



Locked-in Metaphorically: The War on Hawking in Nairobi's CBD and the Cat-and-Mouse Game¹

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Abstract

This article investigates how hawking in the streets of the Nairobi Central Business District (CBD) produces political spaces where processes related to belonging, inclusion and exclusion are played out and contested at both discursive and material levels. The article adopts the Conceptual Metaphor Framework to critically evaluate the conceptualisation of hawkers and hawking in Nairobi's CBD by varied actors. The study finds that two dominant metaphors – the 'war' metaphor and the 'cat-and-mouse' metaphor – have persistently and resiliently defined the life-world of hawkers in the CBD and the hawkers' relations with the City authorities. Further, that this conceptualisation has had adverse consequences, including providing a false clarity to this social phenomenon, which dehumanises the hawkers as well as naturalising and justifying the antagonistic relations between them and the authorities, thereby limiting the effective management of hawking within the CBD. The article concludes that there is a need for a revisionary framing of both the hawking phenomenon and the hawker-city-authorities relationship to facilitate broadened and progressive strategies and policies that would impact more positively on the material world of the hawker in the city.

Keywords: Belonging, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, exclusion, hawking, Nairobi CBD, urban space

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Résumé

Cet article examine comment le colportage dans les rues du quartier central des affaires de Nairobi (Central Business District) produit des espaces politiques où se déroulent des processus d'appartenance, d'inclusion et d'exclusion contestés aux niveaux discursif et matériel. Le document adopte le cadre conceptuel de la métaphore pour, de manière critique, évaluer la conceptualisation, par divers acteurs, des colporteurs et du colportage dans le CBD de Nairobi. L'étude constate que deux métaphores dominantes, celle de la « guerre » et celle du « chat et de la souris », définissent, de manière persistante et résiliente, le monde et la vie des colporteurs dans le CBD et les relations des colporteurs avec les autorités municipales. De plus, cette conceptualisation a eu des conséquences néfastes, notamment en apportant un faux éclairage à ce phénomène social, « éclairage » qui déshumanise les colporteurs et naturalise et justifie leurs relations antagonistes avec les autorités, limitant ainsi la gestion efficace du colportage au sein du CBD. Le document conclut qu'il est nécessaire de redéfinir le cadre, à la fois, du phénomène du colportage et de la relation colporteur-ville-autorités afin de développer des stratégies et des politiques ouvertes et progressives qui auront un impact plus positif sur le monde matériel du colporteur dans la cité.

Mots-clés : appartenance, théorie de la métaphore conceptuelle, exclusion, colportage, CBD de Nairobi, espace urbain

Introduction

This article proceeds from the understanding that metaphors frame people's reality of the world; that is, they activate various specific identities, socio-political and economic practices and moral-legal and governance configurations in the material world. Drawing from this perspective, the paper seeks to investigate how hawking in the streets of the Nairobi Central Business District (CBD) produces 'political spaces where processes related to belonging, inclusion and exclusion are played out and contested' (Gordon 2007:447), at both discursive and material levels that operate dialectically. In this regard, the paper discusses two dominant and opposing conceptual metaphors, namely, the 'war' metaphor and the 'cat-and-mouse' metaphor that characterise the meaning-making contestation of the utilisation of the Nairobi CBD space, as held by the Nairobi City authorities on the one hand and hawkers on the other, with affirmation by the print media. After explicating how the two metaphors emerge and are interwoven in discourses about hawkers and hawking in the Nairobi CBD streets, the study critiques how the adoption of these dominant metaphors advance and constrain hawkers' claims to their right to the city – the right to access and utilise the street space as an economic asset to the benefit of all city inhabitants.

This article uses the term ‘hawking’ as commonly used in Kenya, with the knowledge that, as noted by Brown and Mackie (2017:2), terms such as ‘street trading’ and ‘vending’ among others are used to describe the same phenomenon in different parts of the world. Hawking as a practice in Nairobi CBD streets, and hawkers as the actors, are as old as the city itself. However, they are an urban phenomenon that has been mostly reviled and only occasionally tolerated or merely officially recognised on paper but not practically integrated in the planning of the city throughout the history of Nairobi (Dragsted-Mutengwa 2018; Linehan 2007; Mitullah 1991; Morange 2015b; Parker 1948; Werlin 1974). Hawking is bound to remain a feature of the urban landscape in Nairobi in the foreseeable future given the rapid urbanisation rate in Kenya, estimated at 4.3 per cent, with the proportion of Kenyans living in urban areas expected to rise from 27 per cent in 2016 to 33 per cent by 2030 (Cira, Kamunyori & Babijes 2016). Specifically, the population of Nairobi is expected to grow from four million to seven million by 2030 (ibid). Moreover, street hawking in Kenya forms a significant part of the micro, small and medium enterprises that constitute around 95 per cent of the country’s businesses and entrepreneurs (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics 2016).

Hawking in Nairobi CBD is a complex and dynamic phenomenon, as in other parts of the world (Bromley 2000). It varies in terms of the range of goods and services sold, the time of the day it is carried out, whether the hawkers are mobile or fixed, full-time or part-time, seasonal or occasional, types of ownership of the business, types of relationship with off-street businesses, and motivation, which could range from survival to the diversification of existing businesses or strategies for moving stock, among others. However, this study is interested in the hawkers who sell varied types of goods but not services, who are mobile and spread their merchandise on the ground or improvised stands.

Despite the prolonged existence and dynamism of hawking in Nairobi, just as in many cities in Africa, there exists a ‘paucity of national and city-level data’ about it (Brown & Mackie 2018:2). In fact, Mitullah (2003:3) observes that hawking remains ‘unaccounted and unrecognized’ in national economic statistics in Africa because of the long-held opinion by authorities that street trade is ‘an underground activity that undermines the healthy function of the formal economy’. As such, hawking in the city is met with repressive treatment by authorities who are guided by the ideologies of gentrification, hygienism, aesthetics and modernism, which view hawking as an antithesis to these ideologies (Brown & Mackie 2018; Morange 2015a, 2015b; Musoni 2010).

