The geography of informal arts and crafts traders in South Africa's four main city centres

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Abstract

The choice of location of street traders and the products they sell reflect specific geographies of flows of people. In this study the focus is on the spatial relationships between arts and crafts trading and the tourist market. This article presents the outcomes of research into the characteristics and geographies of informal trade in arts and crafts in South Africa's four main metropolitan city centres. The results show that informal selling of arts and crafts is a relatively small component of street trading in all four centres. Intra-city variations are reported and the geographical patterns of arts and crafts traders in the four centres analysed with GIS software. The purpose of this analysis is to identify concentrations of traders specialising in arts and crafts within the general distributions of informal traders in the four cities.

DIE GEOGRAFIE VAN INFORMELE HANDEL IN KUNS EN HANDWERK IN SUID-AFRIKA SE VIER HOOF METROPOLITAANSE STEDELIKE KERNE

Die geografiese vloei van mense word gereflekteer deur die keuse wat informele handelaars uitoefen ten opsigte van hul ligging en die produkte wat hulle verkoop. Die studie fokus op die ruimtelike verhoudings tussen die kuns- en handwerkhandel en die toeriste mark. Hierdie artikel bied die uitkomste van die navorsing na die eienskappe en geografie van die informele handel in kuns- en handwerk in Suid-Afrika se vier hoof metropolitaanse stedelike kerne. Die resultate toon dat informele handel van kuns- en handwerk 'n relatief klein komponent van straathandel in al vier die stede is. Intra-stadvariasies word gerapporteer en die geografiese patrone van kuns-en handwerkhandelaars in die vier stede word met behulp van GIS-sagteware ontleed. Die doel van hierdie analise is om konsentrasies van handelaars wat spesialiseer in kuns- en handwerk te identifiseer binne die algemene verspreidings van informele handelaars in die vier stede.

SEBAKA KAPA TULO YA BAHWEBI BA BONONO BO FAPANENG SETSING SA METSEMEHOLO E MENE HO LA AFRIKA BORWA

Kgetho ya sebaka kapa tulo ya barekisi ba mebileng esitana le dihlahiswa tseo ba di rekisang e bontsha dibaka tsa phallelo ya batho. Thutong ena tsepamiso ya maikutlo e hodima dikamano tse batsi kgwebong ya mefuta ya bonono le ba ho bopa le mmaraka wa bohahlaodi. Ditaba tsena di fana ka diphetho tsa dipatlisiso tsa dimelo le dibaka tsa tlhaho tsa kgwebo eo e seng molaong ya mefuta ya bonono le ho bopa ditsing tsa metsemeholo ya Afrika Borwa. Diphetho di bontsha hore thekiso ya tsa bonono le ho bopa ke karolwana feela ya kgwebo ya mebileng ditsing tseo tse nne. Ho behwa diphapanyetsano tse fapafapaneng le dipaterone tsa sebaka sa bonono le bahwebi ba ho bopa ditsing tswe nne tse manolotsweng ka GIS software. Sepheo sa manollo ena ke ho bona hore na bahwebi ba bonono le ho bopa ba sebetsanang le tsena ba phallela kae ka hara diphatlalatso tsa kakaretso tsa bahwebi ka hara metsemeholo e mene.

1. INTRODUCTION

The informal economy of South Africa is vibrant, growing and provides opportunities to many unemployed entrepreneurs. To the untrained eye informal trading might seem a disorganised congregation of people trading whatever seems possible wherever they can. This is not the case. By and large they form part of a variety of subgroups that tend to sell specific combinations of products – food and beverages, fresh produce, personal-care products, clothing, arts and crafts, and many more – at specific locations. This article focuses on the locational choices made by traders in arts and crafts in South Africa's four major cities. The potential relationships between the informal selling of arts and crafts, space and place considerations, and tourism flows are a crucial factor in understanding the geography of this subsector. The research also examines the location of arts and crafts traders in relation to other informal traders in the cities under study to establish potential relationships and linkages.

The focus of this article has emerged from a wider research project using data from interviews with informal traders selling their wares in the CBDs of four major cities in South Africa (Figure 1). For this article, a subset of the data focusing on the traders selling arts and crafts-related goods was used. The aims of the article are twofold: first, to establish the characteristics of informal traders selling arts and crafts *vis-à-vis* the general informal trading population and, secondly, to ascertain the spatial distribution of the former traders regarding their turnover and significance in relation to all the other informal traders surveyed.

2. THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

It is widely recognised that the informal sector is taking on increasing significance in developing countries as a means to absorb significant numbers of un- or underemployed citizens (Portes, Blitzer & Curtis, 1986: 727; Dewar & Watson, 2000: 1; Lyons & Snoxell, 2005: 1077). Growth in this sector has been especially significant in sub-Saharan African cities where urban

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Figure 1: Location of the four South African cities surveyed

populations have been growing fast while limited employment opportunities exist in the formal economic sector, especially for people in the unskilled and semi-skilled employment categories (Rogerson, 2000: 677; Cohen, 2004: 277; Reddy, 2007: 459). The informal sector presents an opportunity in terms of its potential to "create numerous jobs and absorb a rising proportion of the unemployed workers" that cannot find work in the formal sector (Reddy, 2007: 462; Cohen, 2010: 278). This conviction is shared by the central government. In its National Framework for Local Economic Development the Provincial and Local Government Department of South Africa specifically instructed municipalities to focus on the development of supportive policies to assist in the integration of informal traders in the business environment of the cities (Department of Planning and Local Government, 2006: 23).

According to Lighthelm & Masuku (2003), South Africa has a vibrant and growing informal economy. Growth in the informal sector can not only be attributed to opportunities that have been taken up by the unemployed as survivalist enterprises but is also the result of entrepreneurs seizing lucrative business opportunities (Lighthelm & Masuku, 2003). Measuring and reporting on the extent of the informal economy has always been a contentious issue due to differences in definitions of the sector. Estimating the size of a sector that ranges from survivalist enterprises to more sophisticated informal entrepreneurs conducting business informally in order to escape high taxes or government regulations remains a challenge (Devey, Skinner & Valodia, 2003: 12; Dewar, 2005: 5; Ligthelm, 2008: 370; Tissington, 2009: 27).

According to Lighthelm & Masuku (2003: 3), the use of the term 'informal sector' in economic literature was never meant to refer to a homogeneous group. In order to draw meaningful conclusions about its composition the sector needs to be disaggregated. According to Reddy (2007: 463), the informal sector broadly refers to a wide range of economic activities which include street-food or market vendors, small automotive and machine repair shops, and small-scale manufacturing such as garments, shoes or handicrafts carried out by single operators outside the regulatory framework of the state. Although not exhaustive, the suggestion of subcategories is useful as it assists in contextualising the narrower focus of this article on informal retail activity undertaken in the form of street trading in the central business districts (CBDs) of South Africa's four major urban agglomerations, specifically on the selling of arts and crafts and related products.

The informal selling of arts and crafts is not a new phenomenon in South Africa. It did occur during the years of apartheid but usually at exurban locations and often along tourist routes. However, several factors have boosted the industry since 1994. Increased flows of tourists to the country; South Africa's stronger role as a regional (tourism) destination and gateway, and in-migration from the rest of Africa to South Africa have all influenced the extent and the nature of the offerings of informal arts and crafts products. Using South Africa as a gateway to Africa, streams of foreign tourists offer ample business opportunities for the informal arts and crafts trader. This has also impacted international migration to the country. Many entrepreneurs from elsewhere in Africa are migrating to South Africa to sell their wares to growing numbers of tourists visiting the country (Peberdy, 2000: 201; Kuiters, 2007: 31). These entrepreneurs bring about diversity in the offerings. Some interesting study findings in this area of research can be reported. Curios that are put on offer often reveal the origins of migrants (Kuiters, 2007: 55). Kuiters (2007: 55) found that the majority of local entrepreneurs are employed whereas foreign entrepreneurs tend to own their business. Usually goods that are put on offer are not produced by the traders themselves (Reddy, 2007: 471) but rather are sourced from their home countries or from other creative sources.

