

HIDDEN WARWICK: A PHOTO ESSAY OF THE BARROW OPERATORS AND
THEIR ROLE IN DURBAN'S INFORMAL ECONOMY

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*“This market is the center of the nation. It is the heart of the country. It is the pulse.
Without a pulse, a human cannot be alive and thrive. It is time now to fix our heart”*

–Patric Mncube, April 15th, 2011



Patric, my advisor, taking a turn at pulling Eric Mthethwa's barrow at 4 AM on April 20th, 2011

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ABSTRACT

This study is a photo essay/profile of barrow operators and traders that work in Warwick Junction, an informal trading market in downtown Durban, South Africa. I worked closely with Patric Mncube, the senior project officer of *Asiye eTafuleni*, to complete this research project. The barrow operators that I focused on are responsible for moving goods in, out and around the market to different trading sites and are essential in allowing the market to prosper. Almost all of these barrow operators are men who come from the Eastern Cape in search for more profitable work to support their families. In addition to simply profiling these men, I wanted to explore how barrow operators were able to contribute to Durban's informal and formal economies.

To gather information, I conducted interviews and took photographs (portraits and action pictures) of various barrow operators throughout the market. Additionally, I interviewed barrow operator leaders, informal traders, and informal trader leaders to get a better idea of the community as a whole.

I found that the barrow operators are beyond crucial to the informal economy, specifically Warwick Junction. They allow goods to travel between storage and trader stalls in a safe and timely manner. They are forced to labor in terrible working conditions, yet they have no representation to make changes that will benefit them. However, these barrow operators are committed to eventually acquiring some form of representation, perhaps in trader organization meetings, to make their difficult jobs slightly easier.

INTRODUCTION

“South Africa’s informal economy has played a significant role in the country’s overall economy, especially in reducing the problems of poverty and unemployment” (Mapadimeng 125). Within the informal economy, street traders and barrow operators form a crucial relationship that allows both groups not only to survive, but thrive. Street trading is “a viable enterprise from the point of view of generating a regular income” (Mapadimeng 136). However, unfortunately the world population and South Africa’s government are less than impressed with the contributions of the informal economy. “In November 2003 President Mbeki stated, during his address to the National Council of Provinces] that ‘The second economy (or the marginalised economy) is characterised by underdevelopment, contributes little to the GDP, contains a big percentage of our population, incorporates the poorest of our rural and urban poor, is structurally disconnected from both the first and the global economy and is incapable of self generated growth and development’” (Shier 1). Mbeki’s view represents the view of many people in South Africa, and this study was created in the hope that people will begin realizing the importance and benefits of South Africa and Durban’s informal economies.

Street trading makes up a large percentage of Durban’s informal economy, but many do not realize how important the barrow operators are to street trading and the

informal economy as a whole. Little to no literature includes information on the barrow operators, hence the inspiration for this research project. The barrow operators are essential in allowing Warwick Junction to operate as smoothly as it does, and I wanted their stories finally to be told.

Warwick Junction is a large informal trading market in downtown Durban, South Africa. The market spans throughout many city blocks and around 460,000 people walk through it every day (Dobson and Skinner 5). Thousands of barrow operators and informal traders work in various sectors of the market:

- Bovine head
- Brook Street
- Victoria Street Market
- Herb market
- Lime sellers
- Early Morning Market

In this study, I looked at barrow operators that worked in four of those sectors: Bovine Head, Early Morning Market, Brook Street Market and Victoria Street Market.

Barrow operators ultimately allow informal traders to make an income. The income generated by these informal traders can benefit the formal economy, which will be explained more in depth later in the paper.

Specifically, the objectives of this paper are to profile many barrow operators and the traders they work for. The questions that will be answered are as follows: Where do these barrow operators come from? What does their daily life entail? How large is the

barrow operator population? What is the history of the barrow operators, as a whole? What is the relationship between the barrow operator and the trader they work for? How are the barrow operators organized; are there leaders? What makes an effective barrow operator? How are payment/finances calculated? What problems do the barrow operators and traders face? How are they resolved?

