall. Because of this, I was also owing some months of tolls and fees. This resulted in the locking up of my container by city authorities. I had to call upon the trader association leaders to intervene. They helped out of this problem", he concluded. This is a classic case where the trader shows the important role that these leaders play in helping traders to navigate regulations governing their trading lives in the city. On the part of *Abu* - the returnee, he recounted how he wanted to re-negotiate with city authorities so that he pays his tolls, fees, and levies quarterly instead of monthly. According to him "I didn't know any city official who could help me to do this renegotiation. So, I called one of our leaders who willingly led me to the authorities to have such discussions. It was really helpful". Such interventions by the leaders of traders go a long way to help traders to maintain the rights to trade and operate in the city.

There are also instances where traders showed how influential political actors help them to navigate regulations governing their trading practices. For instance, as stated earlier, when *Hajia* applied for a permit to build her container and realised that it was delayed, she narrated how a political actor helped to facilitate the process to secure the permit. According to her "the process was getting frustrating and so I needed someone to facilitate the process. Luckily, a politically influential friend stepped in to help me". This illustrative case of *Hajia* represents the narrative of various traders who leveraged their direct or indirect relationships with influential actors who ordinarily are not part of the governance structure,

yet they have some influence in the city to help them navigate regulations regarding their trade in the city.

The container stall owner occasionally visited *Fawzy* at his stall to collect his rent and monitor his trading activities. He had this to say: "My stall owner comes to the stall to collect his rent at the end of the month. He uses this visit to monitor my activities to ensure that I use his stall for only legitimate business. Interestingly, it is also an indirect way of communicating to me that he still owns the stall".

Relatedly, some container traders establish strategic social networks with actors that matter in the city. This is very important because the trader usually needs someone who can assist him/her when they need to engage and negotiate with regulators in the city. To this end, some traders become politically aligned by associating themselves with national political parties so that they can leverage their membership in these political parties to their advantage (Bob-Millar & Obeng-Odoom, 2011). This study's findings reveal that the influence of such political persons is more pronounced when that political party is in government. The ruling class is chosen from members of that political party and therefore their interests matter as far as decisions concerning the city are concerned. Traders, therefore, take advantage of their alliances with such persons and leverage that to navigate the different regulations governing their trading lives in the city. The desire of container traders to maintain the right to trade is key in traders' decision to deploy various strategies to navigate the different regulations governing their trade and trading spaces in the city. Traders are granted legitimacy through different regulations (Roever, 2020) that shape their

daily trading. The multiplicity of the governance practices regulates and legitimise traders' activities in the city.

An equally important regulatory practice is the paying of daily, weekly, monthly and annual tolls, levies, and fees by container traders as observed in the streets of Accra (Anyidoho, 2013). These regulatory practices govern access to space, the building of the container, setting up the trade, and maintaining the rights to trade in the city. Here, regulations are "dispersed across a range of sites and rest with several state and non-state actors" (Schindler, 2014: 2596). The multiple sites, in this case, are the different layers and forms of regulations that bring together various actors such as state officials, land/container owners, and toll collectors playing diverse at the same time unequal roles in its enactments. These show instances where traders engage directly with state officials and in other ways engage with representatives of city authorities such as toll collectors.

Although regulations governing the use of space and the conduct of trade in the city of Wa are instituted by city authorities, in some cases like the fixing of fees, tolls, and levies, authorities involve key stakeholders such as leaders of traders associations. According to a city official, "it is important for us to involve the traders and their representatives in the decision-making progress regarding the fixing of fees, tolls, and levies. This is to commit traders to comply because they are part of the decision-making process". On the part of the trader, a 47-year-old man who is a member of a trader association stated that "we make sure to represent our members during meetings where we discuss and agree on the amounts to pay as fees, tolls, and levies. We bargain where necessary and object to amounts that will

impact negatively the incomes of our members. That is why we step in to impress upon our members who fail to comply with these payments" he concluded. From the empirical data from this research, it emerged that the container trading space in Wa is a regulated space but not "a hidden space from control" of city authorities (Whitson, 2007: 2917).

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that container street traders are regulated by both landowners and city officials. Traders deploy different strategies to navigate the various regulations governing their trading practices in Wa, including using personal networks and associational influence. Through the various forms of regulations – from routine checks on the trader by various governance actors to paying of different monetary commitments by the trader; I have revealed how traders creatively navigated these different regulations as actors in the city's governance. The trader is seen as an important and active actor in the city's governance, interacting with the city and its different regulators in ways to maintain their rights to trade in the container.

The process of enforcing the different regulatory practices opens up the diversity, and complexity of regulations governing container street traders in Wa; bringing together various actors playing different roles and, in some instances, complementing each other to ensure that traders maintain standards in their everyday trading practices in the city. This shows pragmatic and important ways traders maintain the right to trade in the container by engaging different state and non-state actors in the city.

This chapter has also shown that maintaining the rights to trade is enmeshed in dynamic and locally embedded networks that are hinged on both formal and informal procedures, 'local arrangements' built on social networks, and formalised processes between traders and authorities. Whereas the formalised processes are strict and guided by legislation, local arrangements entail unofficial networks traders leverage to maintain the rights to trade. These practical realities shape the power dynamics between officials, land and business owners, and container traders. They shape the negotiated logics that are central to the active place of container traders in the governance of street trading in Wa, the focus of the following final chapter. In this final chapter, I deploy traders' negotiated logics as the framing device to substantiate how traders' roles in governance shape the different regulations governing container trading in the city.

Chapter 7: Negotiated logics: Traders shaping street governance

Introduction

Container street traders are active participants in the governance of trading in Wa. In negotiating access to space and permits, building the container to set up the trade, and paying tolls, fees, and levies, traders are shaped by and shape city regulations. Traders have varied capacities to engage in regulation, which shapes their ethos of compliance. While traders rarely actively contest their regulation or publicly mobilise to change the regulations governing their trade, they are not passive. Some can comply. Others renegotiate to delay obligations. Some traders strategically dodge regulations. In these practices, traders shape the application of regulation governing their trade. Just as container traders in Wa do not encroach, or build covertly, the building of container stalls and the work of trading is regulated by city officials. Rather than informality, trading is part of the everyday governance of the city of Wa.

In this chapter, I explore the varied negotiated logics that shape trading. Some traders work to make-do. Some traders are entrepreneurs, trading to move-up. And others find container trading a refuge, a way to be in the city. These logics of trade are negotiated. They encompass traders' motivations and aspirations. They are a product of the micro-practices that shape trade. They are situated in traders' engagements and negotiations with regulations and regulators in the city. They are the basis on which container traders build agency, are present and active in the city, key players who shape the city's materiality, its flow of goods, and the everyday use of street spaces.

