Urban Livelihoods, the Informal, and new roles for Professionals and Local Government

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Richard Dobson, an architect by profession, worked for the eThekwini [formerly Durban] Municipality as a project leader for over ten years, first leading its Warwick Junction Urban Renewal Project and later its Inner-city Renewal Programme. He left eThekwini in 2006 to establish Asiye eTafuleni (AeT) and focus on offering design and facilitation services to those working in the informal economy. His technical, design and project work has been recognised through various local, national and international awards and citations – one example being his receipt of the 2014 Diakonia Human Rights Award for advancing the rights of informal workers.

Asiye eTafuleni (AeT) believes that urban planning and design are key drivers of change that can support the livelihoods of informal workers. AeT brings communities together through inclusive planning and design processes in order to build a better, more sustainable urban future for everyone. AeT believes that informal workers and the working poor must have a voice in urban planning and design processes. AeT works to provide a facilitating role – as well as an active role – in promoting informal workers' voices in urban design and planning, including support in spatial planning, infrastructure and urban furniture, and regulations, laws and policies.[1]

1 https://aet.org.za/, last accessed 30 July 2019.

The session was moderated by **Phillip Lühl**, Lecturer, Department of Architecture and Spatial Planning, NUST

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Introduction

I am an architect by profession, privileged over the last 20 years or so to be involved in urban regeneration, particularly in a part of Durban that has focused on urban informality. I am with an NGO we founded called *Asiye eTafuleni*, which in isiZulu means "come to the table". That is just the literal meaning, but figuratively an isiZulu speaker will understand you are saying "Let's negotiate". The NGO is about negotiating the urban future or urban present for people who use public spaces for their livelihoods. I will talk a little bit about urbanisation, informality, exclusion, about being alienated from what I will describe as an urban scene, and the consequence of that: a reality with parallel worlds where neither learns from the other. The case study which I will present is the Warwick Junction in Durban, and I will tease out some observations, but I will not be making conclusions; I am hoping we will be doing this together. I will not really focus on the labour aspects. First of all, I am an architect not an academic – so I am not even going to try to perform as one. Often in relation to informality, labour comes up mainly because people are struggling to define *informality*, so they start comparing it to the *formal*, and *formal* generally means "formal jobs". A lot of definitions of *informality* start challenging the trade union movement in terms of how they describe formal jobs. Based on these definitions, informal jobs are not protected, and then it becomes problematic. I am not going to go there, other than [make] some general observations.

Urbanisation and the informal

If we talk about urbanisation, it is really important to talk about some global realities. We all know that we have reached the mark where, now, the world is predominantly settled in urban spaces.[2] One in eight people live[s] in megacities, which are cities with over 10 million people; but what I think is more interesting is that half of the urban population does not live in megacities. They actually live in cities with about 500,000 habitants. I mention that because, in my mind, when we start thinking about informality, we start talking about urban; we sort of start moving towards the catastrophic version. Your context here is Namibia and, for myself back in Durban, I think our challenges are those of smaller towns and cities.

Then if we start talking about economics, there is the story about 'Africa rising'.[3] The story is that African countries are actually performing better than other countries in the world. However, that is largely jobless growth.[4] While this is linking us to international markets, the trickle-down to the rest is incredibly poor. It is postulated that there are two models that we should be pursuing: one is the Market Model, which is the one I was referring to in which we are trying to link Africa to global markets – which in fact leaves us with jobless growth. The other one is the Equity Model, where you actually try do both, but you are very conscious of the trickle-down; [where] in fact all the players have to win in the equation. I mention this because these do start to bump up against

informality. Because part of what informality is about is people's reaction to joblessness: being busy, but not necessarily being productively busy.

We need to look at where we are from an urban point of view, from a global reality. We are seeing huge displaced populations which are politically displaced, who now, through survival techniques, try to reconfigure how they operate in the urban [sphere] from a political point of view, from a settlement point of view, and of course from the [economic] point of view. An example of this is mobile money in Somalia,[5] which is amazing because it is really a response to the meltdown of the money system there. In doing so, people invented another way of doing money, and the reach of that money is incredible. It may again [be] tainted with the black market and the illicit side of how that money is being moved and laundered, but the upside of it is a really functioning circulation of money being able to purchase goods.