The paper consists of eight sections that are embedded with pictures that contribute to the text. The first section tells brief life histories of barrow operators and traders, which include how many people they support, how much experience they have, and what their daily lives include. This section also focuses on the history of the barrow operators as a whole and how the industry has been transformed over the years. The second section focuses on the relationship between the barrow operators and traders. Specifically, the qualities of a good barrow operator, according to barrow operators and traders, are discussed. The third section analyzes the leadership within the barrow operator and trader communities, particularly how barrow operator and trader leaders are elected, the length they are elected for, as well as the desired qualities of leaders. The fourth section analyzes the payment between the barrow operator leaders, the fifth section analyzes the different types of physical barrows, and the sixth section consists of pictures of the barrow operators in different areas of the market. Lastly, the seventh section discusses the problems that barrow operators face, while eighth section delineates goals for the future to fix the problems that harm the barrow operators.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term, informal economy, is greatly debated in terms of definition and to what extent the barrow operator/trader sector covers that definition. For the purpose of this paper, informal economy will be broadly defined as “many different types of economic activity (trading, collecting, providing a service and manufacturing), different employment relations (the self employed, paid and unpaid workers and disguised wage workers) and activities with different economic potential (survivalist activities and successful small enterprises)” (Devey, Skinner and Valodia 7-8).

The informal economy and formal economy are often defined as two separate entities, while they are actually extremely interrelated and dependent on one another. Customarily the informal economy (globally and locally) is viewed as an unorganized, unregulated and unimportant element of economies. However, recent literature has proven that the informal economy, globally and in South Africa, is beneficial to the formal economy, to issues of unemployment and to the country’s overall gross national product (GDP). Furthermore, the informal economy can be surprisingly well ordered and regulated, and that can be seen in Durban’s street traders.

Unemployment

Unemployment is one of the largest challenges that South Africa is currently facing. Almost one-fourth of the population (24%) is currently unemployed (Statistics South Africa 2010). The informal economy gives unemployed people the opportunity to make an income and support their families by becoming self-employed. “South Africa’s high involuntary unemployment and small informal sector is attributed to an underperforming formal sector and barriers-to-entry in the informal sector” (Davies and

Thurlow 1). Unemployment often stems from a combination of a lack of employment opportunities and an abundance of low-skilled workers. It is also the result of “manufacturing’s decline since the end of Apartheid [that] is attributed to low profitability caused by rising import competition” (Davies and Thurlow 1). The informal economy has fewer barriers than the formal economy and has helped employ those that are actively looking for work. Data show a tremendous growth in employment with the number of workers employed in the informal economy, more than doubling over the period 1997 to February 2001 (Devey, Skinner and Valodia 5). This is an example of the informal economy directly benefiting South Africa’s working population. The informal economy provides a type of haven for unemployed people that need to find work. Also, “unemployment in South Africa is involuntary and informal work is preferred” (Davies and Thurlow 2). Once someone is unemployed, he or she is given the opportunity to restart his or her working career. Self-employment can often be an appealing new career path because potential employees are given the opportunity to manage themselves and do not risk being fired. However, self-employees must then deal with the pressure of managing their own employment and income, which can fluctuate more frequently and intensely than if a person is employed in the formal economy.

Another benefit of the informal economy is that there, in a sense, is unlimited job potential. Clearly there is a certain limited amount of supply and demand, but ultimately people can enter and leave the informal economy much more easily than they can in the formal economy. "In Africa, informal work during the past decade is estimated to have accounted for almost 80% of non-agricultural employment, over 60% of urban employment and over 90% of new jobs" (Becker 18). The lack of limitations within the

informal economy allows for jobs to be generated at a rate that can better support the population.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

"In November 2003 President Mbeki stated [during his address to the National Council of Provinces] that 'The second economy (or the marginalised economy) is characterised by underdevelopment, contributes little to the GDP, contains a big percentage of our population, incorporates the poorest of our rural and urban poor, is structurally disconnected from both the first and the global economy and is incapable of self generated growth and development'" (Shier 1). In this quote, Mbeki failed to realize that the informal economy (second economy) is able to contribute to the GDP in a few ways.

First, the informal economy allows people to generate income that they can then use to purchase goods in the formal economy. Many people claim that the formal and informal economies are completely separate, when there are actually many connections between the two. "The 'second economy' is far from being structurally disconnected from the mainstream of the economy. Instead, multiple forward and backward linkages exist between formal and informal activities. Data from the Labour Force Survey shows that there is a surprising level of churning within the labour market, with the status of more than half the workers having changed at least once in the period under analysis" (Shier 2). Money and goods flow between the two economies and "another study suggests that capital moves between the two sectors because households that have some form of regular income are most often also involved in self-employment" (Shier 2).