A specific location in a city can attract entrepreneurs in the informal sector for a variety of reasons, mostly for the potential business opportunities that are expected from potential clients frequenting the location, for example existing markets or tourist attractions (Drake, 2003: 511). Across the world, the product offerings of the creative sector are displayed and sold by the informal sector and, in many cases, this type of informal trade feeds most significantly off tourism flows (Evans-Pritchard, 1987: 292; Peberdy, 2000: 212; Kuiters, 2007: 58). Urban tourism generators or attractions are often related to unique spaces and places where cityscapes reflect the commercialisation of the needs and desires of tourists (Peberdy, 2000: 212; Timothy & Teye, 2005: 82; Kuiters, 2007: 58). As a result, clusters of informal traders tend to be found along major urban routes frequented by tourists or close to major areas of attraction such as Crawford Market in Bombay, Camden Market in London, Nga Nam Floating Market in Vietnam, Old Muttrah Souk in Muscat, and many others. Some of the most successful clusters of informal art traders have themselves become significant tourist attractions. Some are periodic markets such as night or weekend markets or more permanent markets such as the plaza in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The research results reported in the following sections validate some of the above findings and provide some new insights, which suggest the need for nuance in tailoring urban planning, policy and management interventions to support this subsector within the overall street trading environment.

3. RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

This article reports on an investigation of the presence and characteristics of informal street traders selling arts and crafts in the CBDs of South Africa's four major metropolitan areas: Cape Town, eThekwini (Durban), Johannesburg and Tshwane (Pretoria) (Figure 2). The aim of the study was to assess the composition of informal trading in arts and crafts products; volumes of trade, and how these compare with all the other informal traders included in the survey. It is argued that the gross daily turnovers of the selected traders compared to that of all other traders in the survey could serve as a reasonable indicator of the former group's significance as a group within the sector as a whole in the four city centres.

Figure 2: Location of the city-centre surveys

As it is difficult to determine accurate numbers of traders in each CBD, the research sample was calculated from total informal trading figures acquired through consultation with the branches in each municipality responsible for managing informal trade (roughly 3,000 in Johannesburg, 2,600 in eThekwini, 900 in Tshwane and 500 in Cape Town). This was also augmented by observational surveys in the four CBDs. Informal trading in the city centres of the four metros is usually only allowed in demarcated bays but enforcement of this rule by municipalities is difficult and seldom successful. The dynamic nature of the informal sector (Dewar, 2005; Skinner, 1999), especially traders that do not trade every day of the week or at the same locations every time, mean that their numbers can change daily, even hourly.

With these challenges in mind the sizes of the samples were determined by the available information provided by the local authorities about the total number of informal merchants in the various cities. The total number surveyed in each city were 126 in Johannesburg, 125 in eThekwini, 111 in Tshwane and 103 in Cape Town. The informal sector questionnaires consisted of eight sections covering the following aspects: the sector's demographic profile; ranges of products sold; physical characteristics of businesses; their general business and economic profiles; operational characteristics; inter-business relationships, and perceptions of informal merchants on their surroundings.

The survey formed an integral part of a larger project funded by the Netherlands Government in which the impact of the informal sector on the spatial evolution of major metropolitan and intermediate-sized cities in South Africa was investigated. Due to the informal business sector's large impact on inner city areas and the high concentrations of street traders in high-density trading areas (Skinner, 1999: 8), the study focused on the CBDs of the cities. The survey did not specifically focus on the sales of arts and crafts only, but on the characteristics and profile of the informal traders in general.

4. CHARACTERISTICS OF INFORMAL ARTS AND CRAFTS TRADERS

A number of characteristics of the arts-and-crafts respondents in comparison with the remainder of the street traders deserve mentioning. First, the study results confirm the view that the range of product offerings in the informal sector is limited and generally oriented toward food and beverage commodities. The study showed that the selling of arts and crafts is a relatively small component of informal trading. Only 15% of the sampled informal traders were engaged solely in the selling of arts and crafts.

Secondly, there is a surprisingly large variation in the numbers of informal traders involved in the selling of arts and crafts products between the cities. In Cape Town nearly one third (32%) of all the traders surveyed sold arts and crafts compared to only 13% in Johannesburg, 11% in eThekwini and 6% in Tshwane.