In this chapter, I first draw together the diverse regulatory regimes that impact container trading. Second, I argue that traders' strategies for navigating regulations range from compliance, to delay, to dodging. And, lastly, I draw on this work to build an argument that conceptualises the negotiated logics that shape trading. These logics are varied, ranging from trading to make-do and survive, to trading to move-up and be an entrepreneur, to trading as a refuge, a way to be in the city. Container traders' negotiated logics shape their roles in governance. These negotiated logics are key to conceptualising container traders as actors in Wa's governance and its streetscapes.

The regulatory terrain: From diverse practices to dynamic spaces

In Wa, the regulatory terrain shows varied, dynamic, and regular forms of regulatory practices such as the permit issuance to build the container to set up the trade. The trader who builds his/her container is required to secure a permit before building the container stall. Apart from the building permit, traders are also required to acquire a business operating permit and renew it every six months. Sometimes leaders of trader associations visit and assess containers and traders' work. There are also occasional visits by owners of the containers, landowners, and other businesspeople. All work in different ways to assess that traders are conducting their trade within the existing regulations and standards.

For city authorities, regulations are a way of maintaining order, and to the trader complying is a way of maintaining the rights to set up and maintain their trade in the container. Shaped by and built around various engagements and relationships, the regulatory terrain offers the

trader and various city regulators a practical way to interact in the use of space for trade. Traders sometimes navigate these regulations differently through established and built relationships with city regulators as indicated in the case of *Amidu*, the 39-year-old container trader. This presents the dynamic aspect of the regulatory terrain, thus presenting the container space as a 'space of power' (Whitson, 2007), negotiated not just between the users (Hackenbroch, 2011), but also between the trader and various actors including the regulators in maintaining order in the use of space for trade in the city.

By substantiating the diverse and complex nature of the regulatory terrain in this Wa research, I make visible the street traders' role in shaping the formulation and application of regulations governing trade and their trading spaces in the city. By this, I also reposition the trader as an actor in city governance. This positioning of the trader in governance shifts the narrative and highlights the traders' role in city governance, a view that is usually not visible in street trading governance debates. The repositioning of the trader in this diverse regulatory terrain demands paying attention to the strategies that traders deploy to navigate through these regulations.

Dodging by being strategically absent from the container

It is no secret that some container traders in Wa operate without the required permits and continuously dodge regulations echoing the study in the streets of Mumbai, India where street traders operate in the city without the required license (Anjaria, 2011). But such traders are not willing to disclose their status. According to a city official, "these traders ignore due process and build the container stall, occupy and persistently conduct their trade

without regard to existing regulations". It emerged that city authorities are able to identify these traders through random checks.

The traders I interviewed in this Wa research were container traders who have permits but also dodge the payments of tolls, fees, and levies. One of such traders I encountered and interviewed was *Hudi,* a 46-year-old man who sells groceries in his container. Although he had the required permits, he occasionally dodged paying tolls, fees, and levies. *Hudi* had this to say "Paying the tolls, fees, and levies on a regular basis really impact negatively on my business capital. This explains why sometimes I intentionally either open my shop late to avoid the toll collectors or give some excuses when the toll collectors meet me in the stall. I must state that I know I cannot escape the payments forever. But I do so to allow me a bit of time to pay when I think I have money" he concluded. It is important to state that these traders deliberately dodge to avoid regulations. This shows that even traders with permits at a point in time may be breaching the regulations governing their trade and space.

I also encountered a limited degree of instances where toll collectors indicated how perchers dodged the paying of tolls by using the original container trader as a cover-up, by presenting their business and that of the original trader as the same business. However, this strategy only works up to a point. The role of the original container trader puts the percher in check to prevent drawing any unwarranted attention from city authorities. A container trader sums this up "the lady I have allowed to perch knows what to do to continue her trade here with me because I have told her". It is important to state that, this form of arrangement

works when there is some form of direct or indirect established relationships between the traders in question.

Additionally, I encountered to a limited degree traders who said they dodge their obligations by being strategically absent; in most instances, it is not meant to be forever but mostly for some time to allow them some financial space before they comply. Others also dodge with the intention not to pay at all. These traders' narratives and experiences show how diverse the regulatory terrain is. This is because although regulations are enforced by city authorities and their representatives, traders' experiences and responses to regulations and regulators vary. While some traders duly comply with regulations due to some personal reasons, some are able to renegotiate to postpone their obligations and others also strategically dodge their obligations by being absent. This difference makes visible the trader engaging with different actors, the complex power relations at play, which shape regulations governing their space to trade in the city.

I also interviewed some traders who even though they are in the trade to survive, such traders were not keen to comply with paying tolls and fees because to them, their income is inadequate to be paying tolls all the time. For example, Lambert, a 26-year-old airtime trader explained "the money I get from this trade is not enough to meet my basic needs. That is why I sometimes find ways to evade the payment of the toll either by dodging when I see the toll collector coming to my container or giving some excuses that will allow me to pay later". Traders operating with this logic largely see their trade as the lifeline to their survival in the city.

In such instances, a task force is usually used to conduct random checks to either stop the trader from operating or ensure adherence. In cases where the trader refuses to pay, the city authorities' deploy what Roever (2016: 27) refers to as "local government practices" such as harassment and confiscation of goods to ensure compliance. Traders who are connected to people in authority or have well-established networks and relationships with the regulators are able to get their locked containers opened; thus influencing the application of existing regulations in their favour. One container trader who sells airtime disclosed "A task force once came to my container and requested to see my toll receipts. I didn't have it because I had not paid for that period. They wanted to stop me from trading but the intervention of a political figure [an Assembly member of that area] saved me. I am into this trade just to make some money to meet my basic needs so paying tolls is really not helping me at all he concluded". So, traders can influence regulations through other actors in some instances.

Sharing his experience, *Hudi* explained "on this fateful day, I opened my container as I always do to start the day's business. After a few hours, a toll collector I had not met before walked in and demanded that I pay my toll for the month which I had dodged for time. I didn't have money, so I told him to come later. But he was so aggressive and that made me angry. So, I told him I won't pay. After a few exchanges of words, the toll collector called someone on his phone and before I knew it, the task force came around and locked up my container. I was eventually accompanied to the Municipal office by the leaders of my traders' association to pay before my container was opened for me". The role of leaders of traders associations in negotiating on behalf of their members is vital as observed by Salès (2018) in the streets of

Mumbai. *Hudi's* account shows that although traders dodge some regulations, they last for some period. In other words, traders do not dodge regulations forever.

City authorities in managing traders who dodge regulations adopt different regulatory strategies including regularisation, relocation, coercion, and demolishing. Informing the logic and adoption of a particular strategy is considered on a case-by-case basis. According to the city Planner, first, a regularisation strategy is adopted in situations where the trader does not have a space acquisition permit, but the location of the container stall and the conduct of trade does not pose any serious challenge to other residents in and around the location. In situations like that, the trader or owner of the container stalls is usually invited and allowed to apply for a permit to regularise their operations. Second, a relocation strategy is applied when the location of the traders, their container stalls, and conduct of trade pose some form of threat to other users of the space. Usually, city authorities allocate suitable spaces to aid the relocation process and accommodate such traders, although it is not always the case. The third is the coercion strategy where the trader is put under pressure to obey the regulations governing their trade and space as demonstrated in the account of *Hudi*. The last is the demolishing strategy. It is employed to deal with traders who do not have permits and the location of the container poses danger and threat to urban residents. In such cases, the container stalls are removed or demolished. One City official explained, "Prior notice of about three months is sent to the trader before the demolishing or removal occur". To do so, city officials usually use red paint to write "remove: order by Wa municipal assembly" after the removal notice has been served to the affected trader(s).

