



Street trading and the World Cup: a 'beautified', inclusive city?

By Elsa Burzynski



When analysing official discourse and existing legislation about street trading, it appears that this activity is associated with all that is negative: crime, drug trafficking, pollution and non-compliance with the most basic hygiene rules, litter, overcrowding... Street traders are seen as being 'behind' many illegal activities, and street trading is considered as an issue to tackle, to hide, or to eradicate. This is even more the case when cities are hosting international events and when they are to be seen and looked at by a vast, worldwide audience. They have to convey a specific image of their country - and often, when it comes to cities in the global south, to build this very image for the occasion. Street trading being associated with the 'non-modern', many researchers have noticed that evictions often accompany major public and tourist events (Skinner: 2008), as part of a 'beautification process'. The preparation for the upcoming 2010 World Cup is thus an example of how street trading, being associated with several negative issues and specific risks, is to be controlled when a city, in this case the municipality of Tshwane, hosts such an event.

A set of measures to control street trading ahead of and during the World Cup

Street trading in Tshwane is regulated by the street trading by-laws as well as by the traffic by-laws. Besides this existing legislation, the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) and the City of Tshwane have agreed on additional by-laws, to be implemented during the Confederations Cup (2009) and the World Cup (2010). These by-laws aim at reinforcing legislation, including that related to street trading, by:

- Determining which areas are available for trading purposes during the World Cup, and actually prohibiting the use of the vast majority of urban areas (controlled access sites, exclusion zones, prohibited areas and even some restricted areas where trading was previously authorised). In my view, there are likely to be evictions, especially in the areas defined as non-trading areas.
- Ensuring that street trading does not generate actual and visual pollution, by producing litter or simply by occupying sites that should otherwise be accessible and visible.

- Ensuring that street trading does not "damage any property" or "injure any person", which relates to security concerns.
- Preventing street trading from "obstructing" traffic or people's movements.

In addition to these by-laws, FIFA and the City of Tshwane have been working on specific projects regarding the accommodation of a certain number of traders in predefined areas during the event. They intend to define "trading corridors" (specific streets where street trading can legally occur) as well as additional sites to accommodate a pre-defined number of street traders (mostly those selling foodstuffs and arts and crafts). The City of Tshwane has included public viewing areas (safe spaces from where to view buildings or sites of interest) among these additional sites.

Traders allowed to sell in such sites are to be identified from the existing database, according to precise criteria such as their compliance with hygienic rules or the quality of the goods sold (when it comes to arts and crafts), and will be given "events permits".

Similar projects are to be tested in other hosting cities such as Johannesburg, as the website of the City of Johannesburg confirms: "new opportunities are being created for traders to benefit from being situated in high fan traffic areas", including "several parallel events at which accredited traders will be able to sell their wares", as well as specific trading sites or "demarcated areas" (fan parks, public viewing areas, fan boulevard walkways, MTN Ekasi TVs, park and rides, and drop-off zones).

The FIFA street trading by-laws and these project plans confirm the fact that street trading is seen as a 'nuisance', preventing the city from being functional (security and traffic concerns, actual pollution) and aesthetic (visual pollution). It has to be regulated, hidden or removed from certain areas - hence the increasing number of clean-up campaigns and a noticeably increased police presence in the streets, searching and controlling stalls. As a consequence, major public events such as the World Cup only benefit a few traders - those who will be identified by the Local Economic Department, who will be issued a specific permit, and who will receive specific training. As for others, they might have been able, or they might be able in the future, to indirectly take advantage of this event:

- B., a street trader located near Pretoria Station, says that she has just opened a new stall, closer to the station, as she believes there will be more movement and more people during the World Cup. She intends to sell goods that will be most needed during this period, with a preference for communication goods (airtime, access to a public phone).
- W., a street trader located in Hatfield near a construction site, has chosen this particular location as the workers buy soft goods from him. Construction sites and road upgrading, ahead of the World Cup, have thus represented an opportunity for some street traders over the last months.

The World Cup and the possibility of social unrest

As noted earlier, street trading is often associated with insecurity by officials. It is also associated with insecurity by some street traders themselves. Indeed, trading in the streets means being visible and vulnerable, especially when it comes to a specific category of traders - those from other African countries. When talking with non-South African traders, it appears that many of them ascribe their vulnerability to xenophobic feelings (Skinner : 1999), some fearing they will be assaulted or insulted due

to their status as 'foreigners'. Xenophobia is indeed an important obstacle when it comes to the integration of non-nationals, including their participation in the South African economy - or, at least, it is viewed as such by many non-nationals.

The majority of the traders tend to say that they should be safe during the upcoming World Cup, as the country has to present itself as a safe, inclusive destination for 'foreigners' - to tame the 'social unrest'. However, most of them fear the period after the World Cup, expecting increased xenophobia and harsher immigration policies. This event, and the period following, thus becomes the locus for increased anxiety and for urban legends regarding the possibility of xenophobic attacks. Many traders say they have heard, or have been told by South African citizens, that they will be threatened immediately after the event. Others, like B., say that there will be more arrests after the World Cup, and that the Department of Home Affairs will refuse to renew the asylum seekers' permit which most of them are using. Many traders thus plan to go back to their home country after the event.

It is quite impossible to anticipate the possibility of attacks or harsher measures against non-nationals after the World Cup. However, it is obvious that South African cities have an interest in displaying a pacified social environment during the event - an environment which remains a fiction according to the 'foreign' street traders themselves.

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