Thirdly, although Cape Town has the largest number of traders in arts and crafts, only 36% of the respondents were South African citizens. By contrast, all the respondents selling arts and crafts in eThekwini were South African citizens compared with 57% in Tshwane and 50% in Johannesburg. In Cape Town only 52% of the people interviewed in the informal sector were South African citizens. In Johannesburg and Tshwane the percentages were 69% and 75%, respectively. Remarkably 17% of all the traders selling arts and crafts chose not to divulge their nationality. One might speculate that sporadic episodes of xenophobia-inspired attacks on foreign traders in our cities may underlie this reluctance.

Fourthly, in both eThekwini and Tshwane more than 50% of all the South African respondents were owners of their concerns, whereas in Johannesburg it was 39% and in Cape Town, 25%. The corresponding figures among the respondents selling arts and crafts were, 57% in eThekwini and Tshwane; 33% in Johannesburg, and 25% in Cape Town. At the time of the interviews, 71% of the traders in arts and crafts in eThekwini had been operating their business for over five years whereas in Cape Town and Tshwane 42% were in operation for over 5 years. In Johannesburg 81% of the arts and crafts businesses have been in operation for less than two and only 13% for over five years.

Fifthly, given municipal by-laws and regulations for informal trading one would have expected that the majority of informal traders in the city centres would have occupied dedicated spaces or demarcated trading bays. However, it was found that 75% of the traders in arts and crafts in Johannesburg chose their own location. By contrast, 86% of those in eThekwini operated from allocated bays as they had no choice where to locate. In Cape Town 48% chose their own location and in Tshwane, 43% (Figure 3).

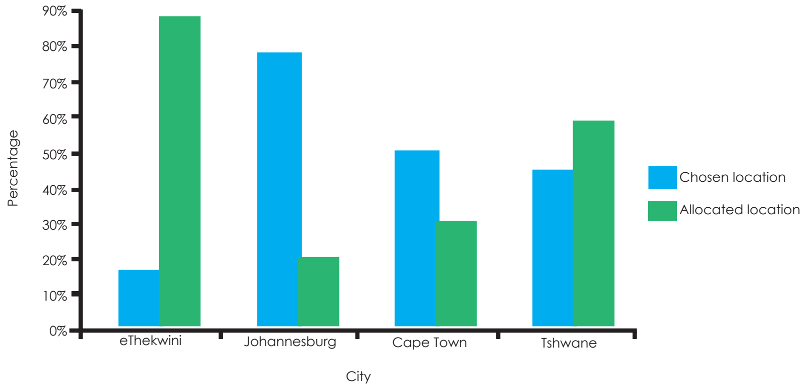

Figure 3: How trading bays were obtained in CBDs

Sixthly, previous research articles indicated that informal traders selling arts and crafts do not always produce their own products (Kuiters, 2007: 67; Reddy, 2007: 471), but proportions were not always known. In this study it was found that only 6% of arts-and-crafts vendors in Johannesburg manufactured their own products while the proportions were somewhat higher in Cape Town (36%) and even in Tshwane (28%). eThekwini seems to be an exception to the rule; 78.6% of its traders manufactured the wares they sold.

Seventhly, accurate turnovers for informal traders are difficult to obtain as most merchants do not keep records of their gross income, and in cases where they do, sale volumes, business-related expenditure, wages and profits are not kept accurately (Skinner 2006: 126). The majority of informal business owners are also reluctant to divulge their income for fear of being taxed (Devey, Skinner & Valodia, 2003: 12; Dewar, 2005: 5; Ligthelm, 2008: 370; Tissington, 2009: 27). Therefore, to question informal traders about the average income from an informal business would probably elicit no or at best unreliable information. In an attempt to calculate a gross mean turnover of street traders, a number of questions were designed so that the answers could be used to determine a crude turnover. Some 71% of all the respondents and 66% of all the arts and crafts vendors had no sources of income other than that generated through their businesses. Only 4% of all those trading in arts and crafts receive monthly government or social grants. The average gross daily turnover of the respondents based on the number of customers per day and the average amounts spent by each customer varied between R900 and R1,200 per day for the vendors of arts and crafts and between R500 and R1,600 for all the respondents. By definition gross turnover excludes expenses incurred and wages to be paid by the owners. Generally, the results from all the respondents indicate that informal traders in Cape Town and eThekwini earn the least, and those in Johannesburg and Tshwane fare slightly better.