Taken together, city authorities' responses to traders who dodge are varied and they adopt these different strategies to enforce their interests and mandate. Most often, the strategy that is employed by city authorities is based on a case-by-case basis. All these strategies reflect the different ways city authorities engage traders. On the flip side, traders dodge, by being strategically absent; either giving excuses, opening the container late to avoid regulators, or using their connections with influential actors in the city to navigate regulations in their favour.

Re-negotiating to postpone and delay obligations

To navigate through regulations in the city, container traders like *Fati* and *Fawzy* in Wa engage with regulators intending to renegotiate to postpone and delay the time to comply. My emphasis on the practice of renegotiating regulations governing street trading shows the possibilities of negotiation space that emerged from the accounts and lived experiences of container traders. For instance, *Fati* – a 45-year-old container trader explained "I know the time that *Saaed* and *Alhassan*, the toll collectors come to take the tolls. But there are times that I will not have money. Whenever that happens, I have a frank discussion with them to give me a few days to reorganise myself before I pay. I must admit that it was difficult to get them to understand during our initial encounters because their work is commission-based. But as our relationships developed over time it is no more a challenge for them to understand". *Fawzy* on the other hand said "I pay rent because I do not own this container. So, there are times that when sales are low, I discuss with the container owner to pay later. I must add that, if I have money, I sometimes pay my rent in advance (sometimes, three months advance payment)". The experiences of *Fati* and *Fawzy* reveal the series of possible

arrangements between the traders and regulators (Kidambi, 2007) that play out in the process of (re)negotiations.

From *Fati* and *Fawzy's* accounts, (re)negotiations kick in whenever traders are unable to comply with regulations due to some individual circumstances. Traders resort to (re)negotiations with regulators either by themselves or through some influential actors. *Abu*, the returnee who owns a container stall explained "the chairman of our trader's association was my 'saviour' when my stall was almost locked up by authorities because I had defaulted payment of my business operating fees for some time. I quickly called him to plead on my behalf and because he is influential, the officials agreed and gave me another chance to pay".

Although the stakes are sometimes high it is usually resolved through continuous (re)negotiations. So, it is a normal occurrence for traders to renegotiate with authorities, particularly traders who have established cordial relationships with these regulators. This sometimes involves soliciting favours from politically connected persons and other influential persons as in the case *Abu*, the returnee, where the leader of traders' stepped in to plead on his behalf. Although these influential political actors are conventionally not part of the organisational hierarchy in the city and its day-to-day governance, they wield some influence that traders tap into to get favours. I encountered situations where traders purposefully become members of political parties to create and enhance the opportunity for them to secure trading spaces particularly when the said political party is in government (Bob-Millar & Obeng-Odoom, 2011).

While some traders draw on the influence of political parties, others join traders' associations as a way of establishing the necessary relationships and networks to leverage as stated earlier (Seligmann, 2001). Traders leverage the influence of the leadership of traders' associations they owe membership to because they are recognised by city authorities as key stakeholders in the governance of the city. The extent to which a trader can renegotiate with regulators is built around the conviviality between the trader and the actor(s) in question. While traders strive to succeed with their renegotiations, they sometimes fail. Traders who fail in renegotiations sometimes face sanctions and in some cases are impressed upon by leaders of their traders' association to coerce them to comply within a given time frame.

Container street traders' access to urban space as demonstrated in this section is secured through their day-to-day negotiations as observed in the streets of Mumbai and characterised by some form of relationships between traders and the state and its representatives (Anjaria, 2011). The forms of engagements that occur between traders and city regulators bring to bear their role as well as how they shape and are shaped by regulations governing their everyday trading practices.

Complying to maintain rights to trade and not worry

Some traders comply with regulations. They follow due process by contacting the right actors to secure access to space, acquire a permit before building and occupying the container stall as well as pay tolls, fees, and levies, and in some instances rents to maintain

the rights to trade in the city. In his research on the streets of Delhi, Seth Schindler, (2014) argues that it is the desire to secure access to urban space that causes street traders to meet the demands of both state and non-state actors as reflected in this Wa research. For instance, *Issah,* a container trader who sells motor bicycles and spare parts stated "Selling motor bicycles and spares requires a lot of money. So, I did not want to start my business and because of permits or failure on my part to pay tolls authorities will come and lock up my stall. Although securing a permit to build the container stall is not an easy road to travel, I made up my mind to ensure that I get it. This was so important to me because I wanted to secure my trading space and trade". Here, *Issah's* rationale for obeying regulations is a purely personal decision to secure his space and trade without confrontations with regulators.

Another container trader - *Hajia*, the retiree noted "I prefer to use my last money to pay my tolls and other fees that I am required to pay. I do so for two main reasons: first, to secure my space because it is my 'home away from home' and then second, to ensure that I do not destroy the relationship between me and the toll collectors who are very powerful actors who can make or break your business". From *Hajia's* account, most traders believed that the best way to secure their trading space and trade is by complying with laid down regulations like paying tolls, fees and levies as well rent for traders who do not own containers. Apart from complying with regulations, it also emerged that establishing and maintaining cordial relationships with key actors such as the toll collector and land/container owners is equally important. This is because such relationships create the space for traders to negotiate whenever it becomes necessary to do so.

Apart from the formal regulations, it emerged in this Wa research that there are some informal practices and mechanisms that control the use of spaces for trade as observed in the streets of Mumbai in India (Anjaria, 2006). The practice of perching though not official, container traders who have secured permits allow other traders to occupy portions of the space they occupy. Here, the original trader is the one that sets the rules governing the use of the space for the percher to comply. *Hafsat*, a container trader perching explained "I do not own the right to occupy this space. So, I do what the owner tells me to do like keeping the environment clean, paying my toll to her at the right time for her to pay to the authorities among others. To protect this small space that she graciously allowed me to occupy, I comply". As much as the rules set by the container trader who owns the right to occupy are not official, it regulates the use of the space and the percher. Here, the original trader feels a sense of responsibility to the space and it is incumbent on the percher to comply with regulations set by the original trader to secure her space for trade as well.

This demonstrates the complexity of regulating urban spaces for trade and inherent compliance strategies. Evident in these narratives are the notions of "tactics" and "strategies" (de Certeau, 1990). Tactics describe the methods that people who do not have their space use to adapt to that of others like *Hafsat.* On the other hand, strategies refer to methods available to people who own their own space and do possess a certain power to act as shown in *Hafsat's* account. This practice of perching resonates with Salès', (2018) study in Mumbai where street traders who have been operating for a long time in a particular space can sublet to other traders because they see themselves as owners – (*malik*). The only difference is that whereas in Mumbai the duration of presence in the city is a way to guarantee a form of

legitimacy even without a license, in this Wa research, it is the permit issued by the municipality that guarantees the traders' legitimacy.