If we start looking at the informal economy and start throwing numbers, the reality is sobering. In Southeast Asia, anything around 80% in terms of how people earn their livelihood is deemed *informal*;[6] and if you go to India, the figures are at about 90%. So, what is the reality? Is the reality formal or informal? Then there is sub-Saharan Africa, where the prevalence of the informal economy ranges from 82% in Mali down to 33% in South Africa – that is, excluding agricultural employment. There are many figures about informality today, but at the same time the reality is highly contextual. The big surprise for me is that, in South Africa, 44% of the wholesale and retail activities go through the informal economy, and it is estimated that this is worth N\$52 billion, or 5.2% of the GDP.[7] Therefore, informality is not something which is marginal: we are actually looking at something which is now starting to be really mainstream.

Informality is a new entrance into the city, into an urban economy. However, these new participants are not urban-literate: they do not know about governance, by-laws, how you access services, planning processes, how you get in the queue to get a house, how you get a place to sell your goods. There is a huge deficiency in terms of people's ability to engage with the new urban environment that they are in. It is really natural that people come to the city because the city is the repository of resources. People come to the city because of the hope of a job, access to resources, and some way in which to earn a livelihood. However, you are going to explore and deploy the resources around you, not necessarily in the way they were intended. You will find [an] electricity supply in all sorts of innovative ways; you will collect your water from all sorts of interesting places; and so, you hustle. When you do that, you are causing additional expenses to local authorities, such as extra generation of waste or maintenance of public conveniences that are used in ways [for which] they were never designed.

Urban management is a real challenge, and unless municipalities tackle this reality, you are going to perpetuate prejudicial views about informality: 'they',

2 About 54% of the world's population lives in urban areas. See: UN-Habitat. (2016). World Cities Report 2016: Urbanization and Development – Emerging Futures. Retrieved from https://unhabitat.org/books/world-cities-report/

3 The narrative has been one promoted by pro-business institutions internationally; see: The Economist. (2011, December 3). Africa rising. The Economist. Retrieved from https://www.economist.com/node/21541015 . However, it has been criticised in respect of whether the development is actually pro-poor see e.g. Biney, A. (2013, September 4). Is Africa really rising? Retrieved September 5, 2013, from Pambazuka News website: http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/88748

4 The condition of an increase in economic growth without a concomitant increase in employment. This has been observed in the case of sub-Saharan Africa; see: UNECA. (2015). Economic Report on Africa 2015. Industrializing through trade. Retrieved from United Nations Economic Commission for Africa website: https://www.uneca.org/publications/economic-report-africa-2015. It has also been observed in the Namibian case, see: World Bank. (2013). Country Partnership Agreement for the Republic of Namibia (No. 77748-NA). Retrieved from http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/247341468323960034/Namibia-Country-partnership-strategy-for-the-period-FY2014-FY2017.

5 Onyulo, Tonny. 2016. More phones, fewer banks and years of instability is transforming Somalia into an almost cashless society. Quartz Africa, 26 February 2016. Available at https://qz.com/625258/more-phones-few-banks-and-years-of-instability-are-transforming-somalia-to-a-cashless-society/, last accessed 14 August 2019.

6 ILO/WIEGO. (2013). Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture (2nd Edition). Retrieved from International Labour Organisation website: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_234413.pdf

7 Estimates vary greatly depending on the study, but the available figures are higher than this; see Wills, G. (2009). South Africa's Informal Economy: A Statistical Profile (Working Paper No. 6). Retrieved from Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing website: http://www.inclusivecities.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Wills_WIEGO_WP6.pdf .

the newcomers, are the people who are breaking the public toilets or stealing the electricity; and all the [other kinds] of judgements that people have towards informal workers, simply because provision has not been made for them. Then, there is little participation in the urban economy, partly because this is predicated on the fact that, generally, economic activities will be operating out of fixed property. If you are deprived of access to fixed property for whatever reason, you are already at a disadvantage before you even start the game

