

# Human Geographies of Stellenbosch

Transforming Space,  
Preserving Place?

EDITOR  
Ronnie Donaldson

# 10. Planning for informal spaces in Stellenbosch: the need for participatory design

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## Introduction

The informal economy, as demonstrated by many researchers, forms an important opportunity for the poor and unemployed to earn an income. At the same time, 'informality,' by its very nature, goes against the often regimented, intentional and formalised nature of modern town planning. This contrast is particularly pronounced in Stellenbosch, given the municipality's focus on preserving the town's historic, architectural aesthetic in light of tourist appeal and the economic capital that tourists bring – see Chapters 4, 11, 12 & 13. On the other hand, current planning legislation such as the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA) promotes a planning culture that values principles such as "spatial justice," "spatial sustainability" and "spatial resilience", all of which seek to establish and perpetuate a planning mentality that aligns social, economic and environmental responsibilities (SPLUMA 2013). Thus, town planners and decisions makers in Stellenbosch face the perpetual challenge of negotiating between the provision of stable and inclusive spaces for informal traders (or street buskers – see Chapter 11) in the CBD on the one hand; and on the other hand – to police and discourage economic informality in light of the sector's indifference to historic town aesthetics and prevalence of "NIMBY-ism."

This chapter focuses on the complexities and opportunities of informal street trading in Stellenbosch as a case study to demonstrate why a nuanced approach to 'inclusive' planning is necessary in South Africa, given the country's vast inequality and socio-economic challenges. Through structured interviews with informal vendors at two trading sites, in combination with unstructured interviews with municipal staff members from various departments, this chapter presents a deep, ethnographic description of informal street trading in Stellenbosch at two sites in the historic town centre. In particular, the chapter looks at two historical events that have largely shaped the status quo of trader-municipality interaction in the past decade, and highlights the challenges and opportunities for town planners to more carefully engage with informal traders by making use of innovative forms of public participation.

## Informal trading in South Africa

With a Gini co-efficient ranging from 0.65 to 0.69, South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world (World Bank 2017). This stark contrast between the rich and the poor translates to a situation in which many South Africans are continuously trapped in survival mode, with little opportunity to accumulate savings for increased socioeconomic security. Indeed, this 'dual economy' is one of the country's most significant development challenges (ibid 2017). With few formal job opportunities, many residents sustain their livelihoods through work in the informal economic sector.

According to StatsSA, South Africa has an official unemployment rate of 26.7%, with an expanded unemployment definition closer to 36%. While difficult to quantify, the informal economy is thought to account for at least 15% of employment in the country and contribute towards at least 5% of the country's GDP (Statistics South Africa 2015). The majority of employment undertaken as part of the informal economy is classified as "elementary" in scope and 54% of Western Cape residents involved in informal business reported having no alternative income sources. On the other hand, in 2013, 29% of individuals were able to transition from the informal into the formal sector (ibid 2015).

Previous research has been undertaken to understand and define the function and dynamics of the informal economy in large South African cities. For instance, Barret (2003) provides a comprehensive overview of the informal minibus taxi industry in South Africa, while Bennet (2003) specifically examines the informal textile market. Horn (2011) describes the 'profile' of South African street vendors in four major cities, revealing that most businesses had been in existence for more than five years; the vast majority of traders identified as "Black African;" most had completed "some secondary" schooling, and more than 70% had more than two dependents for whom they were providing. Daily income varied greatly between urban centres, with a low of R600 reported in eThekweni and a high of R1 500 in Johannesburg. As part of the findings from the same data set, Willemse (2011) notes that the main constraints on informal traders are economic in nature – including poor cash flow, a lack of access to start-up/expansion capital and strong competition between traders. Willemse (2011) further notes the 'political conditions' that are detrimental to traders (such as policies that discriminate against informal business and a lack of organised bargaining power); as well as 'operational constraints' – the most important of which included a lack of access to transportation for the daily movement of products. A shortage of storage facilities and adequate security were also found to be common problems for some traders.

Willemse (2013) reports that since the end of the apartheid regime, many migrants have entered South Africa as foreign nationals from other African countries, some fleeing situations of civil war and violence while others are lured by the prospect of more promising economic opportunities. Migrants form a considerable portion of the informal economy, partly due to the costly and bureaucratic immigration procedures that newcomers must endure to attain legal working status within South Africa. On the other hand, Liedman et al. (2013) report a much more deliberate business model followed by foreign nationals, suggesting that Somali spaza shop owners in Delft, Cape

Town, rely on a vast network of business contacts, free or cheap family labour from Somalia and a close-knit local Somali community for cost-sharing in the ordering of bulk products. The result, Liedman et al. suggest, is that foreign-run informal businesses quickly grow to out-compete local microenterprises, while still maintaining a label of informality. The study goes on to conclude that a singular policy for the regulation of informal economic activity is not sufficient. Instead, policy should seek to allow space for the growth and development of survivalist, micro-entrepreneurial activity, while pushing to formalise those businesses that have managed to grow beyond a particular margin.

Thus, the informal economy provides essential income-earning opportunities for unemployed (or underemployed) South Africans and foreign nationals residing in the country, despite the heterogeneity of the sector. At the same time, due to high rates of socio-economic inequality within current urban form and functions, town planning has an important role to play in establishing spaces and opportunities that allow microentrepreneurs to procure a livelihood and, ideally, to scale up their businesses. However, as Liedman's work suggests, there cannot be a one-size-fits-all policy for engaging with the informal economy. Instead, given the diverse nature of the sector and those who participate within it, municipalities must develop iterative and reflexive policies that rely on on-going engagement with informal workers and communities.