Here, the container space is regulated by both official and unofficial regulations involving state and non-state actors. Traders do not build or occupy clandestinely, rather the container is built under the supervision of traders themselves or their representative and the City Engineer to ensure adherence to standards as provided in the permits. A city official explained, "we do not just issue permits to people without supervising what they build. So, we do site visits to monitor the building process so that people do not alter the dimensions of space allocated to them". Beyond city officials monitoring to ensure compliance, I also encountered a limited degree of instances where landowners monitored the building process. For example, *Daramani,* a container trader indicated "my landowner is a bit controversial so he was constantly on me when I was building my container. According to my landowner, his visits were to ensure that I built exactly what the space was allocated for". These accounts show that traders' compliance goes beyond just their willingness to do so. But different forms of supervision ensure that traders comply with regulations.

It is equally important to note that the underlying motivations for complying are varied. Whereas some traders comply to avoid any confrontations with authorities and their representatives, other traders in addition to this comply to maintain the right to trade in the container. There are also traders like *Issah*, the motor bicycle and spare parts trader who comply with regulations to protect their investments. By this, traders follow the trajectory

of securing the right permits to build, occupy and trade in the container. At each of these stages, traders make some financial commitments by paying some fees, levies, and tolls.

By complying, some traders leverage their networks and associational influences. I encountered a high degree of traders who have become members of political parties and other associations as a way of establishing the necessary relationships and networks that can provide support for them in times of need. One of the ultimate aims of establishing these networks is "to secure access to space" (Schindler, 2014: 2609). The traders' social networks, therefore, make a difference in their ability to comply with regulations. So, traders deliberately invest in expanding and maintaining their networks to tap into the opportunities therein (Seligmann, 2001). The apparent critical role of the trader in complying with regulations and its obvious objective to maintain the rights to trade make visible otherwise invisible aspects of the street traders' encounters with various regulators, their roles, and the ways they engage with regulators in the city as key actors in governance. In concluding, I have demonstrated that container traders comply through a range of strategies that involve both official and unofficial practices and actors. It is equally important not to essentialise compliance with regulations as a homogeneous traders' role and practice, rather I propose that we recognise the multiplicity of ways that street traders comply with regulations governing their trade and space.

This section has shown the different roles of container traders in governance and the ways traders shape and are shaped by regulations governing their trade and spaces in the city.

Traders' strategies are rooted in the negotiated logics which work in and against regulations, the focus of the following section

The varied logics of trading

Traders in this Wa research are motivated by varied logics which they negotiate with various actors in the city to build the container stall and their trade. Some traders build their trade in contingent ways, in some cases a means of trading-to make-do to survive. Others trade as a coping strategy, a refuge to reintegrate and re-organise lives. For some, it is a reflection of aspirations, a means to move up. These negotiated logics are diverse, dynamic, and can change over time. The negotiated logics encompass traders' motivations, aspirations, and micro-practices that drive their trade. Motivation refers to the socio-economic and cultural factors [such as unemployment, low income, killing boredom, re-organising ones' life, and protecting family business legacy] that give the trader the impetus to become a container trader. Aspirations refer to the business objective(s) set by the trader for their trade. Here, while some aim just to survive, others set a goal to become "an entrepreneur … who understands the framework within which they have to work that enable them to grow their businesses" (Dierwechter, 2004: 975). Trading becomes a way to move-up in some instances, and as a coping strategy or refuge in others. Practice refers to the way the trader conducts him/herself to either make-do, move-up, or trade as a refuge in the city. The traders' motivations, aspirations, and practices help to facilitate the functioning of their varied trading logics.

Building from the diversity and complexity of traders' logics which according to Huang, Zhang & Xue, (2018: 2743) are driven by "multiple socio-economic forces such as unemployment, poverty, poor remuneration …" and "transcend the necessity-driven or opportunity-driven thesis, but rather by an amalgamation of the two" (Adom, 2014: 113), I show how these negotiated logics shape traders' responses with regulations and regulators in the city. These negotiated logics shape both trading and regulations by showing the different ethos of compliance by traders. In other words, the ways traders comply with regulations vary. For instance, while some traders comply with regulations largely without issues, others renegotiate to postpone and delay their obligations, and some dodge by being strategically absent. Differentiating container street traders' negotiated logics is key because it shows up particular geographies of interactions, encounters, and engagements between the trader and the city and its regulators which help flag traders' critical roles and how they shape regulations governing their everyday practices in the city. The following sections provide detailed discussions on the diversity and complexity of traders' negotiated logics.

Making-do to survive and meet personal needs

Participating in container street trading to make-do emerged as an important trading logic in this Wa research. These traders build their trade-in contingent ways, in some cases a means of trading-to make-do to survive. *Latif,* a container trader who sells airtime explained "my main aim for setting up this trade was to gather money to support my university education. My parents are not working so they are not in a position to help me. So, I decided to start this trade to secure my education plans". *Latif's* participation in container trading to sell airtime was therefore contingent on his quest to gather money to support his university

education. According to Stephen, a university graduate stated, “setting up this trade in the container after my national service is to put food on my table as I wait to secure employment in a government or private institution”. Here, the trader sees trading in the container as a temporary measure to either eke out a living and/or meet some individual life aspirations and needs. In such circumstances, the trader has little or no option other than to participate in this form of trade just to survive.

Relating these findings to the work of Williams & Round (2008) in Ukraine, where 53% of informal workers worked this way out of economic necessity, *Latif* and Stephen were also working as container traders out of the necessity to survive and meet impending needs. In Ghana, a similar study in Koforidua by Adom (2014) revealed that the majority (65%) were necessity-driven informal workers whose main aim for operating is to subsist. In this case, container trading is the lifeline for these traders. Nonetheless, it is important to state that, although this trading logic is primarily driven by traders’ quest to generate income to support their sustenance, the motivating factor is nuanced and much more than just generating income from the container trade to meet their basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. It also includes generating the needed income from the trade to meet other equally important needs such as paying school fees contributing to support household income and resolving other family financial needs. To this extent, the income generated from the trade support the varied needs of traders beyond just survival.

Driven by the logic of making-do, traders usually build much smaller container stalls where they set up their trade to sell fast-moving goods such as airtime. To avoid what the traders’

termed as 'the cumbersome permit application process' most of them negotiate with other container traders who already have permits to perch like the case of *Hafsat,* a container trader who was perching at the frontage of another container stall. Here, it is a common practice scattered across the city's streetscape where traders with permits can allow other traders to perch because as argued by Salès (2018) they see themselves as owners of the space. Although the practice of perching insulates the percher from securing a building permit, it does not necessarily preclude the trader from paying tolls, fees, and other levies to city authorities. Due to their perching status, the trader is usually whipped in line by the original container trader to adhere to regulations. This is critical to the original container trader because any misconduct of the percher will affect him or her directly or indirectly. In the context of this trading logic, people participate in container trading to mainly survive. However, people's motivations for participating in trade are much more than survival but also include those who see trading in the container as a form of refuge and a coping strategy as discussed in the next section.