This article is organised in the following manner. The methodology and data used in the study are discussed, followed by the theoretical framework, which explains the use of conceptual metaphor theory in the study. The next section analyses the data in two sub-sections. The first begins by reviewing data from the print media in Kenya and interviews with Nairobi City County authorities, showing how hawkers and the authorities are depicted in the fairy tale of the 'just war' metaphor. This sub-section ends with a critique of the adoption of the war metaphor and its implication for the hawkers' right to the city. The second sub-section discusses the cat-and-mouse metaphor as used by the hawkers and media to counteract the war metaphor. It first describes how the cat-and-mouse imagery plays out in the Nairobi CBD street space and ends with a critique of this metaphor. The final section concludes the paper.

Methodology and Data

This article adopts an interpretive qualitative design by specifically adopting the metaphor-in-discourse approach, which analyses authentic metaphors in language data extracted from interviews, newspaper content and focus group discussions (FGDs). In so doing, the approach takes into account the metaphors' forms and functions, who uses them, why, in what contexts and with what possible effects and consequences (Semino, Demjén & Demmen 2016). Additionally, the researchers engaged in non-participant observation as the hawkers traded in the streets.

The newspaper data constituted news reports on hawkers and hawking in the Nairobi CBD streets from three English national newspapers (*Daily Nation*, *The Standard* and *People Daily*) between 2003 and 2018. The second set of data was from interviews with hawkers and with city authorities. Hawkers interviewed were from all the major streets in which hawking takes place, including Tom Mboya Street, Moi Avenue, Ronald Ngala Street, River Road, Taveta Road and Latema Road. In addition, senior officers were interviewed from four Nairobi City County departments directly involved in policy formulation, implementation and enforcement, namely: Urban Planning; Environment and Natural Resources; Security, Compliance and Disaster Management; and Commerce, Trade and Industrialisation. The interviews were conducted between September 2018 and January 2019 and subsequently transcribed to enable close analysis. The final set of data was from two homogeneous FGDs with hawkers from the above-listed streets, in order to triangulate the interview data.

Given the difficulty of gaining access to the hawkers, the researchers employed the snowballing method whereby hawker acquaintances linked the researchers to other hawkers. The researchers took care that the initial

contacts operated from different streets and did not come from the same pool of acquaintances, so as to ensure rich and diverse data. The targeted hawkers were of mixed genders and ages. In total, we interviewed twenty-four hawkers, four of whom were living with disabilities. We used the Kiswahili language for both the interviews and FGDs with hawkers and provided English translations of this data.

Theoretical Framework

This article adopts Conceptual Metaphor Theory as a starting point towards understanding the interplay between the discursive construction and the material practices involved in the contestation of hawkers' claims to the right to the city. Conceptual Metaphor Theory is informed by Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) seminal ideas that, firstly, conceptual metaphors are 'pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action' (1980:4); secondly, that metaphors structure how we relate to the world and other people, thereby defining our 'realities' of the world. In defining these realities, metaphors can and do activate various specific identities, socio-political and economic practices and moral-legal and governance configurations in the material world (Boniburini 2015).

The choice of one metaphor over others reflects a certain worldview, and in this sense metaphors are ideological, in that they can be analysed as instruments of power and resistance used to naturalise and contest things and events in a manner that legitimises some and delegitimises others (Stenvoll 2008). Thus, metaphors can be used to qualify and disqualify socio-political and economic arrangements and developments, social groups and individuals in certain spaces (Musloff 2012) with actual consequences in the material world. Furthermore, if certain metaphors are used repetitively they may appear as 'inevitable', 'familiar' or 'natural' realities of the world.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory involves understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another. Researchers using this theory 'typically employ a more abstract concept as a target and a more concrete concept as their source', in that the concrete source domain concepts are a foundational basis for understanding the more abstract, intangible, complex and difficult-to-understand target domain concepts (Kövecses 2010:7).

Concrete concepts that form source domains include what is easier to imagine, see, hear, feel, smell and taste. Kövecses (2010) discusses common source domains as involving the human body, health and illness, animals, and movement and direction, among others. On the other hand, common target domains include emotion, desire, morality, thought, society, religion, politics, the economy, and human relationships, among others. Urban

spaces and the actors therein can be conceived as certain source domains as well, with the consequence that the domains in which they are so conceived activate various identities, relations and socio-political, economic and moral-legal and governance configurations.

Another way in which metaphors are ideological is through the mapping process. Mapping is the transfer of certain attributes from the source to the target domain. Metaphors necessarily highlight aspects of a source domain and hide others, thereby expressing certain worldviews of the same concept.

If we understand urban spaces, such as streets, as political spaces in which inclusion and exclusion are played out, the ideological nature of conceptual metaphors can be insightful in understanding the interplay between the discursive construction and the material practices involved in the contestation of hawkers' claims to the right to the city.

The identification and analysis of metaphors is a recognition that: 'A [m]etaphor operates through the interplay of language's denotative value, what it says clearly and obviously, and its connotative value, what it evocatively and often subjectively calls up, its overtones, allusions, and associations' (Steuter & Wills 2008:3). Thus, metaphor analysis needs to show how a metaphor is used in discourse; that is, how one entity stands for another entity, an idea or cultural association and how it plays out practically.