In Huchzermeyer's (2011) work, *Cities with Slums*, she explains how post-apartheid South African cities have become captivated with the notion of establishing themselves as 'competitive' or 'world class' cities, whereby the urban poor are conceptualized as little more than an embarrassing scourge to stall and resist development. Building on this notion, Charman, Piper and Petersen (2012) present a critical study that suggests the City of Cape Town's planning priorities and zoning laws fail to acknowledge (and consequently undermine) the ways in which the informal economy functions, particularly within a township setting. Given the historical establishment of townships as predominantly residential neighbourhoods, the growth of the informal economy in these settings has been largely organic. For instance, *shebeens*<sup>1</sup> are a significant form of income and employment in townships and informal settlements, as well as playing an important role in creating spaces for socializing and recreation in contexts where few other options exist (Charman, Petersen & Govender 2014). However, the provincial government in the Western Cape has notoriously been at the forefront of shutting down *shebeens* in recent years. In 2012, the DA government announced the piloting of a new "high street" model of urban form in several Cape Town townships, which would allow formal alcohol retailers to legally exist in designated business-zoned areas, and thus permit easier surveillance of alcohol consumption (Meyer 2012). In contrast, Charman, Piper and Petersen (2012) point out that nodal development (long touted as the ideal form of planning for Cape Town in the city's SDF) is far more appropriate to the township context, given the limited likelihood of car ownership for most residents. As such, in trying to reconcile the diverse and intricate nature of the informal economy into formal planning laws and land-use zoning regulations, the result is often a further

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1 Shebeens are small and often informal bars, located predominantly in poorer communities throughout South Africa.



dismantling and marginalization of an already-fragile means of livelihood generation and neighbourhood cohesion.

Skinner (2008) suggests that in opposition to other studies which have concluded that urban governments often work to further marginalize and expel informal traders from city spaces, she suggests that the city of Durban, South Africa, provides an interesting case study to demonstrate how a municipality can take positive steps towards the creation of inclusive processes for engaging with informal traders in productive ways. In the post-apartheid era, the local government in Durban backed planning priorities and practices that were increasingly progressive in support of informal traders. During this time, the city allocated more money than any other South African city towards investment in the informal economy, with a focus on infrastructural development and support services, as well as creating opportunities for traders “to participate on a sustained and continuous basis about their needs and priorities ... often on an issue-by-issue basis” (ibid, p.235). In addition, in partnership with the local police force, the city established a voluntary Traders Against Crime Association, whereby local traders would patrol the areas around their stalls for criminality and alert the authorities when any action was required. This initiative was highly successful, with a decrease in murder rates in one area from 50 to 1, in the first year. Unfortunately, Skinner goes on to note that these progressive policies were short lived. In 2004, the Metropolitan Police, without warning, removed traders’ goods at various business sites throughout the city, justifying the move by claiming that informal traders were undermining profit margins for formal businesses. However, Skinner aptly notes that this sudden change in policy was, in all likelihood, motivated by the 2004 announcement that South Africa would host the 2010 Soccer World Cup and cities would thus be in competition for hosting sporting events.

## Public participation in spatial planning

The concept of public participation is by no means a new one, nor has its implementation ever been straightforward. In Sherry Arnstein’s well known work – *A Ladder of Citizen Participation* (1969) – she highlights that while no one is against the idea in principle, challenges arise when the “have nots” (in Arnstein’s case – marginalised African-American, Mexican and other racialized communities) attempt to become involved in the redistribution of power. She suggests that it is then when support from traditionally-powerful groups tends to diminish. Hence, participation, in Arnstein’s view, is intrinsically linked with the notion of active citizenship, and the way that participation is practiced has very different implications for the distribution of citizen power. From this perspective, Arnstein suggests that participation should be understood as a “ladder,” whereby non-participatory forms of engagement (such as citizen ‘manipulation’ or ‘therapy’) fall within the bottom rungs, while ‘token’ forms of participation take-up the middle, and practices of ‘citizen power’ emerge at the higher levels.

Indeed, as many scholars would suggest, processes of citizen engagement (either within or external to existing political institutions) often fall under the intention of ‘deepening democracy,’ whereby individuals are exposed to the opportunity to deliberate and contest existing norms, practices and realities, towards recreating new democratic

structures (Gaventa 2005; Mansbridge, et al. 2012). At the same time, the notion of 'citizenship,' also becomes key to this discussion. For the purposes of this chapter, 'citizenship' does not necessarily imply the neo-liberal referencing of an individual as being legally tied to a geographic territory. Instead, the notion of 'participatory citizenship' becomes important in this context – whereby citizenship is a personal achievement and grounded in an acknowledgement of a *right to have rights*, and which generally involves tension and struggle for recognition within political arenas, particularly for marginalised groups (Dagnino 2010). Hence, processes of participation have the potential to be highly personal in nature, as well as highly political.