Furthermore, the comparison of average daily gross turnovers between all the traders surveyed and those selling arts and crafts exclusively reflects some variation between the four cities. The average daily gross turnovers of the arts-and-crafts vendors in Johannesburg and Tshwane are slightly higher than those of their counterparts in Cape Town and eThekwini. However, traders in the arts and crafts sectors in Cape Town (R1,100) and eThekwini (R978) reflect significantly higher average daily gross income in relation to the turnover of all traders in these two cities (R691 and R573, respectively) as opposed to the pattern in Johannesburg and Tshwane (Figure 4).

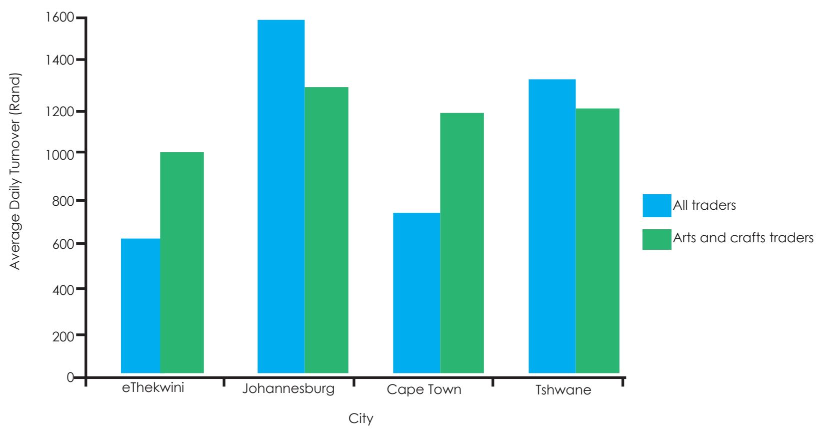

Figure 4: Average daily gross turnover of arts and crafts traders compared to all informal traders surveyed

5. THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE ARTS AND CRAFTS TRADE IN THE CBDS OF THE FOUR CITIES

Dewar & Watson (2000: 89) found three major factors influencing the location of traders: the 'location of generators of population movement' such as railway stations and bus and taxi termini; alignment with the 'location of major movement routes', and the 'distribution and density of residential activity'. In this study a comparison of the annual daily gross turnovers in the four cities revealed significant spatial variation at the local or intra-CBD scale.

5.1 Cape Town

Figure 5 portrays the location and average daily gross turnover of arts and crafts traders in the Cape Town CBD. It shows that the traders tend to cluster at points in the CBD generally related to key tourism nodes or areas. The largest

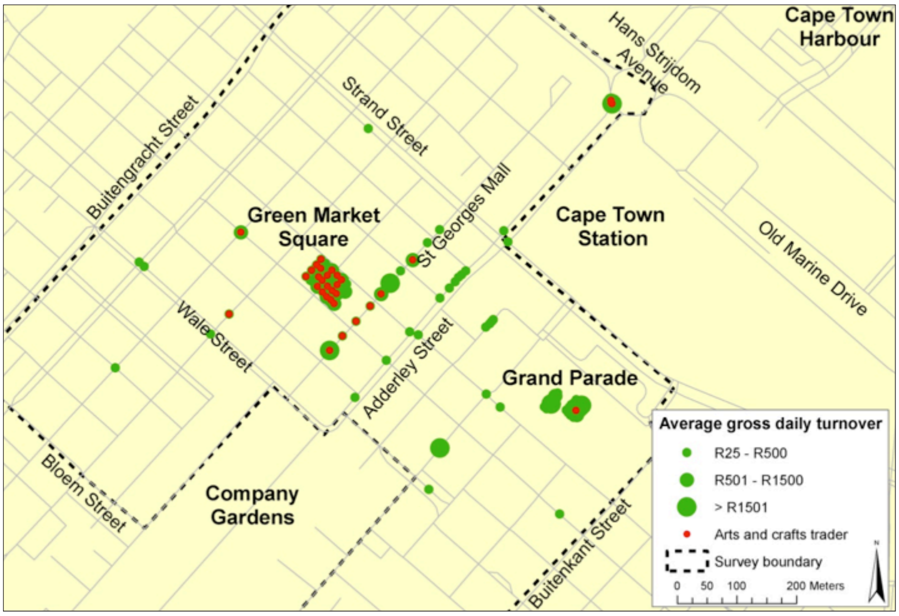

Figure 5: Cape Town CBD: Distribution of informal traders and their average daily gross turnover