Trading as a form of refuge to reorganise traders' life in the city

The second trading logic is trading as a refuge – as a coping strategy. Seeking refuge by building trade in the container in the city's streets was an equally important logic. There is recognition that, as important as the economic benefit is to traders, there are other traders whose trading logic goes beyond just survival and economic benefits. This explains why a container trader like *Hajia* the retiree, has this to say "I could not imagine being at home doing nothing as I am on retirement. So, I decided to set up this trade to keep me active". As clearly stated in her narrative, becoming a container trader is a way to manage boredom as

well as set a stage for convivial interactions. As a critical space that is helping her manage boredom, *Hajia* explained "I comply with regulations governing my trade like paying off my tolls and renewing my business operating permits. I don't want to even think of losing this space because apart from helping me deal with loneliness, it is also a good opportunity to make some money" she concluded. According to Schindler (2014: 2609), the trader's behaviour to comply with regulations is "guided by the desire to secure access to urban space" as expressed by *Hajia* because of her attachment to her trading space.

In parallel to *Hajia's* experience, as a returnee, Abu decided to build his trade due to his failed attempt to seek greener pastures overseas. His decision to participate in this trade came in handy to enable him to reintegrate and re-organise his life after returning home in the unpleasant circumstance of deportation and its associated frustration. *Abu* stated "I wanted to do something that will help me at the time to re-organise my life. So, the flexibility in terms of entering the trade and the fact that there was high demand for motor bicycles and spare parts informed my decision to become a container trader". He further added "apart from the money I get from this business, the business is so dear to me because it gives me much joy that I have succeeded in re-organising my life. Because of this, apart from paying my tolls to city authorities, I also relate very with the landowners so that I don't lose this space". The illustrative cases of *Hajia* and *Abu* explicitly show how the container trade serves as a form of refuge that cushion and create a comfort zone for people in times of difficulties to re-organise their life.

What is critical in these traders' accounts is that the decision to participate in container trade involves a mix of "necessity and opportunity-driven" motivations (Williams, 2008: 157). While the elements of necessity-driven motivations include factors such as insufficient family income, frustration with a formal job, joblessness, or the need for a flexible job schedule due to other family commitments, independence, self-fulfillment, entrepreneurial drives, desire for wealth, and social status, and other matters are seen as opportunity factors (Duchenaut, 1997). In this Wa research, apart from the economic benefits associated with the trade, traders' decision to participate in the container trade includes re-organising their lives in order to find comfort.

Not only does container trade offer space for economic exchanges but is also an important space of refuge where people resort to deal with their circumstances. In other words, traders operating with this trading logic see the trading space and trade as a space of refuge where they go for different forms of comfort in life as illustrated in the accounts of *Hajia* and *Abu*. The last thing such traders will ever want to encounter is anything that will bring them stress or cause them to lose space and take them out of business. It is against this background that those participating in container trading as a form of refuge generally comply with regulations. To this end, these traders' practices are often in sync with regulations to avoid confrontations between them and city authorities. In other words, the traders avoid any acts of defiance and struggle against regulators to secure the trading space and maintain their rights to trade in the city. One significant point is that to secure access to the urban space, traders constantly adapt to the regulatory environment and enforcement practices of both city authorities and non-state actors (Schindler, 2014).

Moving-up to become business owners

Container traders trading to move up – as a progressive venture, is the third trading logic that emerged in this Wa research. It is a process whereby traders are motivated to 'start small and aim big. This trading logic resonates with Williams, (2008) study of informal entrepreneurs in England, Ukraine, and Russia where traders pursued their entrepreneurial ventures through the informal economy [such as street trading]. In this Wa research, it became evident that while some traders progressed from a small business to a container business, others started right away in a container stall but with plans to establish branches in other parts of the city. For example, *Fawzy*, a 37-year-old man progressed from his table-top business to his current container stall. He explained "I started my trade at the frontage of the house where I lived. But I have always wished to build my container. I do not have enough money for that now, that is why I am currently renting this container but with the hope of owning mine soon. It is through hard work and perseverance that my business developed from the table-top to a container stall, and now selling larger quantities and much more expensive goods than the table-top business" he concluded.

On the other hand, *Mumuni*, a 45-year-old man indicated "I started my business by buying my first container to start my business". However, the process for getting his second container changed. He indicated "I had plans to establish other branches of my business in other parts of the city. So when I gathered enough money to build a container, I did so near the main traffic light". What this means is that traders have different ways and capacities of getting access to space; that is the container stall. In the example of Sam, the civil servant, he started his trade by building his container. *Humu*, a 47-year-old lady secured her container

stall through a middleman who negotiated with the owner on her behalf. She explained "I saw the advertisement with the middleman's phone number posted on an electrical pole in the city. I had searched for a container for a long time. So, when I saw this opportunity, I quickly called to express interest. The middleman led the negotiations and I bought it". The different ways through which traders get access to their trading space show their diverse capacity to secure access which echoes Salès' (2016) study in Mumbai where street traders showed the varied capacity to acquire the trading space and depended on intermediaries.

It is significant to state that, these different ways of getting access to the trading space have different implications for regulations. While traders who build the container themselves require a permit to do so, those who buy and rent do not require such a building permit. Notwithstanding the mode of getting access to the trading space [container stall], all container traders are required to pay different tolls, fees, and levies as observed by Anyidoho (2013) in her study of street traders in Accra, Ghana.

Additionally, while some traders start small and progress as time goes on, other traders' expressions and trade objective(s) conveyed the same logic of establishing and growing a lasting business to become entrepreneurs. Traders operating with this logic have plans to expand their current business by establishing branches of the container trade in other parts of the city. Central in this discussion is the urge of traders to pursue the dream of moving up the economic ladder by expanding their working capital and expanding their trading spaces to become business owners or 'entrepreneurs … who understand the framework within which they have to work that enable them to grow their businesses' (Dierwechter, 2004).

Traders with this logic of establishing and developing a trade have a serious attachment to the business and so strive to comply with regulations to protect and promote their trading aspirations. Traders explained that as much as they make sure not to default in the payment of their renewal permits, fees, tolls, and levies, it is difficult to sometimes fulfill these required obligations on time. When it happens that they are unable to pay these fees, levies, and tolls, they re-negotiate with the actors to be given a grace period to pay later. According to traders, such re-negotiations work. To this end, efforts are made by traders to make 'strategic choices' to connect with their trade and build relations that can promote the long-term plan they have for their trade (Schmalz, Ludwig & Webster, 2019). These practices reflect a form of traders' aspirations in relation to their relationships and compliance with regulations. The traders' conscious efforts to build and maintain their trade and spaces complicates earlier findings in the study of Yankson (2007: 44) in Accra where the majority (70 percent) of street traders 'did nothing special' to keep their trading spaces.

