INCLUDING THE URBAN INFORMAL SECTOR IN THE PLANNING PROCESS: A STUDY OF STREET HAWKING ACTIVITIES IN DHAKA CITY, BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT
The urban informal sector (UIS) is a vibrant section of the urban economy worldwide. In Dhaka, policy-making and planning processes that are aimed for the UIS, which is facing high population density, are adversely affecting the urban built environment. Street enterprises are among the dominant sub-groups of the retailing environment. Their availability along sidewalks, as well as in markets, schools, and parks, has raised the issue of the significance of their activities in the urban economy of Dhaka City. Street hawking has always been overlooked by local authorities and the police, and is regarded as an illegal activity. This study focused on factors that underlie street hawking. It aims to observe the hawking scenario and its effect on the urban environment as well as to examine several inclusive planning approaches to recognize the contributions of hawking to urban development. For sampling, qualitative data were used to analyze the results of the focus group discussion and interviews to create profiles, categories, and patterns. The findings show that dominant hawker groups have mostly migrated from rural areas and have low skills. They sell various products in different locations in public places. The negative effects of hawkers on society include encroachment on sidewalks, over-urbanization, overcrowding of cities, and unrelenting traffic jams. This study concludes that street hawkers locate themselves without any guideline. Therefore, an approach was developed to solve problems associated with street hawking by recognizing street hawkers and including them in urban planning. Attention was also given on certification and public management systems as well as on the advantageous contributions of street hawkers to communities.

Keywords: Street hawking, Informal economy, Factors, Urban space, Planning

1.0 INTRODUCTION
In developing countries, the potential role of informal sector retailing in alleviating poverty and unemployment is indubitable (Dewar & Watson, 1990). However, the definitional debate on the informal sector stems from recognizing the numerous and complex linkages that exist between the formal and informal sectors in terms of their harmless or exploitative nature (Tokman, 1978). Informal sector retailing is one of the survival strategies of the indigent. Different points of view and contexts have resulted in various terms used for the informal sector. Scholars have referred
to the informal economy as the unregulated economy, unorganized sector, or unobserved employment, to cite a few examples. The informal sector typically refers to both the economic units and workers involved in various commercial activities and occupations that operate beyond the confines of formal employment (Williams & Jan, 1998); (Suharto, 2002). Various authors have used different terms to denote the informal economy, including the unbalanced economy (Ferman & L.A, 1973), the underground economy, the black market (Rakowski, 1994), and the hidden economy (Frey & W.W., 1984). In addition, popular media use terms such as imperceptible, hidden, sunken, uneven, non-official, and unrecorded economy (Losby, 2002). In many countries, informal activities are commonly not recognized by their governments (Bhowmik, 2005).

In Dhaka, uncontrolled hawking has created “informal” bazaar areas in public places. This phenomenon is more prevalent in the central retail area that has “naturally sprouted” in New Dhaka (Hossain, 2001). According to the 2012 Strategic Transport Planning Report, the Dhaka Metropolitan City has approximately 388 km of footpaths for the movement of city dwellers; however, hawkers have occupied approximately 155 km of these footpaths. This study investigates the spatial structure of hawking activities in a developing country such as Dhaka. Retail has a key role in urbanization in three aspects. First, as a high-value land use, retail is one of the drivers in the economics of urban land prices and the spatialization of other land uses. Second, retail functions as a major attractor of pedestrian and vehicular movements, and thus, it affects the patterns of urban activities and space use. Third, retail frequently offers the first form of employment to rural migrants arriving in a city, particularly in developing nations. In reality, however, chaos in the urban marketplace in developing countries is apparent (Findly, Paddison, & Dawson, 1990). This study has been motivated by the belief that a gap exists between perception and reality in this issue because of the lack of empirical studies on the nature of the spatial patterns and social relations of hawkers. The apparent complexity in such dynamics have drawn our attention regarding the necessity for a systematic investigation on the locational distribution of hawker clusters and the behavioral patterns of street hawkers and consumers with respect to urban planning

Hawkers are low-income entrepreneurs who are mainly found in densely populated urban informal sectors in developing countries. A sociologist (Bhowmik, 2005) claims that given the fragile nature of street hawking activities and the types of assets that are typically accumulated through such activities, hawkers are expected to encounter, in particularly acute degrees, common obstacles to attaining financial transactions. A continuous two-way progression is always observed, that is, a socio-spatial dialectic, in which people simultaneously create and modify urban spaces and adapt their spatial behavior according to the spaces that they are occupying (Knox, 1995). From this perspective, geographers and economists argue that the spatial patterns of urban retail developments arise from buyer–seller interactions within a specific urban context. In developed countries, shopping patterns have changed to keep abreast of rapidly changing socioeconomic conditions. By contrast, different social and economic environments in developing cities still accommodate formal and informal retailing activities at the same development level (Findly, Paddison, & Dawson, 1990). Consequently, the behavioral dynamic of varying groups of retailers and consumers shape retail developments in a rapidly urbanizing context (Kinsey, 1988). According to (Bodhikong & Moongjongklang, 2003), streets hawkers always have to serve the needs of their consumers, who are mostly from the poor sector.
Hawkers sell goods at low prices (Bhowmik, 2005). They always take their place near public areas (parks, bus or railway terminals, offices, schools, and so on) where people can easily buy necessary goods from them (Bromley, 2004).