Image 3-1

We could probably spend all afternoon speculating why this image represents alienation from the urban scene. Generally, in Africa, we have inherited an urban typology from our colonial benefactors. So, most of our cities are not responsive to our endemic cultures, our cultural preferences. Even before we start to discuss any issue, we [have] got an urban form which is not responsive to how we want to 'live urban'. In this backdrop, we see clearly depicted deficiencies in [the] relationship with public transport: we know that, in Africa, the minibus taxis are prevalent. They are highly criticised because of their excessive demand on the road network [and] excessive congestion; but, for people that need to access urban spaces, [minibuses are] highly efficient. At the same time, there will be those that will be demanding good road condition[s] so that they can drive their luxury vehicle[s]. However, the primary figure in the photograph is really what the challenge is all about (Image 3-1): here is this individual, a traditional healer, highly respected in his traditional culture, who now has to assert his presence and his cultural significance in a foreign environment which is not catering for him. He then starts to acquire symbols of urban life – a briefcase – which matches his image as to what a businessman should look like from the mobile phone adverts. Then he applies his trade on the sidewalk. For us Westerners, that is equivalent to [going] into a pharmacy to buy our medicine. However, in his dignity, he maintains his cultural recognition as traditional healer by the necklace that he is wearing. In the alienation and the deprivation, the level of dignity is unbelievable – and

I think that is one of the main things that is being exploited with [regard] to informality. Here are people that are coming to the city, making a go [of it], trying [to] find an urban presence, and in the main, doing it with incredible dignity. That is the message I would like to talk about.

Image 3-2   *Image 3-3*

So, what are the consequences? I mentioned earlier the parallel worlds, neither one learning from the other. In the picture (Image 3-2) there are a lot of guys cooking corn on the cob – mealies. They use timber and wood salvaged around the city for that activity. They probably know more about how the city works than the city managers [do]. They've got urban intelligence, but no one is bothering to go to those guys and say, "Let's engage you in the system so we can actually find out what's happening." The other thing is that, through this facility, they cook 26 tonnes of cobs a day, equivalent to N\$1.5 million a week. Most people do not even know that there are these incredible economic activities going on which are providing a culturally preferred carbohydrate meal in the middle of the day. Probably 500m away from the first picture are people who cook cow heads. A marginal intervention from the City in terms of health and safety created some infrastructure for them, and suddenly they are one step up. The margin in terms of recognition is actually very small: it is not about quantum leaps.

But then we also get the complete opposite end of the spectrum, where there are the ideologies that many universities drive and that are driven by international norms of converting cities into devices for branding. South Africa, as you know, has suffered from that with the World Cup (Image 3-3), and a whole sub-lecture could be done about that. This drives a completely foreign focus, which is very seductive, but it leaves the majority behind.

Warwick Junction

Warwick Junction suffered from apartheid's spatial regulation, which was particularly bad in Durban (Image 3-4). The area around it was generally designated for white use and occupation, but black people could transit freely as it was the black public transport node of the city. This was the place that you had to come to if you wanted to access the 'white city', and it is from here where the public transport network radiated out into the rest of the city. Today, there [are] something like 2,000 minibus taxis coming into this area, 460,000 people

[traverse] that area a day, coming into the city. Clearly, those are the customers for those trading in the public space. There are about 6,000–8,000 informal workers who [operate] in this market complex, trading traditional herbs and medicine, corn on the cob, the cow heads and so on.

Image 3-4. The Warwick Junction, Durban, South Africa.

In Durban, back in 1996, there was a honeymoon period after the fall of apartheid. Local government throughout the country was trying to restructure, and it embarked on urban regeneration programmes. Durban took its most blighted area, which is this market area, and tried to restructure it. The first immediate challenge was the herb market. Even back in the colonial years, people were trying to establish a traditional medicine market in the city, but it was totally disregarded. The only land that was immediately available was an unutilised portion of the city's road network, so it was clear that one could turn that into a linear market and create the herb trading stalls along the sides.

Image 3-5. The Warwick Junction, Durban, South Africa: Pre-existing conditions in 1996.