Conceptualising the Hawker in the Nairobi CBD as the Villain, in the War Metaphor

Lakoff (1992) conceives of the war metaphor as 'the fairy tale of the just war', positing that war has to be morally justified. Lakoff observes that morality is conceptualised as a matter of keeping the moral books balanced, where the 'wrongdoer' or villain needs to be punished in order to balance the moral books. If the wrongdoer refuses to settle his or her moral account, then someone must go after the criminal to ensure moral equity is established. The other characters in this war are: the hero, who is moral, courageous, rational, unwilling to negotiate with villains and compelled to defend the victim; the victim, the innocent character who lives in the shadow of the evil villain, enduring cruel treatment. This war is triggered by the villain committing a crime against an innocent victim, creating a moral imbalance. The hero is compelled to step forward to restore the moral balance and achieve victory by defeating the villain.

The next sub-sections give an overview of how the hawker is depicted as the villain in the CBD, as derived firstly from newspaper data and secondly from interviews with Nairobi City authorities.

The hawkers as villain in newspaper reports

Data capturing the recurring motif of the depiction of hawkers as villains in Nairobi CBD streets was drawn from three newspapers over a period spanning fifteen years. The descriptions use the actual phrasing in the newspapers. Our focus on media reports is informed by the observation that media news is ubiquitous in modern society and is a primary source for understanding the world and helps to constitute people's realities (Talbot 2007). The media exerts power and influence not only on individuals but also on major institutions of society and government (ibid). This power and influence is mostly reflected in the news genre because news carries with it the aura of 'objective' information. However, news is a construction of reality based on the news values and ideological leanings of the media (Bednarek & Caple 2012; Schudson 2003). Furthermore, newspapers carry the prestige and authority that come with the written word, thus making news in the newspaper much more influential.

In these newspapers, hawkers and hawking are described as a 'menace'.² They are also depicted as 'flooding',³ 'invading'⁴ and 'swarming'⁵ the CBD, with their presence portrayed as an 'influx'⁶ that creates a 'sea of humanity'⁷ 'submerging'⁸ the city with their numbers and wares. The CBD is said to be 'overrun'⁹ by hawkers, who are further accused of causing the city to come to a 'standstill'¹⁰ as they 'pitch tents'¹¹ outside licensed business premises. For their part, the 'city traders feel the heat of hawkers invasion' and rise 'up in arms'.¹² '[U]gly actions by Nairobi hawkers of terrorising people, motorists, passengers, businessmen and beating up [police] officers',¹³ are depicted as 'finally driving the last nail into the casket of the once "Green City in the Sun"'.¹⁴ Thus, the Nairobi City authorities are forced to 'deal'¹⁵ with hawkers variedly. One way is by having 'special [police] force[s] formed to deal with the hawkers'.¹⁶ The City Inspectorate also regularly mounts 'crackdown[s]'¹⁷ against hawkers or conducts 'routine operations against illegal traders'¹⁸ in order to 'contain' them. In other instances the 'city deploys teams [of enforcement officers] to clear hawkers', during operations in which the public is 'caught in police-hawker crossfire',¹⁹ suffers 'blood and tears as police fight hawkers'²⁰ while 'hawkers refuse to move out'.²¹ When hawkers are overpowered, they move out of the CBD and the fights abate. However, before long there is 'the return of the hawkers',²² a 'resurgence', an 'influx', a 'flooding' as hawkers act on their own or 'at the behest of powerful political cartels seeking election'.²³ At this point, the familiar script starts again and proceeds in more or less the manner reconstructed here – as the 'relocation of hawkers fail[s] again'.²⁴

Besides the newspapers' use of the specific forms of language highlighted above, the depiction of hawkers as villains is reinforced in other ways. Firstly,

news on hawking is mostly reported from the perspective of the authorities and rarely from that of the hawkers. Secondly, hawkers' opinions are rarely sought and the hawkers are not as frequently quoted as the authorities, the licensed traders or the public. Where hawkers' opinions are sought, these are rarely placed in prominent positions of the newspapers, such as the headline or at the beginning of the news report, unless they are negative, for instance when hawkers declare they will not leave the city, which may be construed as obstinacy.

The image of hawker as villain is also sustained through the occasional inclusion of run-on reports on crime, such as murders, carjackings or acts of lawlessness in the *matatu* (public service vehicles), carried under headlines on hawkers and hawking, yet such reports have no connection whatsoever with news on hawkers (*Daily Nation* 2/06/2006, 3/06/2006, 5/03/2008; *The Standard* 2/06/2006 and *People Daily* 1/06/2009). This strategy seems to consciously or unconsciously activate a metaphor transfer effect on readers, a proximity-is-similarity effect, which works on the basis that people tend to judge entities to be more similar to each other when they are placed closely in space (Winter & Matlock 2013). Thus, when unrelated reports on crime are included and juxtaposed in news about hawking, the suggestion of criminality is imputed in the act of hawking in a manner that suggests that hawking and hawkers in their entirety are criminal. A similar strategy to such metaphor transfer is discussed by Wills and Steuter (2014) in their critique of the 'war-on-terror' metaphor in what they call attempts to 'redraw semantic boundaries', where the metaphoric speech of powerful actors in the war on terror represents the individual terrorist actors in a manner that suggests that all those of similar religion, ethnicity or nationality are terrorists. This has devastating consequences for entire communities or populations.

The hawker as villain is further reinforced through the use of photography taken at angles that portray hawking as a larger-than-life phenomenon that inconceivably dwarfs all other urban life, to suggest that hawking has suffocated all other activities in the CBD (*People Daily* 14/07/2016 and 13/07/2016; *Daily Nation* 5/03/2008).

The hawker as villain in interviews with city authorities

During our interview with the Licensing Officer in the Nairobi City County Department of Commerce, Trade and Industrialisation, about the status of hawkers in the Nairobi CBD, he was categorical that the department had nothing to do with the kind of hawker this study was interested in. He said:

The hawkers you are asking me about are handled by the Inspectorate. This department has nothing to do with hawkers that ply their trade from place to place. We only deal with hawkers who have a permanent location, who are issued with licenses after being inspected and issued with relevant certificates and clearances such as public health certificates and a report filed by the Inspectorate that they are not obstructing free flow of movement or obstructing licensed business.