With competing notions of citizenship and differing levels of power and identity, processes of public participation become exceedingly difficult to facilitate in productive and inclusive ways - particularly in contexts of high inequality such as South Africa. Healy (1992, p.155) suggests that one of the most important forms of addressing divergent interests is to "plan through debate" in a respectful way. Through debate, all sides are heard and acknowledged; to debate is not simply to list demands but to provide justification. Along with debate, there is a need for "a reflexive and critical capacity ... in the process of argumentation" (Healy 1992, p.155). Healy's approach is thus about maximizing participation in the planning process by positioning the planner as a facilitator, who, through strategic forms of engagement, is able to negotiate, validate and eventually define a basis of rationality through complex forms of interaction with diverse communities. As an important aspect of inclusive participation, Soen (1997) suggests that planners have a unique role in terms of facilitating 'trust' between diverse interest groups, while Forester (2013) adds that along with substantive skills, planners require a high degree of emotional and communicative capacities to be efficient in their role.

Communicative planning as an approach aims to advance deliberate democracy by exploring the potential for broad, workable agreement on planning matters, making deliberation inclusive and thorough before a planning issue is decided on (Healey 2006). This type of planning attempts to neutralize biased power relations by reducing their influence in order to produce more democratic outcomes (Forester 2013). Communicative planning entails more than talking with stakeholders and informing the public. It is about a respectful, interpersonal discursive practice adapted to the needs of the liberal and pluralist societies in order to prevent one social group from legitimately forcing its preferred solutions to collective problems on other groups (Sager 2013; De Roo & Porter 2007). The ideal is to reach a decision through debate rather than voting.

In the South African context, the practice of town planning (and consequent opportunities for public participation) is highly unique, due to the previous apartheid-era focus on spatial planning to maintain distances between racial groups. Under the Group Areas Act (1950), black South Africans were not permitted to access the most viable business and manufacturing areas of cities; while under provisions of the Black (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act (No. 25 of 1945), street trading and economic activity were tightly controlled and mainly restricted. With the implementation of such laws, street vending was mostly unpractised during the apartheid era. However, upon transitioning to a

new democracy in 1994, South Africa saw a surge in street trading across the country (Skinner 2006, 2008). In terms of public participation during the apartheid era, Turok (1994, p.247) notes that, “there was little scope in statutory planning procedures for public consultation, let alone for more active forms of public participation.”

In post-apartheid South Africa, the institutional attitude towards town planning, the role of public participation and the inclusion of marginalised groups has changed significantly. Participatory processes are now embedded into planning legislation, and strategies have been drawn up to focus on planning that would seek to reduce the pervasive inequalities entrenched by apartheid while improving social cohesion. The *Municipal Systems Act 2000 (MSA)* provides context around how planning should be undertaken at the local level, specifically around the creation of mandatory Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), which are binding planning documents that set out a municipality’s short and long-term visions for all aspects of their development (see Chapter 2 for more background on the legal position of this policy framework). The MSA outlines an entire chapter on “Community Participation,” such that a municipality must “encourage, and create conditions for, the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality” (2000, p.16). The *Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act 2013 (SPLUMA)* was passed as a framework policy to set out the institutional structures and basic principles for land-use management within all spheres of government - including national, provincial and municipal. SPLUMA outlines five core principles that planners and governments are encouraged to take account of within planning processes. These principles include: spatial justice, spatial sustainability, spatial resilience, efficiency and good administration. The concepts of spatial justice and spatial sustainability are particularly relevant for the creation of planning policies and decision-making of relevance to the informal economy. As other studies have highlighted, the majority of individuals participating in the informal economy (and particularly street trading) are from previously disadvantaged groups, are generally poor, with dependents, and otherwise unemployed (Horn 2011). According to SPLUMA, municipalities must endeavour to accommodate these groups in municipal plans and priorities through the provision of fair and viable opportunities towards securing their livelihoods. Moreover, under the principle of good administration, SPLUMA indicates that municipalities must “include processes of public participation that afford all parties the opportunity to provide inputs on matters affecting them” (7, a, iv).

Despite the promise of these policy documents and the participatory culture of planning that they attempt to foster, the reality is that the implementation of such principles is not straightforward. Landman (2004), for instance, questions how South African planners and ward councillors should negotiate participatory-planning processes with residents of gated communities, which are becoming increasingly popular within the country. Moreover, Watson (2003a) highlights an instance whereby the City of Cape Town attempted to replace an informal settlement with formal, serviced housing but was brought to a halt during a 3-month protest undertaken by a local Women’s Empowerment Group, protesting against the city’s actions. Watson calls this display “a direct clash of rationalities” driven by widely divergent worldviews between planners, city officials and ‘recipients’ of planning, or in other words, a clash between the city as an objective entity, and the city as lived.

## Methodology

The research sought to address the following questions:

- Firstly, by constructing a street trader identity in Stellenbosch, the purpose was to determine whether traders identify themselves as active, contributing members of society, with the power to negotiate their own livelihoods.
- Secondly, by examining existing practices and opportunities for inclusive participation in town-planning, the research attempted to determine to what extent current formal and informal channels of participation within the municipality encourage the creation of inclusive spaces for informal traders to sustain and negotiate their own livelihoods.
- Lastly, the research investigated the existing relationships between the street traders, municipal officials as well as perceptions from the broader Stellenbosch community in order to establish how these relationships contribute or detract from creating an inclusionary environment for planning of informal spaces.

A mixed-methods approach was used throughout the course of this research. The objective of this approach was grounded in the intention of attaining diverse perspectives from street traders, relevant municipal staff and other key actors, to understand the varied agendas of different groups, to assess where divergences or tensions exist within these agendas, and finally - where opportunities may be available for increased cohesion and cooperation. As such, a combination of structured and unstructured interviews was utilized, as well as ethnographic analysis at each trading site, an analysis of historical records at the local municipal archive, and finally – ‘insider’ action-research practice and observation of municipal politics and town-planning mechanisms during a six-month internship with Stellenbosch Municipality’s Town Planning Department.