Since 1996, about R5 million was committed to work in public spaces and building the market. However, it was only after building the market that people started to realise what was really there. Turnover in the first year [of the market] was R170 million; between 800 and 1,000 traders were employed in the market and benefitting an estimated further 14,000 jobs outside of the market. In informal economies, there are both the visible and invisible workers, and the ratio is of about 1 to anything between 3 and 5. Informal workers have anything from 7 to 12 dependents, so the impact of informality is huge – and disregarding it and disrupting it can have huge and negative consequences. The message here is with regards to the innovation in terms of how you can start to get a toehold and start to implement some sort of response to informality, and that there is a huge amount of assets that are not being recognised.

Image 3-6. Herb market

[Cooking] corn on the cob is a really aggressive process. One requires a 200-litre drum to cook 13 dozen cobs. The damage to the sidewalk is quite considerable, so the intervention here was to build a small facility slightly on the edge of the market where the City would tolerate smoke-generating fire, as the city is a smokeless zone. This enabled the – predominantly – women to cook their mealies and then to hawk them around the city. The interesting thing of this particular example is the struggle to get the capital from the City to build that little facility. The facility cost about N$60,000, and at that time we discovered that the turnover was N$1.5 million a week. So, in essence, they could have paid for this by coffee break on the first day. Often, the intervention with infrastructure is virtually disposable architecture, requiring very low capital but having a huge impact.

Image 3-7. Corn-on-the-cob

The next example is a partnership between two communities. The first one was a religious group of Muslims who venerate a saint who is buried in a shrine alongside a disused part of the city road network which became inactive when the freeway network was built. Trade had started to occupy the area with shack shops, but at the annual veneration ceremony, the communities agreed to demolish their shops for the [veneration] ceremony to take place. The ceremony lasts for two weeks. Afterwards, the Muslim community provided the nails and timber for traders to rebuild their shops, and then it was business as usual again. This is an annual cycle of activities and, right now, they are on the 70th year of the veneration ceremony. So, the religious community came to the City and said that it [was] getting more and more difficult to hold their ceremonies because the scale of the ceremony was getting bigger and bigger. So, they came up with a proposal to build an adjacent roof, which the traders could then use for the rest of the year. The City took on the project and now that roof is 300 meters long, and it provides almost an urban galleria, which allows for open space trading (Image 3-8). We would describe it was an 'urban umbrella', so it is a typology we think allows for some quite interesting urban space interventions that one can implement and that can be a wider asset other than just simply the trading.

Image 3-8. Brook street market

For AmaZulu people there is a cultural preference in their rural context in which women are not allowed to touch the head of the cow. Traditionally, the head was given to men as a reward for slaughtering the animal, and they prepared it for a traditional feast. This practice, which was deeply rural, started to come to the city. I joke with AmaZulu men back at home that whenever the work starts really getting difficult, the women have to start taking over. So, in the city, slaughtering is essentially done by women. The interventions in this case were really very simple, but they had to be incremental. The first step was observing the situation, then designing an intervention, starting to structure the activity, providing appropriate training, then slowly starting to dignify the activities.

Image 3-9. Bovine head cooks

Observations in lieu of conclusions

We are looking at a sustained presence of this urban activity and a local government commitment to informality. This stretches now for over 20 years, and the City has sometimes gone a little bit off course. In 2006, when we had the World Cup[8] [coming in 2010], they wanted to demolish the green roof market and build a shopping mall; but those are the struggles that you have to engage in. However, by and large, the City has maintained the market and continued to respect the activity. Right now, we are almost in the second generation of street traders who have actually benefited from that. I am starting now to describe informality in Durban as a career path of being a street trader. It is not this urban guerrilla [anymore], who has come in and started to hustle and found space on the street. This is your chosen profession: your children are taking over your site or aspire to be this sort of urban participant. I think that is really significant.

Image 3-10. Sustained presence, 1996 (left) and 2016 (right)

Interestingly, over this period, [in] just around 1990, we had ten megacities, and by about 2014 we had 28 megacities. That is to say you can get stability in one area, but you get a tidal wave coming at you from another side. I think a lot of people see informality and they do not want to get involved in it. I do not want to be critical of any government officials that are here, but generally, a lot of the writing that there is about informality suggests that government officials are scared of informality in terms of the implications in dealing with it. What many governments do is that they try to malign it, associate it with the black market, with tax avoidance, and all those [kinds] of things. However, interventions can actually be really simple.