concentration occurs at Greenmarket Square. This historic square is popular with tourists and has a history as an arts and crafts market where visitors can purchase from a unique range of merchandise. It is a prime example among the surveyed CBDs where the arts and crafts merchandise on sale is a key component of the attraction of the venue for tourists, rather than being an ancillary activity that feeds off tourism flows. Other occurrences of arts-and-crafts selling businesses are at the Grand Parade along St Georges Mall, north of the station and on the southern side of the station building. It should be noted that at the time of the survey all traders were moved from the station precincts and told to find alternative space in the city. This was done in preparation for the 2010 Fifa Soccer World Cup to facilitate the upgrading of the station. Figure 5 therefore does not reflect the concentration of traders at the station prior to the staging of the event.

Figure 5 shows the distribution of all the informal traders surveyed and indicates their daily gross turnover with the arts and crafts shown as red dots. This was done to determine whether there is any relationship between areas of higher turnover and the distribution of traders selling arts and crafts. The majority of respondents surveyed in the Cape Town CBD have an average daily turnover of R691 per day while the arts and crafts traders have a significantly higher average daily turnover of R1,100 per day. Higher turnover areas appear to correspond with concentrations of arts and crafts traders, for example Green Market Square and St Georges Mall, areas frequented by tourists who purchase souvenirs.

5.2 eThekwini

There are significant concentrations of informal traders in the business centre of eThekwini. The main clusters occur around existing informal markets, important access routes, the historic city centre, and the beachfront. Figure 6 indicates the Victoria Street Market area and the historic Warwick Triangle as areas where informal traders tend to cluster. These markets are well-known as outlets of fresh produce and Asian merchandise and are characterised by high volumes of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Dr Yusuf Dadoo, Dr A.B. Xuma and Dr Pixley Kaseme Streets are traditionally high-volume taxi and pedestrian routes and this is reflected in concentrations of informal traders along these routes. The arts and crafts vendors are dispersed in the traditional business centre and not clustered in any significant way. There is a concentration of arts and crafts traders in the South Beach area on Marine Parade, an area well-known as a tourism node and holiday destination. Mainly high-rise apartment buildings and hotels in the area ensure a relatively constant tourist market for the arts and crafts traders. According to Skinner (1999: 16), there has been considerable infrastructure development in eThekwini for informal traders, especially along the beachfront which is an important tourist area as well as at Warwick Triangle, a gateway to the city.

The Victoria Street Market area shows a pattern of average gross daily turnover being higher than in other areas where informal traders concentrate. The average daily gross turnover of all surveyed traders in eThekwini is R573 which is slightly less than that of the arts-and-crafts traders (R978). The arts and crafts sellers do not seem to be associated with areas of higher turnover, rather they tend towards the beaches (Skinner, 2006: 16; Durban-tourism.com, 2011: online).