In short, negotiated logics help frame and situate the multiple ways traders respond to regulations governing their trading practices and regulators who enforce these regulations. In the following section, I discuss how traders' negotiated logics shape their role as actors in governance.

Negotiated logics and the governance of trading

Traders' negotiated logics are the key factor(s) that drive the decision of people to become container street traders in this Wa research. These negotiated logics – trading to make-do,

trading to move-up, and trading as a refuge, are negotiated between traders and various actors including both state and non-state actors. They are diverse because they are "driven by multiple socio-economic forces" (Huang et al., 2018: 2743), complex because they "transcend the necessity-driven or opportunity-driven thesis, but rather by an amalgamation of the two" (Adom, 2014: 113) and they can change over time. Traders' negotiated logics are shaped by their unique backgrounds, their socio-economic characteristics, and lived experiences, and they as well shape traders' everyday trading lives in the city including their encounters with the city and its regulators and regulations governing their practices.

Unravelling traders' negotiated logics highlight how they shape and are shaped by varied regulations governing trading practices in the city. But the negotiated logics also help us see the mix of traders' role in governance and their agency to either dodge, renegotiate or comply with regulations governing the trading practice through which we see the different ethos of traders' compliance shaping regulations in the city. Additionally, negotiated logics substantiates the varied motivations that drive people to participate in container trading in this Wa research. This helps our understanding of the different levels and moments traders engage with regulations and regulators in the city. Negotiated logics also surface how traders' motivations, aspirations, and practices help to facilitate the functioning of their trade and trading practices.

Traders' negotiated logics extend the notion that street traders largely negotiate spaces with users – 'negotiated space' (Hackenbroch, 2011: 59). Such perspective does not

consider that apart from trading spaces which traders negotiate for, they also negotiate their trading logics with various actors such as landowners, city authorities, toll collectors, and in some instances with some traders in the city. As an important economic activity dominating the city's streetscape and using urban spaces for trade, the negotiations embed a range of diverse actors with whom the trader interacts in their everyday trading lives in the city. Extending Hackenbroch (2011: 59) notion of 'negotiated space', negotiated logics draws attention to the diversities and complexities of traders' negotiation practices, their varied capacities to negotiate with different actors which help us think deeply about how particular trading logics shape regulations governing their trading practices in the city as discussed below:

I argue that negotiated logics help us see that traders in their varied engagements with regulators and various actors in the city do not necessarily change regulations, rather they sometimes renegotiate, dodge, or comply by participating in the governance in varied ways and at different moments in their everyday trading lives in the city. Throughout this thesis, I have demonstrated how traders play various roles by engaging and negotiating with various actors from negotiating access to space to building the trading space, to setting up the trade and occupying the trading space. The traders' engagements with various actors throughout these different moments help us to see how "power is dispersed across a range of sites and rests with several state and non-state actors" (Schindler, 2014: 2596). Traders are therefore positioned as active players in the city's governance through their engagements and negotiations with various actors in their trading practices.

Negotiated logics help reveal how differentiated traders' trading logics are – making-do, moving-up, and as a refuge. These logics show traders' varied capacities of getting access to space (Salès, 2016) and different geographies and processes of acquiring the spaces including renting, perching, buying, and building. In unpicking traders' negotiated logics, we see how some traders are builders and architects of the street and its built form to support their trading logics. Here we see that traders build in regulated rather than clandestine ways, interacting with city authorities and their representatives. As builders of the city's streetscape, traders understand the craft of their trade and can determine the locational attributes that are suitable for their daily activities (Owusu-Sekyere, Amoah & Teng-Zeng, 2016). Through the building of their trading space, they shape and define the architecture, materiality, and everyday use of street space for economic and other socio-cultural purposes. Generally, getting access to space involves constellations of engagements with various actors in the city who play varied roles in governance. Through these engagements, I reposition the conceptualisation of the street trader as active participants in urban governance, portraying the varied ways they participate and shape governance as key actors in the use of city spaces for trade.

In traders quest to set up trade in containers and aspire to maintain the rights to trade in the city, traders are seen as a key constituency, like formal businesses, creating jobs and paying various forms of daily, weekly, monthly and annual tolls, fees, and levies (Anyidoho, 2013) which are central to Wa municipality's revenue generation –a central source of their internally generated funds and as an important source of employment generation particularly in the city's street economy. In this Wa research, it became evident that

container traders referred to as 'informal entrepreneurs' do not only create jobs for themselves, but they also create jobs for others in cases where the owner of the container trade is already a government employee (Adom, 2014: 113). These payments made by container traders resonate with earlier studies in the second-largest city in Ghana, Kumasi (Owusu-Sekyere et al., 2016), where street traders in Ghanaian cities "provide significant contributions to local government revenues through their value-added tax payments when purchasing goods from larger retailers and distributors, as well as through their direct payments to local authorities such as tolls and other fees" (Adamtey, 2014).

Finally, as a large sector of the street economy and of Wa's urban economy, container street traders are a key part of the city's governance and its ethos, adding vitality and shaping the rhythmic tempo, feel, and the relative orderliness of how Wa as a city runs. In providing a regular source of accessible and affordable goods and services for the urban residents (Food & Agriculture Organization of the United Nations., 2016; Sverdlik, 2017). From the foregoing, I propose that the traders' role in governance as discussed should be understood within the context of their diverse and complex negotiated logics.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how container street traders' participate in governance as active actors. I have shown how traders' negotiated logics are diverse and complex, shaping regulations governing their trading lives and their role in governance in the city. Negotiated logics also help reveal the varied ways traders shape the ethos of compliance through which they shape the application of regulations governing their trade and spaces. This exercise is

productive because it makes visible the otherwise invisible critical roles of the street trader in city governance. Deploying negotiated logics as a framing device, the research shows how traders participate actively in governance by complying, renegotiating, and dodging regulations. Traders do so not necessarily to change regulations in their quests to negotiate access to space to build, set up their trade and occupy spaces in the city. Through these traders' practices, some build the city's street spaces, while they create jobs and contribute to revenue generation for city authorities.

Analysing container traders' role in governance as the research object, the chapter shows the different strategies traders use to negotiate their diverse logics with various actors and navigate the regulatory terrain governing their trading practices. It is the diverse negotiated logics of traders and how they negotiate with various actors' that influence traders' roles in governance. At the same time, it embodies traders' aspirations for trading as well as the complex relationships and engagements which make open their roles in governance.

In brief, traders' negotiated logics are a product of varied engagements between the trader and various actors in the city. It extends our understanding beyond the notion of 'negotiated space' by showing that in addition to traders' negotiating for space, they also negotiate for their logics. Additionally, it shows the complexities of the negotiations and how they shape and make visible the traders' active roles in governance. From this positioning, it is a site for complex and diverse encounters and demonstration of traders' varied capacities to engage and negotiate for space and their trading logics. At the same time, it is a productive space that shapes traders' practices, interactions, aspirations, and roles in city governance.