The officer reiterated, 'other departments refer people to the Trade department for hawkers' issues yet the department has nothing to do with hawkers'. The Licensing Officer's comments portray the hawkers as economic non-persons and therefore as an illegality that needs to be banished from the streets by the Security, Compliance and Disaster Management department. This view is indicative of the demonisation of the informal economy, which by virtue of operating beyond the regulation of the state is considered in developmental theory as 'primitive' and considered as a threat to modern governance (Lobato & Thomas 2015). This line of thinking further connects to exclusionary practices in urban development that disadvantage those in the informal sector who, in this regard, are thought of as undeserving of any state support and protection. Such thinking disenfranchises hawkers' urban citizenship.

The representative of the Director: Environment and Natural Resources said in the interviews that the department's contact with hawkers was minimal but 'we only come into contact with hawkers when we are asked to testify about contravention of bylaws such as nuisance or solid waste management bylaws'. In this comment, hawkers are likewise seen as non-persons in environmental planning, who come into the picture only as defilers of the environment or unruly polluters. This resonates with the newspaper report data above, in which hawkers are described as 'finally driving the last nail into the casket of the once "Green City in the Sun"'. Just as in the interview with the Licensing Officer, hawkers are unaccounted for in urban development and are perceived as not belonging in the city, despite being actors throughout the city's history.

The director in the Department of Security, Compliance and Disaster Management had the most to say about hawkers in Nairobi CBD: 'The policy on hawking is very clear; check the bylaws: hawking is banned in the CBD.' However, he admitted, 'despite the ban, hawkers influx still persists' causing 'unfair competition to genuine businesses that pay licences'. He explained that, 'the department has seven sector commanders with officers under them in the CBD who are on standby to mount patrols to ensure there are no illegalities'. The officer also said that '*Mungiki* controls

hawkers.’ *Mungiki* was a murderous gang that had infiltrated many sectors of society in Nairobi and central regions of Kenya, and whose mode of operation was to instill fear through intimidation, violence and killings and thereby indiscriminately extorting money from citizens. Whereas it is not inconceivable that they had infiltrated hawking in Nairobi, it would seem absurd to condemn all hawkers as having been at the service of the gang. The Inspectorate department took the most unequivocally militaristic perspective towards hawkers, who are highly homogenised, as inextricably linked to the murderous *Mungiki*. Hawkers in the CBD were thus by association criminal enemies who had to be militarily banished from the CBD by the aid of ‘sector commanders’.

Contrastingly, the Director: Urban Planning highlighted the department’s past efforts to integrate street hawking into urban planning policies and provided master plans and policy documents as evidence. He however decried their non-implementation. This officer stood out as the only County personnel interviewed who held an inclusive view of the hawkers’ place in the city. This suggests that the dominant exclusionary narrative of the hawker is not the only one, but that the inclusive narrative has been suppressed.

In a nutshell, from the interviews it emerged that the hawker was considered *persona non grata* in the Nairobi CBD and depicted as an irredeemable security risk, criminal, an illegality, a tax evader, a nuisance and an environmental polluter. This image of the hawker as villain was reinforced ‘across several discursive venues’ (Wills & Steuter, 2014:275) of the City County officialdom, with the exception of the Urban Planning department, thus potentially constituting a meta-narrative of who the hawker in the Nairobi CBD essentially is. Thus, the image of the hawker as villain to be handled by the Department of Security, Compliance and Disaster Management sets up the hawker as an actor upon whom war should be waged.

In the newspaper and interview data presented above, the hero is the Nairobi City County, who works with the support of the national government. The villain conflates the hawker as a category of persons with the act of hawking. The victims are the city dwellers and the general public who have ‘legitimate’ business in the CBD but who are negatively affected by the hawkers’ ‘invasion’ of and ‘menace’ in the CBD. This notion, however, underplays the numerous symbiotic relations of the hawker with the ‘victim’ groups observed in our study. The primary crime committed by the villain is to ‘invade’ the Nairobi CBD street space and engage in attendant negative activities that the word ‘invade’ entails, such as hostile occupation, a mass

of people, an attack or the act of preventing others from enjoying what is theirs. What counts as victory in the war against hawkers/hawking in the CBD is their decisive elimination from the CBD.

A critique of the 'war-on-hawking' metaphor in the Nairobi CBD

The study finds that the use of the war metaphor in conceptualising hawkers and hawking in the Nairobi CBD has possible effects on and consequences for the hawkers' claims to the right to the city.

Flusberg, Matlock and Thibodeau (2018) point to the ubiquity of war metaphors in framing many social and political issues, such as the 'war on poverty', 'war against crime', 'war on terror', 'war on drugs' and 'war on overpopulation' (Hartmann-Mahmud 2002). On the one hand, the war metaphor can positively motivate people to pay attention to social problems, galvanise action on important social issues and help mobilise resources towards social causes in different contexts, such as the medical, political, trade and climate change domains (Flusberg et al 2018). On the other hand, war metaphors may promote negative or even dangerous effects and consequences at both discursive and material realms of human society (Hartmann-Mahmud 2002; Steuter & Wills 2008; Flusberg et al 2018). It is these dangers that the study uses as a basis for critiquing the conceptualisation of hawking in the Nairobi CBD in terms of the war metaphor.

To begin with, Steuter and Wills (2008) point out 'the false clarity' that the war metaphor gives to conceptualising complex issues and, in the process, obscures the multifaceted dimensions, uncertainties and ambiguities around an issue. War metaphors necessarily set up an adversarial 'us' versus 'them' dichotomy and provide a militaristic solution to a socio-political and economic issue as the only viable option. The war metaphor thrusts socio-political and economic issues into the theatre of war, which presupposes that these issues be addressed by a unidimensional military strategy of attack and annihilate (Hartmann-Mahmud 2002). In the context of hawking and hawkers in the Nairobi CBD, this justifies the 'formation of special force[s]', their 'deployment' to undertake 'crackdowns' and 'operations' as the only option to 'clear' and 'contain' hawkers. Furthermore, the war metaphor projects the 'enemy' as 'completely separate and distinct from our society', thereby precluding the said enemy from being seen as a symptom or creation of the socio-political and economic system in which the enemy operates (ibid:428).