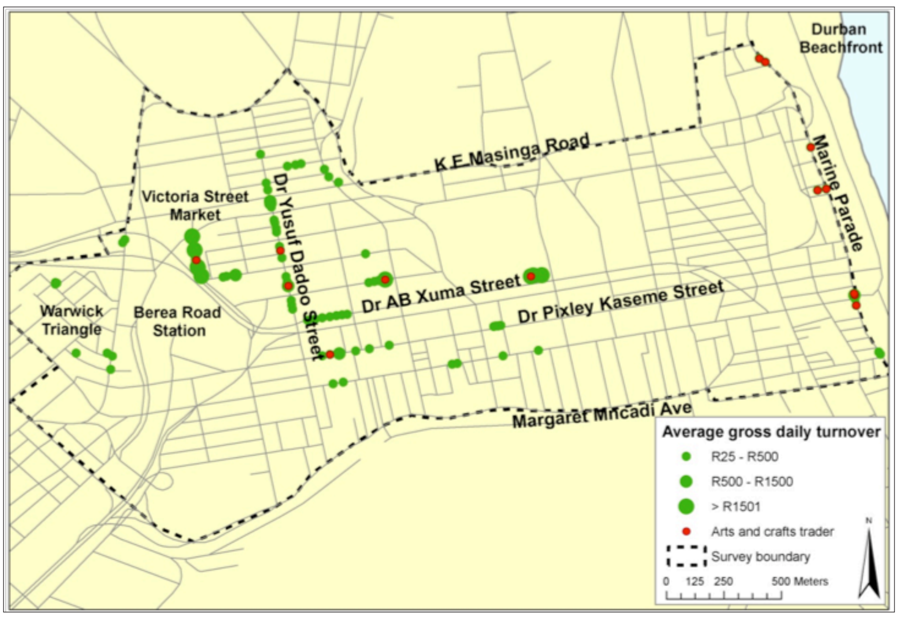

Figure 6: eThekwini CBD: Distribution of informal traders and their average daily gross turnoverr

5.3 Johannesburg

In Johannesburg (Figure 7) the surveyed informal traders concentrated in the north-eastern part of the CBD. They trade in dedicated areas along pedestrian routes such as Simmonds, De Villiers, Plein and King George Streets and also concentrate around nodal generators such as Joubert Park, the Johannesburg Railway Station, and taxi and bus termini. The arts and crafts traders are distributed throughout the city centre with no specific concentrations other than a similar distribution to the other traders.

The average daily gross turnover in Johannesburg shows a pattern of pockets of higher income. A potential cluster of higher income occurs in the vicinity of the Johannesburg Railway Station and along the routes into the city centre from the station, especially on Plein Street. The average daily gross turnover of all respondents is R1,540 and R1,250 for the arts and crafts traders. There is no clear correlation between higher turnover informal trading areas and the location of arts and crafts traders. Arts and crafts traders are found all over the CBD, but concentrations of traders occur between Jeppe and Church Streets and around Joubert Park.

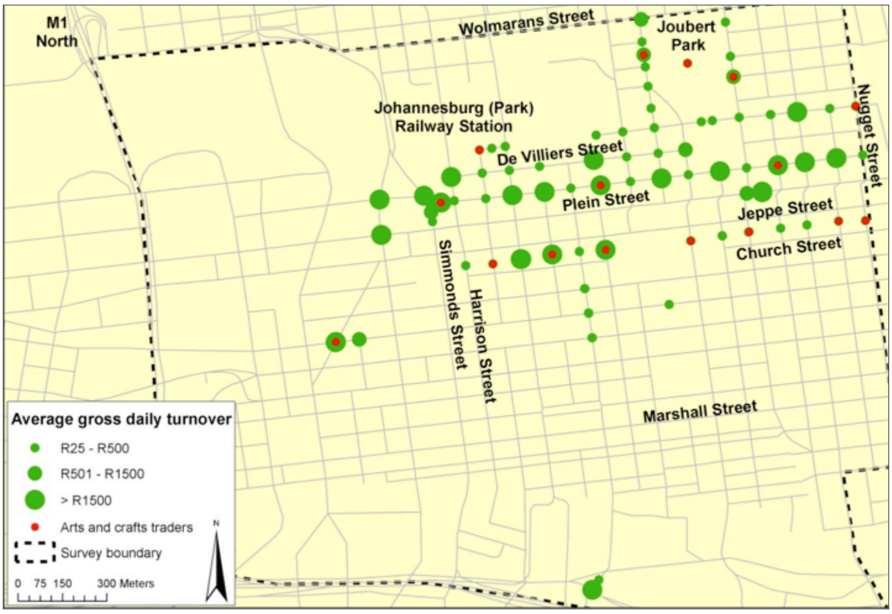

Figure 7: Johannesburg CBD: Distribution of informal traders and their average daily gross turnover

5.4 Tshwane

Tshwane's distribution (Figure 8) of informal traders is similar to that of Johannesburg in the sense that they occur throughout the business centre but concentrations occur around Pretoria Station and the Asian Bazaar as nodal points, and along Van der Walt, Bloed and Boom Streets as access routes leading into the city. Van der Walt Street is also an important access route to the city centre and to many buildings housing government departments.

Figure 8 shows that the overall spatial distribution of informal traders dealing in arts and crafts with a higher average daily gross turnover is similar to that of the group of informal traders as a whole. This is evident in the concentration of merchants along Van der Walt Street, at the Pretoria Station and the Asian Bazaar. Arts and crafts traders have an average daily turnover of R1,153 where the average turnover of all traders is R1,283.