The data-collection process was initiated in August 2016, during which time interview questions were established for traders as well as for municipal staff members. In the case of traders, interview questions revolved around three core themes: 1) the background of the owner and business typology; 2) the location and spatiality of the business; and 3) any engagement the trader has had with the municipality over the course of their trading career in Stellenbosch. To administer the trader interviews, two sites within the central area of Stellenbosch were selected and visited over the course of several days in September 2016 (Figure 10.1). The first site, *Die Braak*, was historically used as a central town square, hosting regular farm markets and acting as a community gathering space. At present, the space consists of a large grassy field, with some pedestrian sidewalks criss-crossing the park and oak trees bordering most of the space. As one of the few open, public recreational spaces in the area, *Die Braak* tends to attract a number of unemployed or homeless individuals who often lie under the trees or in the sun, depending on the season. Although *Die Braak* remains a central component of the historical core of Stellenbosch, it forms the western border of the majority of commercial and tourist activity within the CBD. As such, neither locals nor tourists tend to have reason to pass through the space on a regular basis. Despite various studies and site development plans prepared for the area, the space has yet to undergo any form of significant transformation and hence remains under-utilized by the majority of residents and visitors of Stellenbosch. The Braak is Stellenbosch’s only grade-A heritage resource.





**Figure 10.1** Aerial view of central Stellenbosch, including Bird Street and *Die Braak* trading sites (Source: Authors)

One of the few regular, structured activities to exist in *Die Braak* is an informal-trader market, which runs Monday to Saturday during daylight hours. The term ‘market’ is used loosely here, since a market generally has a more formalized structure and recognition, whereas *Die Braak* traders have failed to attain a marketable identity within the municipality. At the time of data collection, approximately sixteen trading stalls had been set up by vendors at *Die Braak*, although this number is likely to vary by season. Of the sixteen vendors present, eight interviews were conducted, with three female and five male traders. These interviews were generally quite structured in nature, lasting from fifteen to twenty minutes, with the same questions posed to each vendor.

The second trading site in the study is the *Bird Street Taxi Rank* trading area. Unlike *Die Braak*, which is located within the tourist core of Stellenbosch, the taxi rank site is situated at the edge of the CBD, in an area of town that tends to be quite bustling during the day, as it forms a central transit hub for lower-income commuters and university students. On the other hand, one would be unlikely to find many tourists or higher-income residents in the area, unless passing through in private vehicles. In 2005, the municipality constructed a new, formal taxi rank on the site, to act as a central pick-up and drop-off point for ‘taxis’ (mini busses) entering and exiting Stellenbosch. Adjacent

to the taxi rank, a roofed-and-walled formal market structure was also constructed to accommodate informal traders who had been regularly trading in the area for decades. More about this process will be discussed later in the chapter.

At the *Bird Street Taxi Rank* site, five interviews were conducted with three female and two male vendors, out of potential of approximately ten traders who were present during the time of interviews. Participants were selected at random, but many (predominantly black, and identified as foreign by other vendors) vendors selling inside the market structure immediately declined participation in the study while (mostly coloured) vendors outside of the structure were eager to be involved.

Beyond visiting the two trading sites, interviews were also held with members of municipal staff from three departments who interact or make decisions (either directly or indirectly) with or about street traders in the municipality. Staff included representatives from the Town Planning and Community Security departments, as well as the Local Economic Development and Integrated Development Planning units. These interviews were conducted in October 2016 (following interviews with traders themselves), in order to triangulate information received from traders, and to develop a local-government perspective of the town's vision and policies for creating a viable working environment for low-income entrepreneurs. For the purposes of this research, all quotations extracted during these interviews have been coded and anonymised.

## Vendor identity

### *Die Braak trading site*

All traders interviewed at *Die Braak* stated that they were immigrants from various African countries. Most traders interviewed were from well-educated backgrounds, many of which had attained post-secondary qualifications in their home countries - including one individual with a college degree in Business Administration and one with a three-year geography degree. Others indicated a diversity of previous work experience - including a sports coach for children with disabilities; a primary school teacher, and hotel manager. Interestingly, none of the *Die Braak* traders mentioned any previous experience operating a small business prior to arriving in South Africa. The amount of time operating a business on the site varied, but the majority had been positioned in or around the *Die Braak* area for upwards of eight years, while others were relatively new to the site. The majority lived within the Stellenbosch area - predominantly in the mainly-black township of Kayamandi.

Despite their varied countries of origin and diverse professional backgrounds, interviews with *Die Braak* traders indicated a strong and cohesive group identity grounded in their collective 'otherness,' shared economic experiences and their exclusion from job opportunities and rights afforded to South African citizens. Many of the traders indicated pride and a sense of gratitude for the opportunity to own a business in Stellenbosch, despite long and hard hours. Many vendors reported working upwards of ten or more hours per day, six days per week. Having a large, open space was seen as an advantage of the business location, as was the "freedom to move around,"

proximity to the tourist town centre, and protection from large trees on the site during hot summer days. Vendors were divided on whether they would prefer the current flexibility of informal shop structures that were set-up and removed each day, or the reliability of formal stalls where their goods could be locked away each night. On the other hand, the extreme seasonality of the business was indicated as a significant challenge for business sustainability, with vendors indicating that they may turn an average profit of R300 - R1 500 per week, while some noting that during the winter months, it would not be uncommon to go more than a week without any sales.