Secondly, retailers, consumers and tourists in the formal economy buy goods that were originally produced in the informal economy. For example, crafts from the Early Morning Bead Market in Warwick Junction can be found in stores around Durban, South Africa. Another example within Warwick Junction is that throughout the market many people work as cardboard collectors. “Working throughout the inner city and its surrounds, over 500 women and men collect around 30 tons of cardboard a day, yet their value to the city and its environment has gone largely unrecognized” (Dobson and Skinner 79). However, through Asiye eTafuleni and the Self Employed Women’s Union, the work of the cardboard collectors has become acknowledged as important, at least within the informal economy sector. These cardboard collectors (and other informal waste collectors) are an important link between the informal and formal sectors, because these men and women sell the cardboard and waste back to waste buy back centers, which is part of the formal economy. The money generated through this trade now accounts “for almost 20% of Mondi’s total recovered paper purchases” (Skinner eThekwini Informal Economy Conference 2006). Also, goods that are produced in the informal sector can be formally exported outside the country, which contributes to the exporting country’s GDP.

Both of these examples are evidence of how the formal economy purchases these goods from the informal economy. This leads the formal economy to ultimately generate revenue, which directly benefits South Africa’s GDP. Informal enterprises contribute 8-10% to South Africa’s GDP and in 2004, country -wide total expenditure in the informal economy stood at R52 billion (Skinner eThekwini Informal Economy Conference 2006).

The examples mentioned previously are evidence that the informal and formal sectors of economies are not completely separate. The two sectors are reliant on one another and when one is not performing well, the other is affected. "The informal economy's growth or decline has essentially been linked to the growth or decrease of the formal economy" (Becker 17). It is unfair to label one inferior by calling it the "second economy" because both sectors have their strengths and weaknesses. The informal economy generates revenue and should be referred to as the informal economy, rather than the informal sector, to show its importance. "The informal sector is increasingly being referred to as the informal economy to get away from the idea that informality is confined to a specific sector of economic activity but rather cuts across many sectors. 'Informal economy' also emphasizes the existence of a continuum from the informal to the formal ends of the economy and thus the interdependence between the two sides" (Becker 8).

Order and Regulation of Informal Economy

The informal economy has been stereotyped to be unregulated and unorganized. Government does not regulate the informal economy, so in that regard this stereotype is fairly accurate. However, the informal economy is sometimes regulated in a clear way at the local level. Warwick Junction is an example of an extremely orderly aspect of the Durban's informal economy. There are many markets throughout Warwick, and each has a specific purpose, specific employees, and specific customers. The Early Morning Market sells fruits and vegetables; Victoria Street Market sells crafts, clothes and spices; Brook Street market sells a combination of hardware, clothing and food. The list could

continue, but each area of the market has been designated to produce and sell items. This organization happened naturally, with the help of Warwick Junction Urban Renewal Project.

Within Durban and Warwick, street traders rent out stalls and purchase, sell and produce specific goods that are transported in an orderly way to and from their stands by barrow operators. Barrow operators are men and women that move goods in, out and around Durban and are hired by the street traders. In certain areas, barrow operators are paid by the weight of the goods and the distance they are traveling with them. In other areas, barrow operators are paid per trip. Street traders that trade nearby often pay their barrow operators the same amount and by the same criteria. Nothing is written down, but verbal agreements are made, and when trouble arises there are street trader leaders that can deal with these issues. These trader leaders are elected every two years, and have a set of duties, including handling conflicts. However, barrow operators are in dire need of having elected leaders as well to help them be treated more fairly by the street traders they work for. That being said, organization exists, and is essential, within the informal economy. The organization does not always resemble the structure within the formal economy, but this is because both sectors function completely differently.

Organization exists and continues to be necessary because the informal economy generates a great deal of revenue. Specifically, “the informal trade turnover in Warwick Junction is estimated to be R1 billion annually” (Skinner eThekweni Informal Economy Conference 2006). Around 460,000 people walk through Warwick every day and between 5000 and 8000 people trade informally there, earning between R1000 and R8000 a month (Dobson and Skinner 5).