2.0 THE PROBLEM
The hawkers in Dhaka City occupy streets and footpaths, which causes a serious problem in the metropolitan. They do not follow any guideline on where they can locate themselves. In addition, they occupy pedestrian space, and thus, pedestrians are forced to walk on the streets. According to Yankson and Paul (2000), as long as the urban informal economy grows, informal economic work areas or locations will be limited. Consequently, environmental problems such as traffic and health hazards will increase.

Dhaka is one of the fastest rising mega-cities in the world, with 500,000 to 600,000 new migrants, mostly from the poor sector, arriving in the city annually (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2010). The population of Dhaka is currently approximately 16 million and is projected to grow to 20 million by 2020 (World Bank, 2010), which makes it the third largest city in the world in terms of population. Most migrants come from rural areas to search for opportunities that can provide them with new livelihood options, and consequently, improvement in living standards (Hossain, 2001). This phenomenon has led to the rapid growth of the informal sector, which is accompanied by the dramatic increase in street trading. Such trading activities obviously increased in Dhaka, particularly along major transportation routes such as New Market, Gulistan, Motijhil, and Mirpur. Street hawkers are also common in bus and train stations, where crowds gather day and night.

At present, municipal and local government authorities in Dhaka do not seriously consider the needs of street hawkers. Therefore, this study will address this issue and attempt to include street hawkers in the urban landscape and economy. Urban development planning will not function well without appropriate certification and management policies on the welfare of street hawkers (Suharto, 2003).

Fig. 1: Growth of Dhaka City
Source: Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) Profile
3.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES
This study aims to: (a) investigate the patterns of street hawking and the factors that underlie this activity; and (b) examine a set of guidelines for street hawkers in Dhaka City that will allow them to be included in urban planning.

4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
The study population included (a) street hawkers who are occupying urban locations along streets, parks, and bus stops; (b) customers who buy from street hawkers, and (c) local government authorities. The research methodology used was the case study, which involved qualitative data collection. The units of analysis were street hawking activity and urban environment. A multiple embedded case design was used to analyze four context areas, a focus group discussion, and interviews by creating themes, categories, and patterns, which were organized based on the qualitative data. Participants in the qualitative survey were selected based on grounded theoretical sampling and availability (Bowen, 2005); (Charmaz, 2005).

4.1 Selecting the study area and the respondents
A huge number of street hawkers are found in Dhaka City. Based on statistics from the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), the city has approximately 5,000,000 street hawkers. The four busiest areas in Dhaka City were selected in terms of the aforementioned functional activities. These areas are Mirpur, New Market, Gulistan, and Motijheel, where numerous hawkers sell items that are necessary for daily living such as cosmetics, clothes, food, and so on.

4.2 Data collection technique
The qualitative data collection method was adopted in this research. Documents, observations, interviews, and photographic surveys were used to collect data for the study.

a) Documents were obtained as supporting evidence from relevant sources.

b) Observation was performed to ensure the reliability of evidence, which helped in observing the physical patterns of street hawking as well as the behaviors of street hawkers and consumers in the retailing environment.

c) Interviews, as a data collection technique, assisted in determining the relevance of hawking activities in the economy, the society, and the environment. This technique explores the perceptions of a community regarding hawking and the urban environment as well as its concerns on the current environment that supports such activity.

d) Photographic surveys assess visual images of hawking activities through the physical features of an urban environment and the usage of such facility.

4.3 Data analysis techniques
This research used data triangulation, which involves different methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2003). Relevant data were analyzed using the computer software NVIVO. This software increases the reliability and validity of data analysis because it makes the analysis process transparent, comprehensive, and replicable.

5.0 FINDINGS
In this research, data from documents, comments from street hawkers, episodic observations, as well as hawker and consumer participation were analyzed. In addition, street hawkers were determined to benefit from their informal activities in urban areas.
5.1 Dhaka and street hawking
In 2007, the DCC decided to relocate hawkers to 20 selected spots in the capital. However, this measure was not implemented for long because of different issues. According to the Bangladesh Combined Footpath Hawkers’ Council (2007), only 15,000 hawkers can stay in a holiday market while the rest will become jobless after they are evicted. Street hawkers gather in specific locations, which are close to areas where they can be approached easily by consumers. At present, spaces for street hawking activities have not been identified and user benefits have not been emphasized.