In our data, this conceptualisation allows for the media and the City authorities to refer to the presence of the hawkers in terms of 'invading', 'flooding' and 'swarming' the CBD and to preclude us from interrogating

issues such as the socio-political, economic and historical contexts and conditions in both Nairobi and Kenya, as well as the role of the authorities in creating and aggravating hawking in the CBD into becoming the social problem it is. Steuter and Wills (2008) warn that the creation of an enemy without a context in the society in which he or she operates allows for authorities to subvert the culprit–victim roles of the authorities and the enemy. In our data, the authorities' depiction of the hawker as the enemy to be militarily annihilated by the hero-authorities necessarily absolves the authorities from having contributed to the precipitation of what is now a 'menace'. It underplays the authorities' role in poor or inadequate planning, discriminatory urban policies that do not recognise the informal economy's contribution to the overall country's economy, and a disconnect between policies that in theory recognise hawking as part of the urban economy and a legal framework that in practice is intolerant to hawking (Linehan 2007; Morange 2015a; Racaud, Kago & Owuor 2018).

The second danger of war metaphors is that they can magnify the perception of the threat posed by an issue (Flusberg et al 2018). As literature discussing the US-led war on terror shows, magnified fear can be used to stigmatise, dehumanise and other those thought to represent the threat (Hodges & Nilep 2007; Steuter & Wills 2008, 2009). Othering can be achieved through projecting the enemy as non-human (as abhorrent objects or animals) or as an undifferentiated, indistinguishable mass or aggregate, and thus set up the enemy for elimination with little or no compunction.

In the data, hawkers are depicted as an undifferentiated and dangerous mass who are an indeterminate malevolent force ('menace'), a dangerous force of nature ('flood'), an indistinguishable mass of insects that can be dangerous and/or destructive ('swarm') and a chaotic mass of humanity ('sea of humanity'). As such, the dehumanised and threateningly depicted enemy (the hawker) is set up for annihilation. At this point, the 'ever-present risk of moving from the metaphorical to the literal' inherent in the war metaphor in situations when the enemy is dehumanised may just become the material reality (Hartmann-Mahmud 2002). This movement from the metaphorical to the literal is a common feature in Nairobi's CBD streets, which are regularly characterised by acts of latent, mild and brutal violence, police–hawker clashes and killings.

A third danger of the war metaphor is its great capacity to foreclose debate and engender undemocratic culture by expanding the powers of government and squeezing the life out of alternative models of dealing with a social issue (Hartmann-Mahmud 2002; Lakoff & Frisch 2006; Steuter & Wills 2008). This is made possible because the war metaphor simplifies large

complex issues into a combative duality of 'us' versus 'the enemy'. It forces the public into either supporting the authorities' position or siding with the enemy by engendering a false dilemma, implying that 'you' are either with 'us' or the 'enemy'. As Hartmann-Mahmud (2002:430) posits, in a time of war, citizens are positioned not to make 'the philosophical, ethical, and political critique', they are positioned only to ask questions surrounding strategy, the best weapon to be used and whether the war is being won. An overt use of this form of silencing is discernable in the Nairobi City County's 2007 hawkers bylaw No. 12, which states that 'any person who solicits, bargains, induces or negotiates with any hawker with a view to buy, purchase or sell any good in a non-designated area shall be guilty of an offence'. A less overt form of silencing is the suppression of the voices that call for the integration of hawkers into city planning and policies, as seen in the continued non-implementation of master plans, from 1973 to date, that aim to progressively integrate hawkers in the Nairobi CBD. Such silencing was best indicated by the Director of Urban Planning who, during our interviews, expressed frustration at the non-implementation of master plans which had been painstakingly developed.

A fourth danger is that the war metaphor presupposes a clear victory that brings an end to the war. As Hartmann-Mahmud (2002) has argued, whereas traditional wars with concrete targets may have a clear defeat of enemies, wars against social issues or concepts can never achieve such victories. Social issues seem amenable to be managed only, and not annihilated. Hartmann-Mahmud (2002:429) avers that, war metaphors directed at a social issue only 'prolong the inevitable confrontation with its complexity' or prevent effective alternatives from being considered (Flusberg et al 2018). Our data shows that there are hawkers who have been in the business for over twenty years, and some do not envisage leaving the trade. In addition, given that all the hawkers we interviewed indicated that their greatest motivation to joining the trade was the need to earn a livelihood, what alternative means of livelihood would be provided when the enemy hawker/hawking is eliminated? The persistence of the hawking 'problem' in the Nairobi CBD – spanning over a century – indicates that it has not been eliminated in the past and may not be eliminated in the near future. This may be an indicator of the failure of the war metaphor as the defining conceptualisation of dealing with hawking in the Nairobi CBD.

The persistence of hawking where it was supposed to have been eliminated has spawned another dominant metaphor, the 'cat-and-mouse game' by hawkers and the media to counter the war metaphor as discussed below.

Countering the War Metaphor: The Cat-and-Mouse Metaphor

From our interviews and FGDs with hawkers in Nairobi CBD streets, a dominant metaphor they employed to capture their precarious life amidst the onslaught from the City authorities was ‘a cat-and-mouse game’. The same metaphor often popped up in newspaper reports that describe the life-world of the hawkers in the Nairobi CBD. For instance, *The Standard* (6/11/2014) reported: ‘Spirited attempts by the city *askari* to rid the country’s capital of street hawkers have translated into a cat and mouse game for years.’ *People Daily* (13/3/2008) wrote, ‘The security issue is mostly felt when the city council and the hawkers engage in their usual cat and mouse chase.’ Likewise, the recurring motif presented earlier, of how hawking in Nairobi CBD streets is depicted in the newspapers, denotes an underlying conceptual metaphor of a ‘cat-and-mouse game’ in which the City authorities and hawkers are locked into perpetual, endless and vicious, shifting power relations that involve a ‘constant pursuit, near-captures and repeated escapes’ (Wikipedia dictionary).