Yet, much of the contemporary scholarship in Ghanaian cities mainly focus on the analysis of the state's exclusionary policies that regulate, and in some instances attempt to eliminate street traders' activities (Anyidoho, 2013; Asiedu & Agyei-Mensah, 2008; Okoye, 2020; Owusu-Sekyere, Amoah & Teng-Zeng, 2016; Steel, Ujoranyi & Owusu, 2014; Yankson, 2007). This Wa research addresses this gap by making visible traders' role in city governance through their day-to-day encounters, engagements, and negotiations with various actors in the city. In doing so, I present container traders as heterogeneous individuals with diverse logics which are much more than survival, which they negotiate with various actors. Like Salès' (2016) findings in the streets of Mumbai, container traders in Wa have varied capacities to acquire and maintain their trade and trading spaces.

In conceptualising container traders as active participants in governance, I make visible the varied ways traders engage with various actors to play critical roles in governance. By deploying traders' negotiated logics as a frame to making visible traders' role in governance, it is not intended to challenge scholarly works in different contexts that have presented traders as victims of state exclusionary policies and romanticise traders' role in governance. Rather, the intention is to focus on how amid this dominant notion, the context of Wa presents a space where traders are welcomed, and what may be considered elsewhere as informality is part and parcel of the everyday governance of the city. If the context in the city of Wa offers a vivid example of street traders actively participating in city governance, it nonetheless prompts the question of what a more general conception of street traders role in urban governance might afford, of what their practices and engagements in negotiating

access to space and permits to build and occupy spaces for trade might bring to how urban governance is conceived.

In the final chapter, I conceptualise street traders as active actors, not objects, of urban regulation and governance. I do so by arguing that: i) street traders are active agents in the regulations governing their trading lives in the city; and, ii) through negotiated logics, street traders play roles in governance that are processual, relational, and diverse.

Chapter 8: The Place of Container Street Traders in City Governance

Introduction

Street traders participating in container trading in the central business of Wa are active actors in the city's governance. In negotiating access to space and constructing the container stalls, they shape the street and its built environment. In the same vein, in providing access to goods and services, they contribute to the city's street economy. These traders have consolidated their trading spaces and woven themselves to become part of the city's-built environment, showing their relevance in the use of street spaces and their role in the city's governance. As active actors in the city's governance, I have shown throughout this thesis that by using space for trade, their negotiated logics shape and are shaped by the city's application of regulations governing their everyday trading practices, facilitating their functioning, and enabling their relevance in the city's governance.

While contemporary scholarship on street trading governance, particularly in Ghanaian cities mainly focused on street traders as actors against the state's repressive and exclusionary policies that regulate (Adaawen & Jorgensen, 2012), and in some instances attempt to eliminate traders activities (Gillespie, 2017; Spire & Choplin, 2018; Steel, Ujoranyi & Owusu, 2014), this thesis complicates these dominant narratives. In unravelling the street traders' role as active actors in governance, I have argued in this thesis that container street traders in Wa are welcomed and legitimate actors who have woven themselves into the everyday governance fabric of the city. By participating as actors in governance, I bring into view how they shape the application of regulations governing their trading practices through

the different ethos of compliance such as dodging regulations by being strategically absent, re-negotiating to postpone compliance, and complying with regulations to maintain rights to trade and not to worry. In doing so, I have shown that container traders do not necessarily change regulations, rather they shape them through varied acts of avoidance, postponement, and compliance with regulations.

In unravelling traders' negotiated logics, I have also shown how these diverse logics shape their capacities to negotiate differently for access to space and build the container to set up their trade. The enactments of these diverse negotiated logics and traders' roles show the complexity of the governance terrain, in which street traders engage different state and non-state actors. Through this argument in this thesis, I demonstrate the traders' relevance in the application of regulations governing their trade in the city.

Deploying traders' negotiated logic as my framing device, my analysis shows the multiple ways in which container traders shape the application of regulations governing their trade; bringing into view how they shape and are shaped by the application of regulations governing their trading practices in the city. By paying attention to traders' negotiated logic, I shift attention to street traders as key actors in governance, showing the complex and dynamic internal differences that establish their role as a critical subject of inquiry.

Regulated and Participatory

Container street traders in Wa are welcome, and integrated into the regulatory system as part of the everyday governance practice in the city. Unlike Kamete's (2018) observation of

pernicious assimilation of the urban informal economy in Southern African cities in which street traders are mostly eradicated and victimised, container traders in Wa are part of the city's streetscape. They are regulated when it comes to securing access to space, building, occupying, and conducting trade in the container. So, what may be considered informality in other contexts is part of the city's regulations as various city actors accommodate the activities of these traders as part of the city's streetscape.

Although the power relations that play out between traders and city regulators are unequal because the latter enforces the regulations, nonetheless, it is participatory. Regulation is shaped in trading practices, in spaces that allow for negotiation. The different levels and moments of engagement between traders and the various regulators in the city reveal varied forms of negotiations such as trader-led, association-led, and hired agent negotiation strategies that facilitate container trading in the city. This study's finding differs from that of Seth Schindler's (2014) study in Delhi, India, where municipal authorities remain in control of urban space by enforcing regulations that prevent street traders from obtaining permits to operate legally. In this Wa research, although the different regulators in the city demonstrate varying levels of power in their engagements with traders, there are spaces for negotiations that allow traders to comply, postpone, and in some instances dodge regulations governing their practices in the city.

Here, traders' quests to build the trading space and maintain the rights to trade in the city signals the configurations and enunciations of different actors, and strategies built-in relationships and govern by different forms of regulations enforced by both state and non-

state regulators in the city. It presents the nuances in terms of traders' varied capacities to mobilise resources, coordinate various craftsmen in building the trading space as well as negotiate differently with regulators and other actors either by themselves or through other actors. Throughout this thesis, I have demonstrated how traders engage with different actors in varied ways and play a key role in shaping the application of regulations governing their space and trade, showing more complex power relations. The traders' engagements with various actors throughout the different moments of establishing their container stall help us to see how "power is dispersed across a range of sites and rests with several state and non-state actors" (Schindler, 2014: 2596). Although the regulatory terrain and power relations between traders and the various city actors are unequal, there is space for negotiations, making visible the traders' active role in the city's governance through their engagements and negotiations with these actors in their trading lives in the city.

Accompanying the process of recognition and integration of container traders is the involvement of leaders of trader associations in fixing tolls, fees, and levies in the city. This practice is important for ensuring that the fees, levies, and tolls that are fixed are reasonable for the traders who are key stakeholders and important sources of revenue generation for the authorities. It also commits the traders to take responsibility for the payment of these financial obligations since their representatives are part of the decision-making process. The authorities' practice of involving leaders of traders associations resonates with Tokman's (2007) view that considers the integration of the informal sector [*including street trading*] to include accepting them into the regulatory and taxation systems.