Recognizing the Informal Economy

The informal economy is linked to the formal economy, but has yet to be recognized and deemed beneficial by the formal economy and government. "The informal economy can no longer be considered as a temporary phenomenon. It is clear that the informal economy has a significant job and income generation potential. Therefore, in order to intervene in the best way to stimulate sustainable economic growth and job creation, the informal economy needs to be better understood both by governments and donors" (Becker 45). Once the South African government understands and appreciates the informal economy, they can begin to construct policies to help the large percentage of population who is involved in the sector. "Therefore appropriate policy frameworks and strategies aimed at the informal economy must be developed, without hampering the potential of the informal economy for job creation and economic growth. The main challenge is thus to develop innovative and supportive policies that recognise the contributions of the informal economy and its workforce" (Becker 3).

The majority of the population that is involved in informal activities are members of South Africa's lower economic and social classes. South Africa has an enormous gap between the rich and the poor, and this gap is continuing to grow. "The informal economy has been observed to have more of a fixed character in countries where incomes and assets are not equitably distributed. It seems that if economic growth is not accompanied by improvements in employment levels and income distribution, the informal economy does not shrink. The situation is therefore that the informal economy is continuously increasing in most developing countries, even in rural areas" (Becker 45).

This increase needs to be supported by local and national governments to allow lower class individuals working rights that can help them make a living that can adequately support them and their families. The informal economy is already beneficial to South Africa's population and economy, and now needs the recognition and policies to help it further develop as an important asset of the country.

METHODOLOGY

I used interviewing and photography as my two methodologies for this study. Both methodologies were dependent on one another and information was collected from one methodology and often both. My study mostly relied on qualitative methodology, with small quantitative aspects to support my claims.

Individual and group interviews were held in various areas of the market to allow the interviewees to be able to take a break to work if necessary. I conducted 9 individual interviews and 4 group interviews with barrow operators, street traders, barrow operator leaders and trader leaders. The interviews were informal, and Patric, my advisor, asked the interview questions in Xhosa and then translated the answers in English. I obtained verbal consent to use people's names, information and pictures in this paper. Verbal consent was necessary because the majority of my interviewees were illiterate (see appendix).

Specifically, I interviewed people from four different sectors of Warwick Junction: Early Morning Market, Bovine Head, Victoria Street Market and Brook Street. I wanted to interview barrow operators from every area in the market where their work

was necessary to understand the similarities and differences between the barrow operators' work in each sector. All of the people I interviewed were men because to my knowledge, there are no female barrow operators. My interviewees were between the ages of 23 and 80 because I wanted to talk to barrow operators that had varied amounts of experience. The interviews are broken down as follows:

1. On the South side of the Early Morning Market, I interviewed four barrow operators in a group interview three times (no traders were interviewed because barrow operators do not work for a specific trader in this area of the market).
2. Additionally, on the South Side of the Early Morning Market, I interviewed one barrow operator.
3. On the North Side of the Early Morning Market I interviewed two additional barrow operators in a group interview.
4. In the center of the Early Morning Market, I interviewed a barrow operator leader.
5. In the Bovine Head, I interviewed a barrow operator and the trader he worked for, both in individual interviews.
6. Outside Victoria Street Market, I interviewed two barrow operators and the traders they each worked for in individual interviews.
7. In Brook Street, I only interviewed a trader because barrow operators are not needed in this area of the market, since the storage areas are so close to the trading site. This trader was also a trader leader.

The purpose of these interviews was to learn what life is like as a barrow operator. Particularly I was interested in finding out where these men came from, what their job entailed, their views on their employment, how they were paid, the size of the barrow operator population and how they would respond to me, as an American, doing research on their community. A few of the interviews were originally planned to be individual interviews, but often I found the barrow operators in groups and often the men who I was not directly interviewing would contribute essential details that benefited my study.

Many of my interviews were not scheduled and I would go with Patric to areas of the market where I knew the barrow operators were. After explaining my project and getting consent, I would conduct impromptu interviews. Eventually after a few days of interviewing, barrow operators and traders gave me contact information of their leaders and other men they believed I could benefit from interviewing. Field study research in Warwick Junction was difficult because I had to be adaptable, since people were constantly on the move and working. I took notes throughout interviews in my field notebook and post-interview wrote down observations of the area I was in and how receptive the barrow operators were to my questions.