The cat-and-mouse metaphor is one of many animal metaphors that are pervasive in human language. In these metaphors, animal names are widely employed to designate human characteristics and conversely animals are attributed human characters. Animal metaphors can be understood using Lakoff and Turner’s (1989) cultural model of the Great Chain of Being (GCB) hierarchy, which the authors point out allows us to contextually map out human character traits as non-human attributes and vice versa.

The characteristics of the cat, depending on the context and culture, include being powerful, strong, fierce/cruel/dangerous, opportunistic, greedy, selfish, pampered, entitled, proud, untrustworthy, pretentious and cunning (Muhammad & Rashid 2014; Turner 2014). The characteristics of the mouse on the other hand include being loathsome, destructive, disease- and plague-causing, sly/cunning, vulnerable, powerless, deadly as a mass, timid, weak, dirty, filthy (Steuter & Wills 2008; De Angelis 2005).

The cat-and-mouse game is seen within the context of a predator-prey dichotomy, which, according to the *Oxford Dictionary*, implies to play a cruel game with somebody in your power by changing your behaviour very often, so that your victim becomes nervous and does not know what to expect. The metaphor brings together the conceptual domains of animal and sport into a single human experience. This metaphor is derived from the observation that the cat as an opportunistic hunter readily stalks and kills prey, even when not hungry (Turner 2014), ostensibly as a trophy, which is a way of asserting its higher place in the food chain (Wills & Steuter 2009).

In order to see how the cat-and-mouse metaphor plays out in our data, we firstly highlight how the actions of the City authorities and the reactions of the hawkers can be conceptualised as locked in a cruel game in the Nairobi CBD streets. We then critique the implication of this conceptualisation with regard to the hawkers' claim to the right to the city.

The cat-and-mouse metaphor in interviews and newspaper data

Our data depicts the City authorities as being powerful, like a cat. This quality is manifested in their enforcement of the no-hawking-in-the-CBD policy in a manner perceived to be ruthless, cruel, fierce and dangerous. For instance, *People Daily* (27/10/2014) writes, '[c]ity county *askaris* on the spot over brutality'. In addition, the *Daily Nation* (2/11/2015) writes, '[r]ogue city county *askaris* leave trail of death, injuries'. In addition, all the hawkers we interviewed decried the brutality of the City *askaris*. However, the City authorities consider their actions natural and just. For instance, *The Standard* (6/11/2014) quotes a senior officer in Nairobi County's Trade Regulation and Licensing Sector saying, 'they say harassment but it is not harassment. We are just trying to enforce the law and bring order to the city streets'.

Aware of their vulnerable and precarious position in the CBD in the face of the more powerful City *askaris*, hawkers project the slyness of the mice in order to survive in the dangerous CBD streets. Mice are said to be sly because of their ability to penetrate and navigate places where other animals, including cats, cannot reach (Steuter & Wills 2008). As an illustration, the hawkers said they scout for the City authorities from the rooftops of high buildings within the CBD and use agreed-upon signals, like whistling, whistle-blowing or coded mobile phone communications, which alert other hawkers to hurriedly close business, clear the streets or scuttle for safety. In several instances during our non-participant observation, our hawker informants pointed out such scouts on the rooftops of various strategic buildings. Our informants also told us that they have identified other scouts who keep close surveillance on the City *askaris* as they leave City Hall (the City County Headquarters), follow their movements and notify the hawkers of the specific streets that the *askaris* are headed to, so that the hawkers can hurriedly pack their wares, duck into hiding or camouflage their presence by blending with the pedestrians in the streets. These informants told us that they have an organised and agreed-upon method of remunerating these scouts. In addition, hawkers said they carry only a small amount of stock into the streets so that they can easily scamper should the City *askaris* appear unnoticed or, if their

goods are confiscated, they incur minimal loss. One hawker told us, '*Mtu anawekelea kidogo ndio ikipotea isipotee mingi*' (You operate with a small stock at a time so that if confiscated, you don't lose much).

Further, our data suggests that the City authorities manning the streets are opportunistic and greedy. Just like the cat is said to be an opportunistic hunter who waits in front of burrows for hours, to pounce on prey (Turner 2014:68), the City *askaris* take advantage of the hawkers' presence in the CBD streets to routinely extort money from them. In our interviews, hawkers said that the City *askaris* see them as 'their bank' from which to 'withdraw' money at will in order not to face arrest, or, when arrested, to secure their release and that of their confiscated goods before reaching the City courts. The *People Daily* (28/07/2008) confirms this with a quote from a trader: 'If you don't pay the Kshs 50 "daily fee", the *askaris* confiscate your goods after which you either have to part with a hefty bribe or be taken to court where you get charged of illegal dumping.' The City *askaris'* extortionist behaviour projects the cat's desire for pampering and petting through stroking by human owners (Brown & Bradshaw 2014).

In return, hawkers understand their vulnerability at the hands of the opportunistic and greedy City authorities and they act slyly, as mice do, by readily offering bribes either as individuals or groups to avoid arrest. From our interviews, hawkers told us that in certain streets they had established elaborate mechanisms of pooling together bribes – called *pesa ya wakubwa* (money for the bosses) – that would get to seniors at City Hall through illegal networks. This allowed the contributors unfettered access to street spaces. Fruit vendors in one street had paid for such street spaces, which they referred to as *mashamba* – Kiswahili for 'farms', which is a highly valued factor of production and emotional attachment in Kenya. By informally privatising and commoditising public spaces, a hierarchy of exploitation emerges, in which those who have not made a contribution routinely face arrest during crackdowns as *askaris* turn a blind eye to the paid-up hawkers. This creates a situation that Dragsted-Mutengwa (2018) describes as an exchange practice, whereby hawkers and City officials are mutually engaged in a transaction without necessarily sharing mutual interests. Thus, even in their vulnerable position, hawkers act with the accumulative ruthlessness and selfishness associated with the rodent.