Due to the regular hardships of the business, traders verbally contrasted their perseverant work ethic to that of South Africans, with one female vendor noting that South Africans are "spoilt" by the government:

[South Africans] get free houses, free healthcare and free education... and so they don't know how to work hard. This is why you will not find South Africans who sell arts and crafts to tourists like this... because the amount of labour that goes in, every day, to set up the shop, transport all of the goods... it takes a lot of time and energy.

*(Female vendor, Die Braak)*

This framing of "them" versus "us" is largely reflective of the larger (and often violent) culture of xenophobia pervading South Africa, whereby many (particularly black, African) foreigners are accused of taking jobs and homes away from South Africans, while contributing to the country's soaring crime rates (Piper & Charman 2016; Crush 2000). Interestingly, in interviews with municipal staff, similar views were raised:

In my view that is where the xenophobia comes in. Because these people are qualified, [but] they can't live in their countries some of them walk from Kenya, Nigeria [ ] they must negotiate their way through. I don't know, but they're there. They're working, making money and the local people see them making money, and they have the idea that they are taking away the money [the locals] must make. But 'we're too lazy', or 'too uneducated' or 'we are not entrepreneurs we rely on the system.' And [the foreigners] don't do that.

*(Interview: MS1)*

Unfortunately, if you look at the Global Entrepreneur Monitor... South Africa, in terms of entrepreneurial activities, we are probably third-last, in Africa. And that's why the [foreign vendors] don't understand why [locals] are making such a big deal out of it. All [the foreigners] say is, "All we need is space. The rest, we'll do." Our guys are standing like ... you give them the space and the next thing they'll tell you is "I don't have the money to buy the stock." That's why [the foreigners] are there. Those who are entrepreneurial ... from Zimbabwe ... it's a real trip to travel here. It's not easy! It means you have the best of the best here *(Interview: MS2)*.

Ultimately, there is a perception both amongst Die Braak traders and municipal staff that they are hardworking, industrious and enterprising individuals. On the other hand, their position as non-citizens marginalizes them, to some extent, from making claims on the municipality for the provision of better services that could enhance their economic performance. Unlike black South African citizens, who embody a culture and

history of protest action, foreigners simply do not have the same large-scale political capital, which leaves them vulnerable to manipulation by town planning authorities. This was most clearly highlighted in 2012, when vendors were forcefully evicted from their former trading site without notice nor negotiation.

Due to the precarious legality of their political and economic situation, *Die Braak* vendors thus tend to have a tense but law-abiding relationship with the municipality, epitomized by their strict attention to operating hours, use of space, noise control and clean-up procedures in order to avoid further disruption to their business activities and economic livelihoods. Several vendors even reported that they are frequently blamed for crime in the areas, as well as the unhygienic conditions of the park brought upon by *bergies* (homeless persons) overnight. As a result, vendors often take the initiative to clean up any mess that would cause the municipality to look unkindly to their operations and/or would deter customers from feeling comfortable in the space.

### Bird Street taxi rank

As opposed to *Die Braak* where all vendors hailed from other African countries, vendors at the Bird Street Taxi Rank composed a mixed background of coloured South Africans and black-Africans. As opposed to the *Die Braak* market, which sells art and products for tourists, the Bird Street Taxi Rank provides for a different market entirely, targeting low-income commuters with the sale of cheap, convenience goods - such as fruits, vegetables, spices, smoked fish, clothing and jewellery. Informal street trading at the site has reportedly been popular for decades, with some interview informants reporting that they or their families had been operating their businesses for upwards of forty to fifty years. However, in 2005, the municipality underwent a process of 'formalizing' traders, through the creation of a designated physical structure for sales. As we will see in the next section, this structure currently reinforces dominant hierarchies at the site, exasperating tensions between traders that are already in strong competition.

During the course of the research, only coloured vendors agreed to be interviewed, while black African vendors (identified as foreigners by the other vendors) somewhat nervously declined to participate. Unlike the *Die Braak* vendors, who demonstrate a common identity and solidarity through their 'otherness,' there appears to be complex factors of xenophobia and long-established hierarchies at play amongst traders at the Bird Street Taxi Rank. On the one hand, coloured South African vendors tended to differentiate themselves from the 'foreigners' at the market, often through expressions of both entitlement to the space and suspicion or hostility towards the economic activities of foreign vendors. At the same time, many coloured vendors appear to be in conflict with one another for optimal vending space and competing ideas of leadership and representation. During interviews, they would often express their distrust towards foreign vendors, suggesting that their businesses were merely fronts for drug sales and trafficking. On the other hand, several hinted that even the other coloured vendors could be "mean and nasty" at times, due to competition between themselves.

From the perspective of an inclusive town planning agenda, this lack of social capital between Bird Street traders results in increased complexity for town planners to

negotiate competing priorities and power struggles between traders. To some extent, this complexity is a reflection of the anti-foreigner hostilities expressed by many South Africans. On the other hand, I argue that the current use of space and physical structure of the site tend to reinforce and exasperate existing hierarchies, which will be discussed in the following sections.