5.2 Profile of street hawkers
In a shopping area, young hawkers aged 16 to 35 years old remain as the dominant group (Hossain, 2001). Based on a field survey, most street hawkers are still in their youth. They cannot complete their primary education because of the poor economic condition of their family. As such, they are unsuitable for a job in the formal sector. According to Hossain (2001), 40% of hawkers are from low-income groups. Among them, 50% have high capital investment, whereas 25% do not. Hawkers mainly serve middle- and lower-class shoppers (Bhowmik, 2005). Many studies have discovered the same pattern. Collectively, the income from the informal sector is equivalent to or even higher than some of those from the formal sector (Thomas, 1995); (Tinker, 1997).

5.3 Nature and pattern of street hawking in Dhaka City
This study aims to determine the attitude, selling strategy, dependency relationship, and space organization of hawkers to include street hawking in urban plans. The researchers found that hawkers in the study area have no specific characteristics, groups (for example, shoes, saree, fruits, and so on), or guidelines. However, the prices of the services and products sold by street hawkers are lower than in supermarkets and other formal businesses. Moreover, the fruits and vegetables sold are fresh. For these reasons, hawkers attract a large number of customers.

The study revealed that demographic factors such as sex, age, educational attainment, and origin are significantly associated with hawking as a means of earning a living. The implications of these factors influence people to engage in street hawking. Table 1 provides the socioeconomic and cultural relations of street hawkers to the urban environment of Dhaka City based on the field survey.

Table 1: Socioeconomic and cultural relations of street hawkers to the urban environment of Dhaka City

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors that affecting the attitude of hawkers</th>
<th>Selling strategy and dependency relationship of hawkers</th>
<th>Space organization of hawkers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Majority is male</td>
<td>Attract shoppers from all economic classes, rickshaw pullers, and people moving along the streets; create a pseudo competition in a group with 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Heterogeneous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Origin | 80% migrated for employment opportunities in the informal sector | to 20 hawkers through extensive bargaining to advertise their products and attract customers to their businesses by offering a variety of items | places.

**Source:** Fieldwork (2013)

Based on the field survey, the mode of operation of the street hawkers in Dhaka City is classified into four types: permanent, semi-Permanent, semi-mobile, and mobile (Table 2). All types of hawkers are available in nearly every area that has been studied. The location maps provided in Table 2 only show the dominant types of hawker in a particular area.

**Table 2: Types of street hawker in Dhaka City**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Location map</th>
<th>Picture</th>
<th>Types of good</th>
<th>Consumer group</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>New Market</td>
<td><img src="image1" alt="New Market" /></td>
<td>Clothes, fresh fruits, and household items; In general, they sell only one or two types of goods.</td>
<td>Given the good quality of the products and their low price, members of the high-, middle-, and low-income groups are the main consumers.</td>
<td>This type of street business is run by more than one person and remains in a permanent location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-permanent</td>
<td>Mirpur</td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Mirpur" /></td>
<td>Clothes, household items, vegetables, fruits, services, and so on</td>
<td>Members of the middle- and low-income groups are the target consumers.</td>
<td>Selling platforms are placed on footpaths to conduct business for the day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile</td>
<td>Gulistan</td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Gulistan" /></td>
<td>Traditional snacks, household items, toys, cooked food, and so on</td>
<td>Members of the low-income group and indigent people shop from these hawkers.</td>
<td>Change their location annually or semi-annually</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4 Factors that influencing street hawking

Social reason:
Street hawking is a means of earning a livelihood among the urban poor because it requires a small capital and low skills. A high number of street hawkers in urban areas take to the street when they do not find other sources of income.

Economic reason:
The target customers of street hawkers are mainly passing pedestrians. However, despite the ambiguity of its definitions, street hawking, as an income-generating activity, has become a major structural feature of society. Street hawkers need very low investment and entering the street trading field to gain some income is basically effortless. Starting and activating a street hawking business is relatively stress-free.

Environmental reason:
Hawkers have occupied most streets, taking up any available space to trade. Given that they encroach on footpaths, pedestrians find it difficult to walk and are frequently annoyed with them. Hygiene is another negative effect of street food sellers on the environment. The centers of street hawking activities continue to rise in parks, streets, and terminals.

This condition has created a huge demand for other suitable work sites in urban areas to cope with the increasing number of job seekers in Dhaka City.

6. CONCLUSION
This study attempts to link street hawking with a range of life quality issues. To enhance the livability of Dhaka City, healthy urban designs, planning, and facilities must be developed through improved governance and management. Street hawking remains as a temporary business activity given the lack of authority involvement and sustainable management.

Street hawkers are causing problems by crowding footpaths in urban areas. A large number of urban dwellers rely on street hawkers to maintain their daily expenses. Evicting street hawkers is not a solution, but rather, it will place the city in a more critical state. Local authorities have to develop a management system for street hawkers to enable them to operate their businesses responsibly and to allow the authority to collect legal taxes from street hawkers. Changes in timetable and position layout, weekend cleaning (similar to that in Bangkok), and management decentralization can improve this sector. To include street hawkers in urban planning, licensing restrictions, restricted areas, inspections, and overall design in space provision can satisfy the requirements of both street hawkers and consumers. Such measures will be beneficial to both urban dwellers and street hawkers.
7. ACKNOWLEDGMENT
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8. REFERENCES


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