Our data also depict the City authorities as having the treachery of a cat. Nineteen of the twenty-four hawkers interviewed attested to having been arrested while hawking, and arraigned in court. They described the numerous and largely false charges the City authorities preferred against them. This treachery was captured by one hawker, who protested:

Saa ingine maybe uko shughuli zako lakini kwasababu anakujua wewe ni hawker, na wameitishwa watu kupeleka kortini, anakushika tu anaenda anakwandikia kuuza kwa street, kufunga barabara, kuitana na kuzuia askari wa kanjo kufanya kazi. Unashindwa, hii maneno yote ni mtu mmoja amefanya? (Sometimes you may be attending to your other personal matters but because they know you as a hawker, and are required to take a certain number of people to court, they will arrest you and charge you with selling on the streets, blocking pathways, calling out for buyers and obstructing askaris from doing their work. Then you wonder, have all these been done by one person?)

The treachery by the City authorities was also revealed to us by an officer in the Security, Compliance and Disaster Management department, when he explained the catch in the numerous charges. He told us that the first charge for an arrested hawker would be hawking without a licence, to which all the other charges are tied. This charge creates a cul-de-sac situation in which the hawker is unable to produce a licence, since hawking in the CBD is banned. Because of this the hawker is unable to challenge the other charges, resulting in heavy fines being imposed. Hawkers complained that these charges and resulting fines were very punitive and were meant to ground them financially and to force them out of the streets.

In turn, the hawkers – like mice – employ cunning in the face of the punitive cul-de-sac situation, by accepting all the charges preferred regardless of their truthfulness in order to shorten the court process and secure their freedom to return to the streets. In addition, hawkers regularly fall back on their social networks to get loans to pay the punitive fines and to replenish their stock. As one hawker said, ‘*Unakubali tu unapigwa faini, na faini nilazima nilipe kwa sababu sitoki Nairobi na siwachi kuwa hawker hapa Nairobi CBD*’ (You just accept [the charges] and you are fined, which I just pay because I am not leaving Nairobi and I am not abandoning hawking in the CBD).

Another cunning strategy the hawkers use to remain in the CBD street space includes forming and fostering symbiotic relations with other seemingly antagonistic actors in Nairobi CBD, such as *matatu* operators and licensed traders, who at face value may seem to be hostile to hawkers by virtue of competing for the same space and customers respectively. Seventeen out of the twenty-four hawkers we interviewed considered *matatu* operators as sharing an identity with them in having a precarious status in the CBD, by virtue of being in the informal industry, which is prone to harassment from City authorities. They therefore foster mutually beneficial relations. One hawker reported: ‘*Watu wa matatu na sisi ni kitu moja, wao ni mahustlers kama sisi hawkers na hakuna tofauti. Tofauti ni ile tu anaenda na gari na time yeye anaharassiwa pia sisi tunaharassiwa na City Council, so we are equal*

(The *matatu* crew and hawkers are one, we are hustlers. The only difference is that they operate vehicles, but when they are being harassed by the City County officials, we are being harassed as well. So our fate is similar). In this regard, they pointed out that, firstly, they share the same customers – city residents who buy from the hawkers and use *matatus* to commute to and from the city. Secondly, that *matatu* operators also buy from the hawkers while the hawkers in turn use *matatus* in transporting their wares to the streets. To cement their shared identity, *matatu* operators alert hawkers of impending crackdowns and help hide hawkers' wares in their vehicles.

Besides *matatus*, hawkers said that they also form and nurture symbiotic relationships with licensed traders. Firstly, they told us that some licensed traders entrust stock to hawkers to sell on the streets at a profit or to move dead stock as well as help move seasonal stock, such as umbrellas, well wishes cards and memorabilia, because the mobility of hawkers enables them to get to more buyers than traders in shops can. In addition, some licensed traders store hawkers' wares in their shops overnight, and, in return, the hawkers ensure that the frontage of the shops where they display their wares is left clean. Others told us that their continued interactions with shop owners enable them to get short-term loans from licensed traders, which engendered trust and symbiotic relations.

A critique of the cat-and-mouse metaphor in the Nairobi CBD streets

The study finds that the conceptualisation of the hawkers–City-authorities' relations in the Nairobi CBD streets as a cat-and-mouse game has implications for the hawkers' claims to the right to the city.

To begin with, just like the villain–hero dichotomy in the war metaphor, the predator–prey dyad in the cat-and-mouse metaphor seemingly gives sharp and dramatic clarity to the complex social relations between City authorities and hawkers in Nairobi by using well-known animal attributes to describe this relationship. However, this clarity, just as in the war metaphor, can be a 'false clarity' in that it simplifies a complex social phenomenon that has a deep socio-political and economic history of exclusion and inclusion.

The predator–prey dyad reduces the City-authorities–hawkers' relationship to an 'us vs them' dichotomy, which obscures an in-depth analysis of the issue and results in a simplistic view that suggests that hunting down the hawker is the only practical solution. In addition, the cat-and-mouse metaphor treats the prey/hawkers as non-persons and invaders in the city's ecology as opposed to seeing them, as discussed in the critique of the war metaphor, as a construct of the historical exclusionary socio-political and economic practices of the City authorities.