Interviewing was a very informative methodology because I was able to ask what I was interested in learning and often my interviewees would elaborate on the questions I asked, which ended up helping me understand the barrow operators more clearly.

The second methodology that I used in my study was photography. I believe that photography is extremely important in researching, because visible documentation can more accurately portray peoples' emotions than interviewing. Additionally, photography can tell a story that cannot be described in words. In the case of the barrow operators,

these men speak Xhosa and understand little to no English. The barrow operators and I had a large language barrier and I thought that by photographing them I would be able to minimize this obstacle. Photography does not have a language, and this methodology gave us the opportunity to be put on the same level.

I was the sole photographer in this study and took portraits and action shots of the barrow operators, traders, barrow operator leaders and trader leaders that I also interviewed. I took a portrait photograph of every barrow operator that I interviewed and if possible, I also took an action shot of the barrow operator if they were working before or after our interview. For the traders, I only took a handful of portrait photographs of them because many times, right after our interview, they had to go straight back to work, which did not allow me adequate time to photograph them. These photographs were taken during the day between the hours of 9 am and 3 pm when most of the barrow operators' (besides in the Early Morning Market) work is at a standstill. To compensate for this problem, I went to the market one morning at 4 am during the barrow operators' morning peak (4 am-7 am) and one afternoon during the barrow operators' afternoon peak (4 pm-7 pm) to document the day of Eric Mthethwa's, a barrow operator.

My photographs are intended to be as objective as possible and to tell the barrow operators' stories rather than to make a judgment or opinion about the barrow operators.

LIMITATIONS

The main limitation of my study was my study population. My study sample was neither randomized nor systematic. However, I did make sure that I interviewed barrow operators that had varied amounts of experience working in this field (8 years-40 years).

My study population was chosen based on who was available and willing to speak with me. Barrow operators are extremely busy, and often when I went to find them to interview they were using their midday break as an opportunity to sleep around the market, mostly in storage areas.

Another limitation of my study was my use of a translator. Patric interviewed the barrow operators and leaders in Xhosa and then translated afterwards for me. When he was translating, he did not do so after every answer and instead waited for a pause in the conversation. This could have led to information being lost or unintentionally altered. The barrow operators' and leaders' words went through a filter before reaching me, which could have led to misinformation.

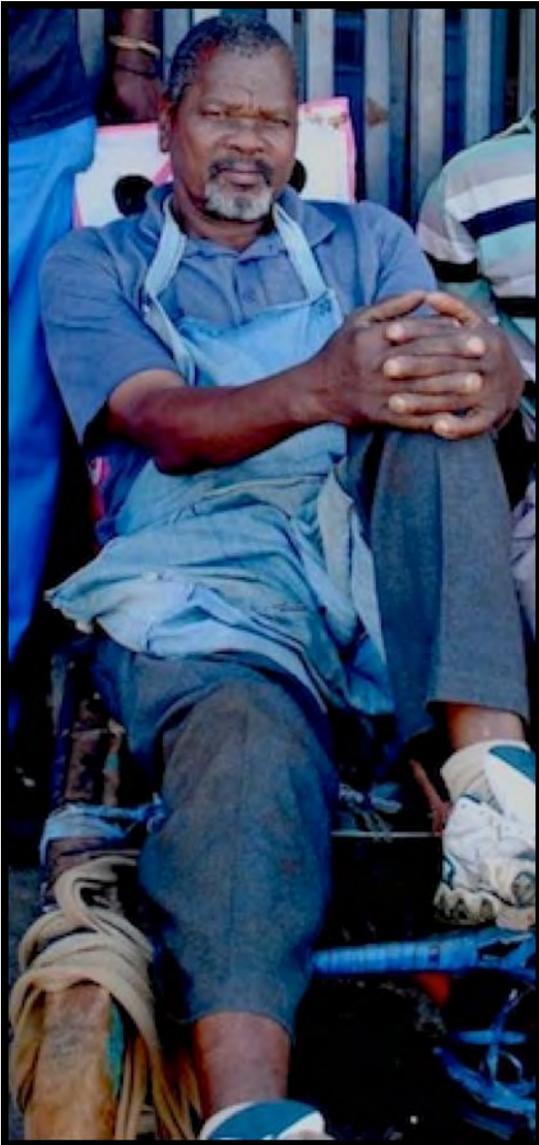
A third limitation of my study was my sample size. I was able to talk to 12 barrow operators, one barrow operator leader, three traders and one trader leader. For the amount of time I was given to complete the research, my results were adequate. However, I do not believe that this study size accurately represents these communities as a whole.