I want to discuss three stages here. The first concerns the original conditions back in 1994–1996. To get started was incredibly simple: we just had to make sure that there were solid, drained sidewalks that would allow you to demarcate spaces, to number those spaces, and have some permit system that [related] to it. You are not punitive in terms of how you make people move from one [space] to the other, but you say, "Take your pallet tables: we prefer it to be of [a specific] design because, if not, the streets are not clear and we have to sweep and wash them. But you can use the same salvaged material to build a different table." Over time, you start to implement higher-order infrastructure that starts to bring about some sort of urban aesthetic – and, probably, a greater level of management.

This is about the processes of assimilation. If someone has been part of that 20-year journey, where they met professionals and municipal staff at their pallet tables who persuaded them to now change the table [and] move into a square, this person is starting to develop what I earlier referred to as urban literacy. People start to understand it: "You want me to collapse my table because you want to make the site cleaner for me in the morning. That makes sense. I'll participate in the programme."

We started an NGO with a three-year funding programme; we are just ending the first phase of it. We have embarked on participatory action research, and we like to believe we have taken it one step further, where we have trained the informal workers to do their own research and determine their own needs and preferences.
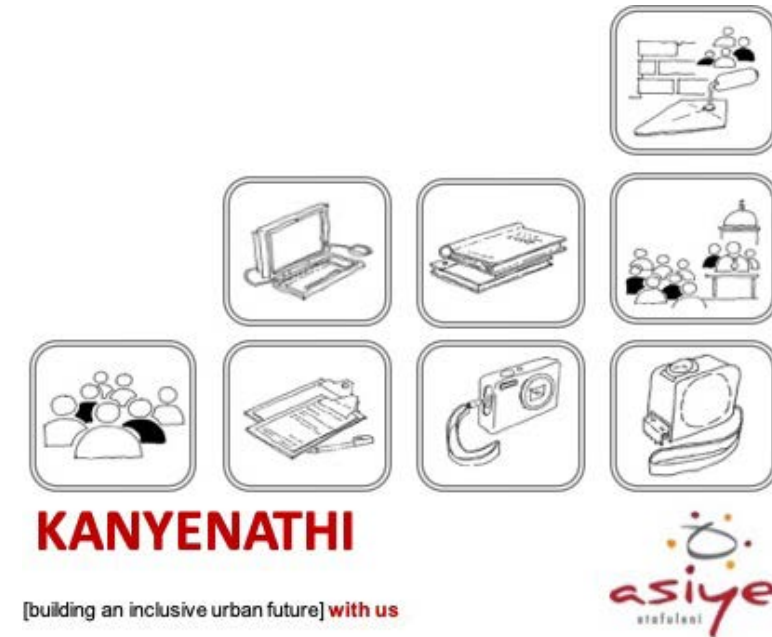

Image 3-11.

The logo represents the three-step process (Image 3-11). The bottom part is to engage with the community [and] initiate research. In the middle [are] the three stages of analysing that information and presenting to local government and then, ultimately, implementing projects. The training process in itself is, of course, incredibly enriching in the sense that the questionnaire is co-designed: Can we put in this question? Will this be helpful? Will this be offensive? Then afterwards comes role-playing and training of the researchers so that the traders themselves start becoming acquainted with the intrusion of someone coming to do the survey. Then the technical team goes in and does the photographs and the measuring. This was for us to know the footprint of all the traders and then to take photographic records of that. Community introductions were also part of the process: you cannot just go around putting