The research suggests that vendors within the two trading sites have very different conceptualisations of their identity - both individually and as a collective. From the Die Braak side, as foreigners to South Africa, vendors experience a lack of individual power or agency to negotiate with the municipality, due to their foreign citizenship and limitation of rights as non-South Africans. On the other hand, they exhibited a strong collective identity, grounded in shared ownership and respect for the space, pride in business ownership and gratitude for the opportunity to work in central Stellenbosch. While the municipality, to some extent, recognizes and appreciates the entrepreneurial capacities of vendors, they also tend to view them with suspicion and disdain, under the assumption that they may step out of line at any time. This perceived image of vendors as both entrepreneurs and 'con-artists' makes effective collaboration difficult, due to the lack of trust felt by both sides.

## Existing practices and opportunities for inclusive participation in town-planning

The by-law dictating interaction with traders and trading locations in Stellenbosch since 1995 is aptly entitled *Supervision and Control of the Carrying on of the Business of Street Vendor, Pedlar or Hawker By-Law*. Indeed, the very title of the document, indicating the need for 'supervision' and 'control' of traders seems to set the municipality's historical approach towards engagement and negotiation with the sector. Within this document, traders are restricted from occupying "a garden or park," next to a "church or other place of worship," beside a state-owned building or "a building declared to be a national monument," amongst other restrictions.

Research suggests that two previous major events have likely influenced the trajectory and sentiment of 'engagement' and 'inclusion' between traders and the municipality at each site. These events include 1) the forcible eviction of vendors from Die Braak in 2012, and 2) the planning and construction of the current formal trading structure at the Bird Street Taxi Rank site in 2005. In 2012, vendors at Die Braak, in Central Stellenbosch were ordered to vacate their long-term trading position beside the Shoprite-Checkers shopping centre, allegedly due to complaints received by members of the nearby church. The church complained about the 'noise' of vendor activities and their general proximity to the church, evoking the historical municipal street-trading by-law, which prevents trading alongside "a church or other place of worship" (Stellenbosch Municipality 1995:(2)(b)(iii)). With neither conversation nor negotiation, law-enforcement officials arrived to oversee the deconstruction of stalls and the eviction of traders from the site. As a result of the eviction, Die Braak vendors were out of work for at least a year while the municipality scurried to find an alternative place for them to trade 'legally.' However, under the current trading by-law, and due to the historical nature of Stellenbosch CBD,

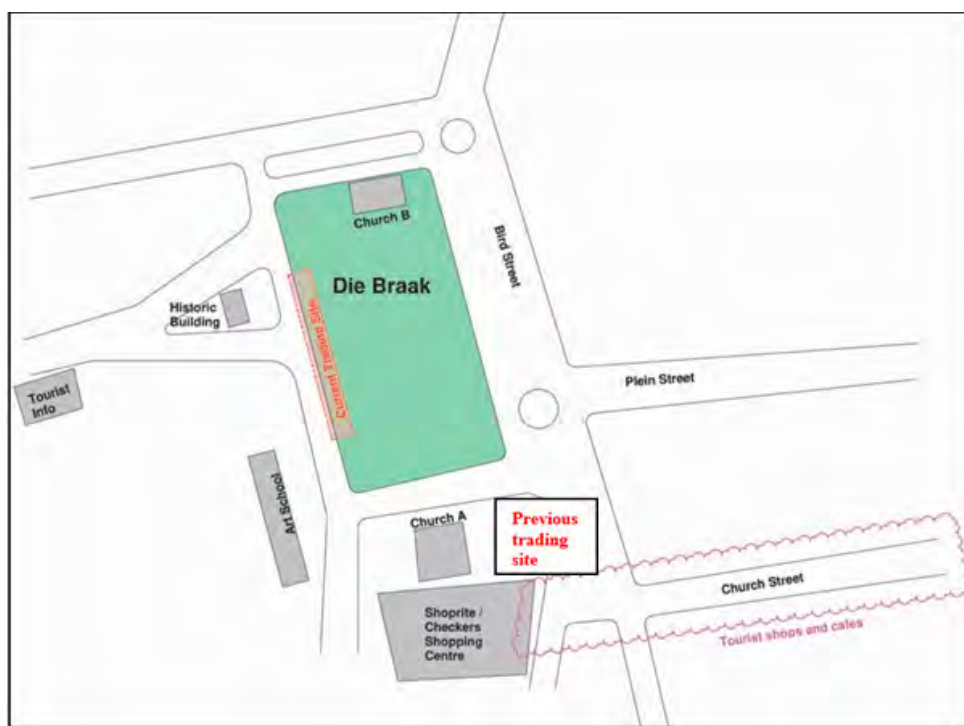


there were very few 'legal' places in which art-selling street traders could viably operate.

As one municipal staff member summarises:

[The church] complained. Shoprite-Checkers [shopping centre] complained about the formal versus informal business. Although they did not compete, the element was an issue. And the council [] just chuckled them off. So, it became a planning problem. And the politicians tried their best to find all sorts of funny places [for the traders to operate]. And we said, "you know, what they want is space. They want to be where people walk. Tourists are [around *Die Braak*], that's the logical place for them. Put them back and get some measures in place to control the problem. Don't move them away." So that became quite a fight and I think the fight turned ugly in the sense that the politicians looked like unhearty people [] So they started looking at "how can we help these people?"