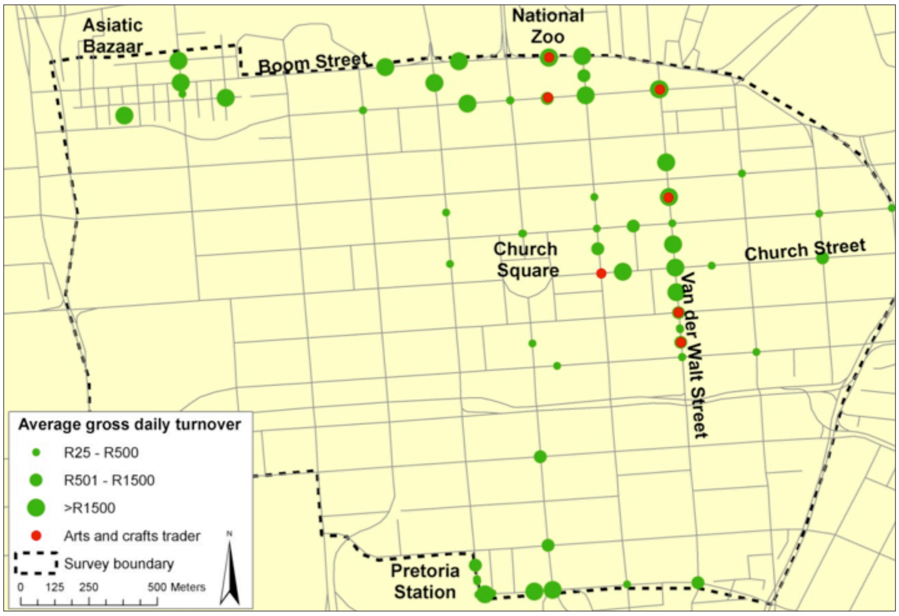

Figure 8: Tshwane CBD: Distribution of informal traders and their average daily gross turnover

6. CONCLUSION

This article confirms that the informal trade in arts and crafts comprises a relatively small component of informal street trading in the four major city centres in South Africa as a whole. As could be expected, there are variations between the cities. In Cape Town and eThekwini trade in arts and crafts form a larger proportion of the total turnover of informal trade, although trade in the full survey is more significant in terms of total turnover in Tshwane and Johannesburg.

In eThekwini, Johannesburg and Tshwane the majority of the arts and crafts traders are South African citizens who own their businesses. In Cape Town, however, the majority of these traders are foreigners and more of them also own the businesses. In Cape Town, Tshwane and eThekwini, arts and crafts businesses are generally well-established businesses that have been in operation for five years or longer, but not in Johannesburg.

An analysis of the spatial pattern of traders in arts and crafts demonstrated strong spatial correlations between recognised tourist routes in the cities and concentrations of informal businesses dealing in arts and crafts products. These patterns distinguish trade in this subsector from broader patterns of street trading in the CBDs, although the extent to which these patterns are evident, varies. While this article reports a number of novel findings, such as the concentration of arts and crafts traders along tourist routes and close to tourist attractions, there are various areas which remain underexplored regarding the geography of arts and crafts traders in the city centres. These include, *inter alia*, further empirical research to support the correlation of arts and crafts traders with the pedestrian tourism flows; further research into the influence of spatial location and related pedestrian tourism flows on arts and crafts sellers product mix as well as turnover and variance in spatial patterns of arts and crafts sellers when considered over various time periods (such as seasonal fluctuations). Nevertheless, the research does point to the need for urban planning, policy and management interventions to adopt a specific, rather than generic approach to street trading within the CBDs. Apart from a focus on the particular needs of the arts and crafts subsector, the fact that these traders tend towards identifiable spatial concentrations within the CBDs presents a number of opportunities for informal business support. For example, these existing spatial patterns may reflect potential to develop into a phenomenon that is more readily spatially identifiable to (tourism or local) markets, possibly focused on a particular niche in the arts and crafts sector and ultimately capable of growth into an established and thriving urban market. However, urban policy and management support is only likely to be successful if this subsector is better understood and interventions are responsive to needs and market dynamics rather than imposing an entirely artificial order to natural patterns.

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