numbers on people's tables without explaining why you are doing it. Finally, [there is] the process of implementing the questionnaire. About 10% of the people were surveyed in the three districts. We ranked people's preferred needs according to the districts; then we tried to present these with graphics which the trader leaders are then able to use and interpret. There are also further graphics through which we now start to prioritise those preferences.
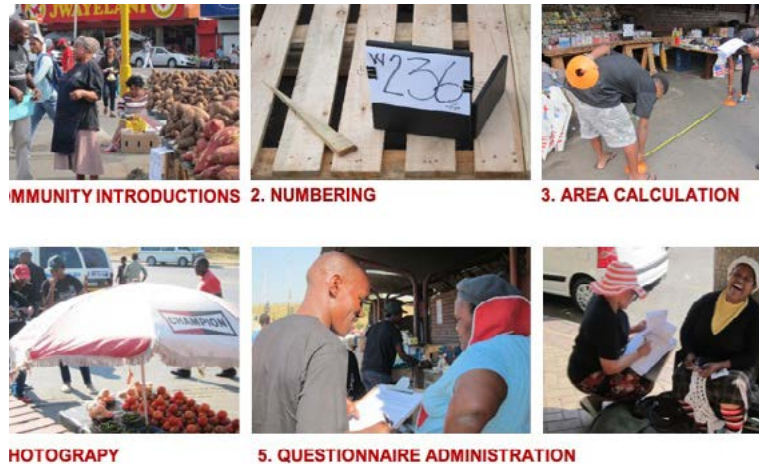

Image 3-12

The results were an amazing surprise, as I would have prioritised shelter, toilets and storage far above water, but water popped up as being one of the key things that the people wanted. If you start to allow these systems, you can start to respond to the real needs that people can relate to. The moment the leaders saw this, they said, "Yes, of course, we told you." This now becomes the springboard to other projects.

We have now got a project with funding to look at toilets. This is done in the streets of the core part of the CBD, where trader shelters built nearly 20 years ago have become dysfunctional over time. They have outgrown their ability to serve the needs of the traders. So, now, we start looking at design responses that could be implemented to mitigate some of the challenges and the prejudice that is projected against informal workers, as they are seen to be an intrusion in the high streets of the city. Part of that process was to train the leaders to make their presentation to the City. The response from the City came back and it was surprising: they expressed interest in four of the proposals. One was about storage; another was looking at a node where there were old shipping containers used for storage and additional toilet facilities; another storage facility; and then another traditional market that sells African incense. The City is now going to commit capital to these interventions. The traders are already invested in the ideas that were discussed when these visuals were generated; and so, already, they are part of the process which is going to be rolled out with their participation.

Image 3-13

Much [more] could be said, [but] I am going to leave it to question time. We need to remember that South Africa has a particularly exclusionary past, particularly from an economic and racial point of view, which aimed at annihilating any cultural preference or cultural expression in the city. Now you [not only] have people present in the city economy, but you also have cultural preferences being expressed. The infrastructure I have shown varied from very small to others that are at large scale, but they are all catalytic. If you were to see a layout of Warwick, it is almost like a new corridor that actually traverses and is starting to link the city. We need to start recognising that there are new entrants into cities and urban economies. We label them informal workers; but recognising them is a primary requirement in terms of how we start to become more proactive and be urbanists of the future. Urbanists start to recognise that we have got this incredible endemic energy in our cities which we are not realising; and, with that energy, we got a unique urban aesthetic which is going to set us apart from anywhere else in the world.

Discussion

Nina Maritz, a Namibian architect, asked how one could get a society to respect instead of disrespecting informal trade.

Mr Dobson replied that, in the case of Warwick Junction, the local authority [was owed] a lot of the credit, as they strongly committed to area-based management and prioritised the area through an interdisciplinary approach. This wavered somehow with the arrival of the World Cup mega-event in 2010, but attention on Warwick was regained through challenging the City – in some cases, with litigation. He said there was a need for support organisations, as the local authority could only do so much. He also gave credit to other organisations that had kept the City in check.

Maria Marealle, a former lecturer at NUST, asked whether AeT had done work in residential areas or only in Warwick. She also asked what percentage of informal trade activities happened in public spaces and residential areas.

Mr Dobson replied that the AeT currently only focused on Warwick. He stated that, through his work and travels, he had seen the relevance of working with informality. He mentioned that the organisation had started with recognition, but then it had moved on to claim the right to design the city for the actual needs of those inhabiting it. For him, sidewalks were a good example: the usual complaint was that informal traders left no space for pedestrians. But he then challenged everyone to think about a sidewalk for various alternative uses. He also prompted the audience to imagine taking away parking lots, and to activate these for other uses. He warned that it was important to acknowledge what the reality was on the ground – otherwise it might simply 'go underground'.