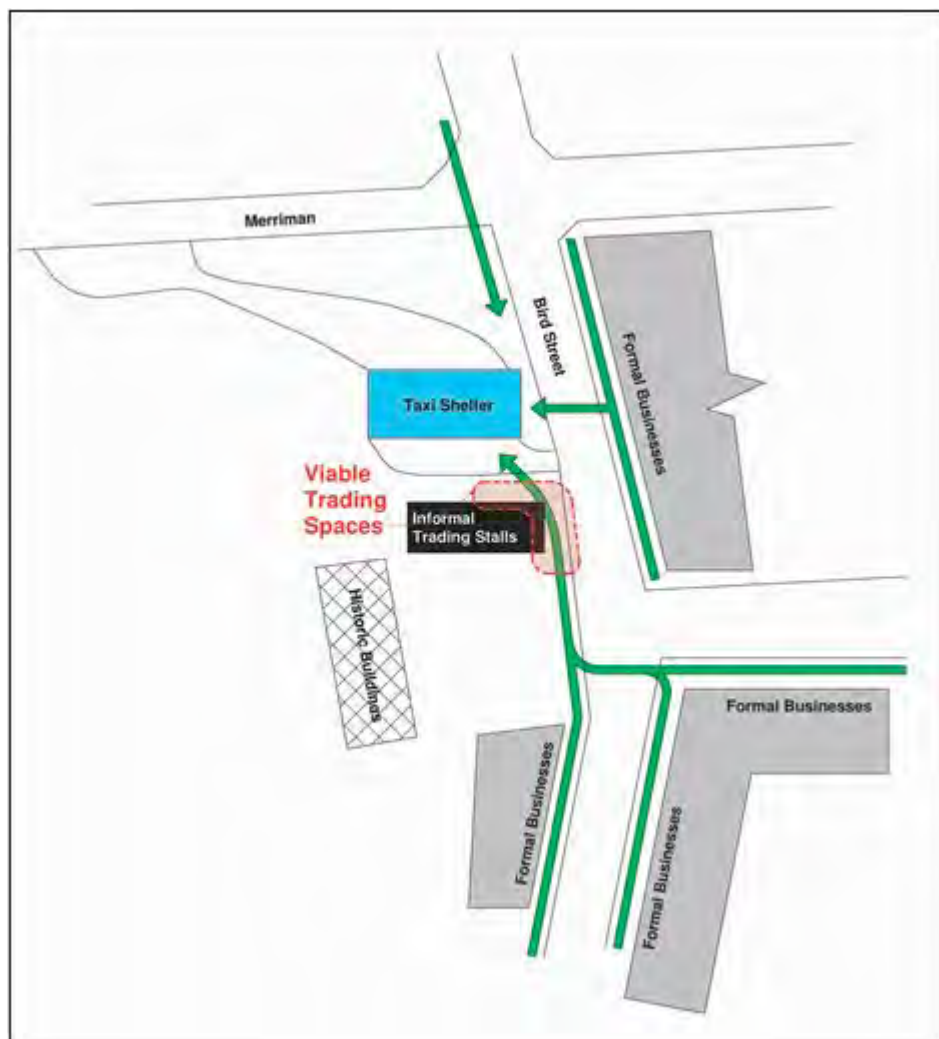
(Municipal Staff 1)



**Figure 10.2** *Die Braak*, pre-2014 trading site (Source: Authors)

The move to new the location also has implications for the viability of the trader businesses. As indicated in Figure 10.2, the previous trading site was in the direct sight-line of tourists, who tend to congregate on and around Church Street, where the majority of tourist-oriented shops and cafes are located. However, through the process of re-location to the new trading site at the far side of *Die Braak* (Figure 10.2), traders have

been mostly removed from the direct sight-line of tourists, as well as being spatially disassociated from the main hub of tourist and economic activity.



**Figure 10.3** Pedestrian-commuter flows around the Bird Street taxi rank (Source: Authors)

The primary intention of the taxi-rank site (Figure 10.3) transformation was to organize a central space for mini-bus taxis to pick-up and drop-off commuting customers, while at the same time, to 'organize' and 'formalize' street vendors and vending spaces that had existed on the site for decades. In particular, the municipality sought to spatially disassociate informal trading away from the immediate transport area, in order to improve transport efficiency and pedestrian safety. With this intention in mind, the municipality established a consultative "market group," consisting of individuals representing informal traders, taxi drivers, and community stakeholders.

Despite a planned process of diverse stakeholder engagement throughout the construction of the Bird Street Taxi Rank, the result, once again, is a process of citizen participation that falls very low on Arnstein's Ladder of Participation – whereby participation (on the part of informal traders) was largely tokenistic in its intention. As such, the resultant structure and layout of the combined taxi and market space is a reflection of the non-inclusive and historically skewed priorities of developing public spaces within the town centre.

Both the Die Braak and Bird Street Taxi rank case studies highlight the role of competing interest groups in the process of making and negotiating town-planning priorities and decisions. In the case of Die Braak, entities including formal businesses, the church and politicians have frequently exploited their power and position to the demise of vulnerable traders; while similarly at the Bird Street site, taxi associations and interest groups that have historically prioritised "aesthetics" rather than economic viability have tended to overshadow the long-term knowledge and expertise of street traders. This raises the question of how the municipality should negotiate, on more equal terms, with traders at each site? As one member of staff articulates:

One of the biggest issues I'm sitting with is how to deal with [the traders] because they're not organised. You see, it becomes very difficult with a local authority, to deal with you as an 'individual.' What I'm trying now is to get them more organised. Let them speak with one voice [...] And currently, it's not working for me. I'm trying to see how I can get the Provincial Traders Association to possibly come out here, to help them establish their own association. And build the capacity in that. Because um what I told them, we're open for discussion but are you ready for us? If you get in to my office, who do you represent? Yourself, or what?

