



Chapter 6 Conclusion



Chapter 6: Conclusion

The Warwick Junction Urban Renewal Project began during the post apartheid period of high enthusiasm for change and co-operation. Compared to many other cities in the developing world, the local authority in Durban was well resourced and owned much of the land in Warwick. However, despite these unique circumstances the Project has some valuable lessons for other local authorities in South Africa and elsewhere. This conclusion recaps some of these and reflects on challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Lessons learned

The Project's starting point was that street traders would always be a part of the city. The significant economic and social roles played by street traders were highlighted by the research done about activities in the area and the growing interactions between traders and officials. It became clear that traders were contributing significantly to the local economy while also supporting large families. Understanding and publicising these roles was important in persuading politicians to allocate the funds needed to implement change in the area.

Street trader management is too often assigned to low-level staff with few resources. At best, it goes to local economic development departments; at worst it is relegated to the police departments. Yet managing street trading activities is particularly challenging; it means learning to work in a constantly changing environment.

However some managers responded to these challenges with real enthusiasm in Warwick. The experience there demonstrates the value of an inter-departmental approach using a wide range of skills and knowledge among existing staff. In addition a few higher level staff were allocated to co-ordinate council activities in the area. The former Project leader of Warwick considered that minimum requirements for project such as this were a planner, an operations person and someone to concentrate on implementation. He was also of the view that, 'when it comes to managing the informal economy, some of your best paid officials need to be on the streets.'

The Project was run on a modest budget. During the period of intensive changes (1997 – 2003) the annual budget allocations for infrastructure ranged between R1.8 million and R2.8 million. The Project did, in some cases, improve livelihoods with very few resources. Establishing a buy-

back centre for cardboard collectors, for example, entailed little more than buying a scale and allocating a small portion of land, but increased the incomes of collectors by 250 percent.

As the quotes below show, stakeholder participation was central to the approach of the Project and there are examples of this throughout this book. This sustained interaction resulted in actual infrastructure that was appropriately designed for specific trader needs. However it also helped to secure (after years of exclusion due to apartheid) a real sense among street traders that they belonged in the city. This ownership is reflected in the high levels of volunteerism described in Chapter 5.

The council afforded informal traders... the opportunity to participate on a sustained and continuous basis in negotiations about their needs and priorities and the council's concerns, in a low-key way, often on an issue-by-issue basis.

Trader leader

In Warwick there was a real engagement with the local day-to-day realities. This is contrary to classic planning methods. Planners often assume that processes can be controlled. Instead the Project team in Warwick worked with the energy that was there.

Local planner

While a commitment to consultation is critical, local authorities also need competent negotiating partners. The traders of Warwick could respond and articulate their needs collectively. When the Project began they already had some organisational experience: they knew how meetings should be structured; they understood accountability and mandates and the need to be report back to their constituencies. The experience in Warwick therefore demonstrates that although individually traders are often in a weak position, together they can achieve significant change.

Being area based and establishing a project centre were central to the consultative approach and the success of the Project. Trader leaders emphasised that having the Project Centre in the area, so that traders could meet on their own as well as with the council, was very important. This facilitated not only the on-going interactions between council staff, street traders and their leaders but also the building and maintenance of trader organisation.





Understanding the specific economic dynamics within different segments of the informal economy was crucial. Through observation, consultation and many one-on-one discussions it became clear that interventions to enhance the livelihoods of, for example, traditional medicine traders, were different from interventions needed for bovine head cooks. The Project adopted a sector by sector approach to infrastructure and support of street traders.

The Project also demonstrates that, through trial and error, architectural and urban design solutions can be found to tackle urban management issues – from preventing crime to providing appropriate water and sanitation facilities – and to support livelihoods. These solutions will always be context-specific; however the same observation and consultation techniques can be used.

If you are curious enough and observe what is going on closely, there will be a design response to accommodate activities.

Project leader





The Early Morning Market, the site proposed for the new mall

Opportunities and challenges ahead

South Africa will be hosting the 2010 Soccer World Cup. This provides both opportunities and threats for the people of Warwick.

In general, street traders are excited about the number of international visitors that the soccer event promises. While Warwick has previously catered largely for poorer Durban residents, traders now meet regularly to plan for 2010 as part of a broader project to attract more middle class customers to the area. They have formed themselves into a committee with representatives from different parts of Warwick. Among other issues this group has discussed how to ensure that the products they sell appeal to outsiders, and how best to market each particular area. There are plans for hosting performances of traditional dance and other entertainment.

The 2010 event does however pose a threat to the traders of Warwick. As part of a package of projects aimed to 'spruce up' the city before the World Cup, the city has proposed that a R350 million shopping centre be built in the centre of Warwick, including a new 400 bay taxi rank. The site for this development includes the Early Morning Market and bovine head cooks facility. Large-scale private property developers are central to this plan. The shopping centre will have 30 000 square metres of formal retail space. In contrast with the Project's approach up to this point, there has been very little consultation with traders about these plans.

These proposals are of real concern for traders, as they entail a substantial redesign of the area. As the Project leader pointed out:

Warwick is like a living organism. There is a relationship between the walking distance between different modes of transport, the numbers of taxis, the proportion of formal retail to informal retail and the density and composition of traders. The detailed consultation and careful project interventions have led to an equilibrium that works. If any one of these factors is changed without involving the traders, this could impact negatively on the viability of trader businesses.

A 50 year lease is due to be granted to a black economic empowerment¹³ consortium. This will effectively transfer ownership and management of large tracts of the area into private property developers' hands. The current design plans show that foot traffic will be directed

¹³Black economic empowerment (BEE) is a programme launched by the South African government to redress inequalities by giving previously disadvantaged groups economic opportunities that under Apartheid were not available to them. For example in granting government tenders, preference is given to companies who have black ownership.

past formal businesses rather than the informal traders. In addition the redevelopment will introduce many formal shops, including a large supermarket chain, into the area. There is a history of formal business using their economic muscle to out-compete informal traders.

It is hoped that this book will help to reinforce the significance of Warwick in several ways. Warwick is important for the livelihoods of those who trade there. Incomes generated through this trade support large households living in poorer parts of the city. It is a dynamic and vibrant area with traders that are particularly responsive to poorer commuters' needs. It is significant to the city as a whole since it is unique to Durban and has potential to expand tourist opportunities. Warwick is also an international benchmark of best practice for street trader infrastructure, management and support. Central to its success is a highly consultative and innovative operating structure that should be continued in any redesign of the area.

The importance of this area is not just about livelihoods but the role it plays in city making.

Project leader



The Bovine Head Market, the site proposed for the new mall