A student remarked that she had seen street vendors being chased by the police in Windhoek. She also noted the stringent informal trade regulations in Windhoek, which in turn obeyed zoning. Because the city was not geared for informal trade, she said, in many cases informal traders ended up doing business in very odd spaces.

Mr Dobson indicated that a City needed a process, a project and a policy. He said it was important for a City to recognise how much they needed to allocate from their resources to the informal sector and to reorganise if necessary. As an example, he suggested closing down a street one day a month for pedestrian and street trade use, just to send a message that the City recognised and favoured informal sector activities. He noted that some cities feared that, by supporting informal trade, they were supporting illegal activities or mafias; but, as he pointed out, so-called formal trade was not exempt from corruption or bribery, for example, so it was discriminatory to say that informal trade was inherently corrupt.

Phillip Lühl of NUST asked how useful it was to demonstrate how much informal trade was contributing to the economy in order to make others hear the argument. He also remarked on the danger of addressing the informal as something that was just happening temporarily until things formalised more.

Mr Dobson said that the economic argument was very powerful, and it was useful in persuading City officials to publicly commit additional money to potentiate existing activities. He also said that such figures were currently even used at ministerial level, and that there was a certain awareness that, by shutting down businesses due to licences or procedures, would also shut down a lot of business activity. Nevertheless, as he remarked, while showing statistics was important, it was as crucial not to leave out the back stories: these helped to nuance the reality. As an example, he noted how the stories of informal traders in Warwick had been useful in avoiding the displacement of informal

trade in favour of building a shopping mall: the argument had been that the mall would only create a few hundred temporary jobs, while the established informal trade sustained tens of thousands of livelihoods.

An **unidentified participant** mentioned that Namibia was very town-planning-oriented and that many were 'stuck to the drawing board'. The participant proposed having more flexibility in order to see how things could work on their own.

Ms Marealle remarked that many activities in the formal sector were supported by those in the informal one. The example she offered was that some of the meeting participants who were wearing clean and ironed clothes probably had an informally employed domestic worker performing those duties for them.

Mr Dobson noted an example from the United States (US) when immigrant workers had gone on strike for one day:[9] it had demonstrated to everyone the impact that their absence would have on the running of the country.

Ms Maritz recalled that, during a trip to India, in a place where civil servants and university staff convened, she had seen a man in a small corner with a coal-heated iron who was ironing people's shirts. She described his services, which were very popular, as an example of exchanges between the two economies.

Kristy Asino, an Urban Planning lecturer at NUST, remarked that town planning schemes, especially the more recent ones, made provision for trading as long as there had been consultations with neighbours and the business had been registered. It became an issue, however, when regulations required structures to have certain special characteristics in order for the business to take place, such as food preparation areas or bathrooms. She mentioned that the current rules were largely inherited, but that they continued to be used. She asked the presenter whether he had achieved any policy reform as a result of his work.

Mr Dobson responded that in the area-based management example, most of the City departments had been represented. The official from the Health Department was in an interesting situation because, in South Africa, health inspectors themselves could be prosecuted if they did not enforce municipal regulations. However, the speaker had engaged with the situation – particularly with the cooking of cow heads – in a way that would mitigate some of the challenges while not completely outlawing the practice in an urban environment. He also organised public talks to the traders in Warwick, where he explained ways of dealing with the food to comply with regulations. The traders also became inventive in their compliance with regulations: for example, the health requirement of having running water, which was thought to require a water tap, was instead met by having drums of water around for traders to wash their hands and other items. Seeing how City officials' attitudes

9 Lam, B. (2017, February 16). A Strike to Show What America Is Like Without Immigrant Workers. The Atlantic. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/02/day-without-immigrants/516969/

had changed in this process, Dobson acknowledged that he had much respect for them. He said that, today, City officials – and even government workers – knew that there were creative ways of complying with regulations.

Mahongora Kavihuha, the Secretary General of the Trade Union Congress of Namibia, disagreed that domestic workers were part of the informal sector.