The second limitation is that the media's use of phrases such as 'city council and the hawkers engage in their usual cat and mouse chase' seems to suggest a perpetual and persistent reality that makes the predatory-prey relationship the inevitable and natural reality of the world of the two actors. This may be detrimental to the hawkers by delegitimising and disqualifying their claim to the right to the city. This is because it may serve to naturalise the constructed moral-legal and governance configuration that the hawkers in the CBD are to be hunted and eliminated, while it is the City authorities' right to eliminate them following the natural instinctive order of the animal kingdom. That the hawkers use this conceptualisation may mean a resigned acceptance of their fate as the hunted and the media's naturalisation of the same. Just as was discussed in the analysis of the war metaphor, the animal metaphor depicted in the stark terms of hunter-hunted dichotomy presents the ever-present risk of moving from a metaphorical conceptualisation into the acceptance, naturalisation and justification of literal acts of latent, mild and brutal violence that City authorities regularly mete out to hawkers.

The third limitation of the cat-and-mouse metaphor is that its conceptualisation of the hawker-City-authorities' relationship as a form of sport in the animal world potentially trivialises the hawkers' struggle to eke a living in the CBD. The metaphor does so when it seems to portray the capture and annihilation of the hawker as a trophy object in a hunting expedition as the way things are in the world. As shown in the previous subsection, it may trivialise and dehumanise hawkers' suffering when their arrests are treated as merely meeting set targets of arraigning a certain number of hawkers in court. In this event, hawkers become trophies to be displayed in court after the successful hunting expedition of the City *askaris*.

The fourth limitation of the cat-and-mouse metaphor is that it narrows solutions in a unidirectional manner. As Steuter and Wills (2008:73) posit:

The hunter seems to possess the autonomy and control in the hunt, but in many ways the actions open to the hunter are limited: the hunter may stalk, chase, track, snare, wound, kill, or bag, but cannot, by his nature and that of his prey, negotiate, confer, settle, or otherwise alter the circumstances.

Thus, this metaphor overly emphasises perpetual hostility and escapes from danger as the natural order, and precludes, for instance, envisaging hawking as a productive economic activity that ought to be creatively integrated into the CBD economy. It precludes progressive and inclusive strategies and policy alternatives, while justifying repressive 'hunting' ones.

When hawkers uncritically adopt the cat-and-mouse game as the defining conceptualisation of their place in the city vis-à-vis the City authorities, they endorse rather than repudiate this conceptualisation. This limits the hawkers'

claims to the right to the city to individual self-help 'micro-level strategies' at the expense of 'macro-level strategies' that might involve organised groups of hawkers engaging with state authorities (Forkuor, Akuoko & Yeboah 2017:8). In this regard, hawker strategies seem to conform to Scott's (1985) everyday forms of passive peasant resistance in what he calls 'the weapons of the weak', such as bribery, strategic collusion with their adversaries, deception, cunning engagement with adversaries and going through the motions of court justice without believing in it. Whereas these strategies may work in the long run by nibbling away the confidence of the oppressive system, they may just prolong the century-old quest for hawkers' right to the city.

Conclusion

Using conceptual metaphors as fundamental discursive tools that structure how we frame the world and its ultimate impact on our material realities, this study sought to analyse how hawking in Nairobi's CBD produces discursive political spaces that activate various identities, specific socio-political, economic and governance practices. The analysis has enabled us to investigate underlying patterns of framing the contestation of urban citizenship, governance and spatial policies in a postcolonial African city and how these frames inform policy and practical steps to manage hawking in the CBD.

The study has shown that the Nairobi City authorities, with the tacit approval of the media on the one hand, have fixed on the war metaphor, while the hawkers – again with the tacit approval of the media – locked onto the cat-and-mouse metaphor, and that these are the two defining metaphors that conceptualise hawking in Nairobi's CBD. As Jayne Docherty and Frank Blechman, quoted by Steuter and Wills (2008:8), observe:

Every metaphor is a way of seeing the world and every metaphor is also a way of not seeing the world. If we lock onto a single description of the problem and the appropriate response too early, we may not discover the most effective long-term responses to a crisis.

Drawing from this quote, it seems that the conception of hawking through the war and cat-and-mouse metaphors in Nairobi began at very formative stages of the city, close to a century ago and persists to the present time. The two metaphors seem to be mutually reinforcing across discursive spaces: in the media, in statements by the City authorities and in common discourse among hawkers. They both presuppose a dichotomy of 'humanity and inhumanity, superiority and inferiority, triumph and capitulation' (Wills & Steuter 2014:284), good and evil, hero and villain, us and them, as well as hunter-prey dyads. These dichotomies overly emphasise conflict, hostility,

the distinctiveness of social actors as well as fundamental and intractable differences, and give a false clarity to complex socio-political issues with an entrenched history. These dichotomous presuppositions and their reinforcement across discursive spaces call to mind what Steuter and Wills (2010:154) have observed of the racist war metaphor applied in response to terrorism by a wide range of powerful actors, as 'creat[ing] a dangerous discursive world characterised by fundamental, insoluble divisions'.

Of particular note is the role of the media in Kenya, which adopts and echoes the war and cat-and-mouse metaphorical frames. As a powerful voice that is the ubiquitous means through which society today understands the world, the media, in uncritically adopting these metaphors, may not only reinforce a sense of fatalism (Steuter & Wills 2010:165) but may also reinforce the oppression and the suppression of those sectors conceived as 'enemy/prey' and disenfranchise them of urban citizenship.

The two metaphors are also fundamentally based on a deadly antagonistic conception with a false sense of being able to vanquish the antagonist/hawker or at least keep the antagonist out of the city. This has spectacularly failed, which suggests the need to 'change the metaphors in order to change the conversation' (Wills & Steuter 2014:285) about how hawking in the Nairobi CBD should be conceived. Such a possibility is suggested in our interviews with the director of Urban Planning whose department has produced master plans that have long sought to integrate hawking into the Nairobi CBD but which have never been fully embraced or implemented by the City authorities.

Notes

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