Considered an important step towards inclusive urban policy (UN-Habitat, 2006; 2009), integrating container street traders in the context of Wa manifests in varied ways and at different moments, showing various forms of engagements, built-in relationships that occur between traders, city authorities and other actors. This practice of integration ensures that traders are made part of the regulatory system through the process of negotiating access to space and permits to build and set up their trade in the container in the city.

Processual, relational, and diverse

Street trading in Wa is unlike many other African cities, where trading activities sit in tension with the state because they are seen as a nuisance, encroachers, and a blight on the city (Kamete, 2013a). Container street trading in Wa is a welcome and regulated economic activity that is part of the streets and the city's street economy. In Wa, container traders follow formal processes to secure space and permits to build and set up their trade in the city. Based on the formalise processes, what is considered 'informality' elsewhere is part of the everyday trading practice and embedded in the city's regulation as the city officials, landowners, private business owners see the activities of these traders as part of the city's streetscape. Here, traders are themselves, builders of the city's streetscape, by constructing the container stalls as well as setting up and developing their trade in the city.

Container traders in Wa are a significant feature and constitute a vast majority of the businesses present and scattered across the city, particularly the central business district. In constructing the container stalls to set up their trade and provide goods and services to urban residents, they have become part of the city's fabric, contributing to the urban street

economy by creating jobs, not just for themselves but others too, providing goods and services, and they are considered as a vital constituency for revenue generation for authorities. How these traders have consolidated their spaces and trade to become part of the everyday practice, accepted and regulated by city regulators marks a paradigm shift from dominant narratives in African cities that frame street traders generally through the lens of antagonistic relationships with local authorities and forms of resistance against restrictions and repression

Unpacking the regulations governing container trading shows a welcomed positioning of various actors in the city which promotes participatory engagements between the traders on one hand and both state and non-state actors on the other hand. Traders' engagements with these different actors manifest and materialise at different levels and in varied moments. First, container traders follow a formal process to secure the trading space and access to the container. This process involves various state agencies and non-state actors such as landowners, private business owners, and leaders of traders' associations collaborating with traders in the allocation of the space. Second, the process of building the container stall also shows multiple ways through which the trader engages with city authorities and various craftsmen. Although traders use their resources to build the container stalls, they do so under the supervision of city officials. What this means is that traders build in regulated ways, not clandestinely or in isolation. This complicates the notion that informal trading spaces are chaotic spaces (Gutmann, 1997) and "hidden spaces" from city officials (Whitson, 2007).

At the stage of setting up the trade and maintaining the rights to trade in the city, traders interact with authorities and their representatives through routine checks from regulators to ensure standards and regular payments of tolls, fees, and levies which are fixed not only by city authorities but with the representatives from leaders of traders associations. Analysis of container street traders' experiences, engagements and negotiation practices through these different moments show that traders are key actors in the city's governance; engaging the city and its regulators, playing integral roles in shaping the ethos of compliance which also influence the regulations governing traders trading lives in the city. The governance practice that emerged in this research presents a more participatory and progressive engagement between the trader and regulators because there is space for negotiation. It is within these internal practices, relationships, and engagements between the trader and various city actors that we see the street traders' roles and negotiated logics as processual, diverse, and relational in the particular context of this Wa research.

Conclusion

Paying attention to street traders' negotiated logics and their role in urban governance is critical. It offers an important entry point into the street trading governance debate in African cities and a framing device to describe the street traders' critical roles in urban governance. Unpacking street traders' negotiated logics is also vital because they help our understanding of the internal differentiation of traders' motivations, their engagements with, and varied ethos of compliance with the regulation. By disaggregating complex internal differences, I show the varied ways traders engage the city, its regulators, and regulations. In doing so, I make visible traders' roles in the street trading governance, an important

contribution to debates on trading and informality in Ghanaian cities in particular, and African cities more generally.

This research nuance the debates on street trading governance by highlighting the critical role of the trader in shaping the application of regulations governing trading. It makes visible the role of the street trader in governance, built-in their diverse negotiated logics. By focusing on the street traders' role, I reposition traders as active actors in governance, which moves the debate on street trading beyond the dominant image of the trader as an antagonistic actor, the subject of the state's repressive and exclusionary policies. Instead, negotiated logics provide a useful basis for substantiating street traders as active participants in city governance.

It is worth noting that, the spatiality and temporality of street traders' micro-practices emerged as critical aspects of the street trading governance discourse. Given this, I propose that it is important for future research to consider the spatiality and temporality of different forms of street traders as one of the ways of enriching the nuances in the responses among research participants. Even so, there are differences regarding the negotiated logics and micro-practices among container street traders who are the object of this thesis, I envisage different articulation and the manifestation of the forms of negotiations and other practices as well as logics among the different forms of street traders as found elsewhere in the literature across Southern cities. This calls for some form of collaboration among scholars across global South cities on street trade studies.

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Appendix 1: Application form for Temporary Structure Permit

THE ……PLANNING AUTHORITY

Application Form for Temporary Structure Permit

The Land Use and Spatial Planning Bill, 20xx

For office use only
Appn. No. ……
Date Recd. ……
Permit No. ……
Refusal No. ……
Queried No……

…… DISTRICT/MUNICIPAL/METROPOLITAN ASSEMBLY

<table>
<tr><th colspan="6">APPLICATION FOR TEMPORARY STRUCTURE PERMIT</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="6">Personal Details</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Name of Applicant</td><td>Residential Address</td><td colspan="3">Phone Number</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2" rowspan="3"></td><td rowspan="3"></td><td colspan="3"></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Email</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3"></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Gender (✓)</td><td>Male ❑</td><td>Female ❑</td><td>Neuter ❑</td><td colspan="2">Postal Address</td><td>Nationality</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3"></td><td colspan="2"></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

APPLICATION FOR TEMPORARY STRUCTURE PERMIT			
ID Type (✓)	Passport ❑ Driver's License ❑ Voter's ID ❑ NHIS ❑	ID Number	

Application details

Information on the current use

Date of Application	____/____/_____ d d / m m / y y y y	Use of particular parcel	
Zoning of the area			
Location of site		Size	
Attach site plan (✓)	Yes ❑ No ❑	Nature of accessibility	
Adjoining uses			

Information on the proposed use

Proposed use		Project component	
Block plan(✓)	Yes ❑ No ❑		

Designs of proposed temporary structure (✓)	**Yes** ❑ **No** ❑
Evidence of Title to Land or permission (✓)	**Yes** ❑ **No** ❑
Type of Document (title) (✓)	**Land Certificate** ❑ **Deed Certificate** ❑ **Noted proposal** ❑ **Allocation Note** ❑ **Executed Indenture** ❑ **Consent/permission note** ❑
Outline of likely effects if any and proposed mitigation measures (TIA, EIA, etc)	

Name of Receiving Officer	**Signature of Officer**