Mr Dobson agreed, but stressed the need to engage with the informal economy. To illustrate his point, he mentioned how, in Nairobi, Kenya, by forbidding informal trade, the police could take advantage of the situation; today, the economy of bribes in that country was considerable. He went on to say that engagement with the informal sector was not based on a formula: it often came about through circumstance – e.g. where one found a sympathetic politician – or it was a matter of timing. Having worked as a consultant for the City, he was able to see for himself not only how the issue was regarded from the City's perspective, but also from the traders'. In illustration, he referred to a colleague of his that had started as a policeman and now worked as a City official: experience in both fields had enabled his colleague to gain considerable 'urban intelligence'. A specific challenge that Dobson highlighted for the AeT was limited funding. He informed the meeting that all AeT funders except one were from overseas.

An **unidentified female participant** stressed the difficulty of complying with municipal regulations, particularly the need to have a fitness certificate which in turn required the availability of toilets. She referred to the fact that there were very few toilets in informal settlements – never mind no connection to the sewerage system and the absence of roads in some cases.

Ms Maritz recognised how the original intent of urban planning legislation had become lost. She explained that, today, it was not the primary objective to own the land and have full infrastructure, as long as there are some basic services that can help those who would like to start trading and make a living. She also pointed out that regulation could further marginalise people; thus, the underlying principles of legislation and regulations should be not to close businesses, but to enable them.

Mr Dobson explained that new technologies had helped to overcome some pre-Internet limitations. He remarked how, in some places, having a registered physical address was a requirement for business certification; now, with digital maps, one could simply submit one's geographic coordinates instead of a street name and number. He also remembered how registered architects had been required to have a fixed telephone line before they were permitted to start practising.

A **female employee from the City of Windhoek** clarified that, in the municipal regulations, there were gradients along the axis of formality–

informality.[10] She illustrated this by way of an area called Onyika, where the housing structures looked very informal, but each plot was provided with municipal services.

Ms Asino added that it was indeed possible to have formal aspects in areas considered to be informal. However, many simply thought of informal as being a shack.

Martin Mendelsohn, an urban planner, remarked that not only was regulating the informal sector problematic, but it also had its own rules. In many cases, it was not about choice between the external or internal systems. In his view, a sensible approach would be to provide spaces that were conducive to trade.

Mr Dobson remarked that debating the definition of informal had had a long history, starting with Keith Hart's work in Ghana.[11] However, he said that informal trade could not be seen in isolation because there are many aspects that impacted the city which could not simply be understood or managed according to conventional perceptions and regulations.

Mike Iipinge, from Walvis Bay Municipality, remarked that he worked with informal traders, but sometimes the areas that were slated for informal trade were not the most conducive to trade. Some traders had moved near big businesses, and there seemed to be a symbiotic relationship developing between the two. He referred to a pilot project they were working on in Swakopmund in this regard, where a plot of land slated for formal businesses lay next to one for informal traders. The condition for the purchasers of the formal business plots was that they had to agree to work with the informal traders.

Mr Lühl noted that informal economies were often in well-connected parts of the city.

Mr Dobson agreed, adding that a common example was taxi ranks.

Ms Maritz reiterated that informal traders knew the best places in the city to trade. She encouraged NUST to do further research-oriented work with students on this matter and requested Mr Dobson to write about their methodology.

Mr Dobson responded that transport interventions and policy were crucial for informal trade. He explained, for example, how South Africa was now shifting to a bus rapid transit system, whose concept originally developed in Latin America.[12] He said that this shift had had a negative impact on informal trade, many of whom profited from taxi ranks and minibus stations.

10 This refers to the six levels that the City of Windhoek outlines in its Development Upgrading Policy (1999), which was recently updated in 2019.

11 Hart, K. (1973). Informal income opportunities and urban employment in Ghana. The Journal of Modern African Studies, 11(1), 61–89.

12 This was first introduced in Curitiba, Brazil. The idea was to create a designated lane for a bus that would perform a function similar to that of a subway, but with much less of an investment. See: Lindau, L. A., Hidalgo, D., & Facchini, D. (2010). Curitiba, the cradle of bus rapid transit. Built Environment, 36(3), 274–282..