*(Municipal Staff 2).*

To date, two events have largely shaped the 'culture' of participation in terms of negotiation and decision making between traders and municipal staff. These events, and their subsequent consequences, have amounted to an environment whereby feelings of mistrust, non-accountability and competing power relations are highly apparent between street traders and the municipality. Nonetheless, aside from a history of unproductive interaction between traders and the municipality, other formal and regular channels of public participation do exist, in terms of input for more general town-planning priorities. While not specific to the context of informal trading, it is important to acknowledge these formal channels of engagement in order to develop a more nuanced understanding of the culture of participation within the municipality, and in what ways (if any) the municipality is seeking to create a more inclusive urban environment.

One of these formal channels exists through the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) Unit of the municipality. As part of the public participation process for annually updating the IDP, public meetings are held, by ward, to provide summaries and to answer questions around the creation and updating of this document. As part of this process, meetings are often held within accessible community venues, with transportation arranged where necessary:

Stellenbosch is notorious for public participation, because you have a lot of rich people, educated people conservative people. So if you want to say, "I want to put the new informal housing here," you'll have a lot of people objecting to that. So it becomes a NIMBY kind of thing [] It's extremely difficult to get broad support from public participation processes. But our public participation [model] is: we make a suggestion, you comment. That's the wrong way around, in my view

*(Municipal Staff 1).*

## Relationships for creating an inclusionary environment

Along with updating the current street-trading by-law, the most recent iteration of the municipality's Stellenbosch Spatial Development Framework (SDF) and Integrated Development Plan (IDP) seem to suggest that the municipality is thinking strategically around how best to accommodate street traders within the CBD. For instance, as part of the *Inclusive Economic Growth* plan in the Stellenbosch SDF (2012), the municipality articulates several action items that would align spatial development priorities with assistance and support to informal and small-scale businesses.

These include:

- "A range of informal retail locations should be provided on sidewalks, verges and median areas to cater for permanent traders (e.g. fruit and vegetables, newspapers and magazines, refreshments and snacks, second hand goods, crafts, clothing etc.)."
- "20% of the space in regional and neighbourhood shopping centres should include a market area, preferably linked to public transport drop off points and sidewalk opportunities."
- "Areas of land should be set aside, and if necessary expropriated to provide SMMEs with access to well-located parts of the CBD for retail, service provision and manufacturing."
- "Marketplaces should be created in central locations that are able to intercept significant pedestrian flows, preferably linked to public transport interchanges."

Going further, the Stellenbosch Integrated Development Plan earmarks a budget line item of R500 000 for "informal traders," (p.218) and close to R400 000 for "establishment of informal trading markets" (p.218). Although there is little description of precisely how this money would be utilised, these items seem to suggest at least some obligation towards facilitating accessible and equitable opportunities for informal traders to be able to earn a livelihood.

However, despite provisions allotted to informal trading in the most recent SDF and IDP, to date the municipality appears to have accomplished little in terms of creating a coherent strategy for developing viable spaces for informal trading. This lack of intentionality is problematic, and gives the impression that the municipality lacks a strategic spatial-economic consideration of where traders should be accommodated, and to what extent the municipality should be responsible for providing basic resources to facilitate the use of these spaces. As summarized by one member of staff, the new trading by-law should be "the tool that implements the spatial plan," and this plan

must consider where viable spaces for trading exist - including where the foot traffic is high enough to sustain business. This lack of action (despite loose, on-paper plans) suggests that current processes of engagement between municipal departments and traders themselves may be lacking, and hence that the municipality simply does not understand the unique needs and planning priorities of the sector.

In general, the research demonstrates that there is significant distrust and tension between local community members and informal traders. There is a perception that vendors are involved in criminal activities, and that the spaces around *Die Braak* and Bird Street are rife with crime, and hence are generally unsafe. According to traders at *Die Braak*, this perception tends to be fuelled by the number of *bergies* around the trading site. Several vendors at the *Die Braak* site mentioned that the most important support that they would like to receive from the municipality would be in the form of security "to keep away delinquents that scare away the customers" (Female Trader, *Die Braak*). On the other hand, as articulated earlier in this chapter, much of the public fear and uncertainty may stem from feelings of xenophobia.

## Conclusion

This research, conducted within two informal trading sites in central Stellenbosch showcases some of the dilemmas of inclusive town planning in South Africa. These two case studies epitomize the nature of dichotomous power relations between the municipal planning office and a (vulnerable) segment of the economy, while demonstrating the need for strong and progressive town planning policies, creative forms of public engagement and urban design that acknowledges the nuanced characteristics of historical and present relationships between heterogeneous South African communities. While town planning is not necessarily the exclusive medium for addressing many of the deeply embedded issues highlighted in this analysis (such as long-standing historical tensions between racial groups and perceived public insecurity), research suggests that it has the potential to play a key role in this regard.

Stellenbosch Municipality needs to acknowledge the legitimacy of informal trading as a potentially viable (and often exclusive) source of income for many South African citizens and residents. However, from a power and inequality perspective, there are many forces at work in town-planning processes that take priority over decisions that could be beneficial for poor and marginalized communities within the municipality. This is something that town planners, politicians and all other municipal staff must remain conscious of, and by all means, it is not an easy task.



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