Lastly, another limitation in my study was the differences in information that I was given from various people. For example, one trader told me that he owned his barrow and rented it to his barrow operator while his barrow operator told me that he owned his own barrow. Ultimately, I was able to extract correct information but I have to rely on the truthfulness of the men I interviewed.

BODY/FINDINGS

Life Histories

I interviewed and conducted brief life histories on twelve barrow operators that work in the Early Morning Market, outside Victoria Street Market and in the Bovine Head area:



Long One sitting on his barrow (4/7/11).

Mambheni Malan “Long One”

Mambheni Malan estimates himself to be around 70 years old and is from the Eastern Cape. He is nicknamed Long One by the other barrow operators because he is very tall. Before coming to Durban, Long One worked as a cutter in the sugar cane fields in the rural areas. He worked as a sugar cane cutter for five years where he earned 20 cents a day, or R6 per month. His father worked a rickshaw pusher in Durban and generally worked around the present Warwick Junction area. His father transported Indians to and from the market to buy food in bulk and then brought them back to their selling stalls. Long One joined his father in the city sometime in the 1960s

and became a barrow operator on the south side of the Early Morning Market. Goods were transported by horse cart from the Umgeni area to Warwick Junction, and Long

One's duty was to offload goods from the carts/vans into the market. Around this time, there were more horse carts in Durban than vehicles. However, Long One said that the area has not changed as much as one might think. Long One was able to earn 20 centers per load and R2 on a good day, an income substantially better than his previous employment in the rural areas.

Long One explained that under apartheid, black people who wanted to work in Durban needed to obtain a permit. White men who owned barrows would rent barrows out to people if they could show permits.

In order to obtain a permit, one must have stable accommodation, so Long One lived with his father illegally. This also meant that Long One worked illegally and he told stories of how police would harass them and raid the markets while they were working. Long One was arrested twice for being in Durban illegally and he was handcuffed, taken into custody and eventually taken back to the Eastern Cape. Long One told me that this was very common, and that people were basically deported from Durban back to the rural areas.

Now barrow operators move goods in, out, around the market, and to and from storage centers. On the south side of Early Morning Market where Long One works, the barrow operators do not work for one specific trader, instead they work for certain trucks to offload and bring the goods into the market.

Long One explained that during school holidays young men (as young as 14) come to Warwick to work for pocket money, and now many work as full time barrow operators after they drop out of school. Barrow operating can often run in families and Long One's family is no exception. When he began working as a barrow operator he was

married with one child, and since becoming a barrow operator he has had five more children. Long One supports his entire family with his earnings that he sends back to the rural areas where his family lives. One of Long One's sons works here, as well as two of his grandsons.

Long One told me that many of his sons and grandsons are not very committed to finish education, which led them also to becoming barrow boys. Long One was never formally educated and is illiterate. He does not know his actual age, but gave me an accurate estimate. However, Long One feels content with his employment and feels that his work gives him what he needs. He told me that some men have managed to pay lobola with the money they have made from working as a barrow operator (Malan personal interview 4/5/11).

Long One is committed to his work, but admits it is difficult at times. He prefers to wear a good running shoe when he works that is comfortable and has a good grip. He understands that safety boots can be more protective, but Long One believes it slows him down and that they are less comfortable (Malan personal interview 4/12/11).



Long One and his grandson, Mbongile, sitting on barrows outside the Early Morning Market (4/7/11)

Mbongile Magaeayane

Mbongile is one of Long One's two grandsons that work as barrow operators in Durban. Mbongile works on the south side of the Early Morning Market as a barrow operator with his grandfather. He is 23 years old and is married with two children.

Mbongile left school in grade nine and has been working in the market since 2006. He is the fourth generation of barrow operators in his family (Magaeayane personal interview 4/7/11).

Mafutha

Mafutha, one of Long One's friends, has been working in the on the south side of the Early Morning Market since 1974. He was born in 1953, and is 58 years old. He started working when he was 21 years old and had been recruited by his father. In the

1970s there were no informal traders working in Warwick so Mafutha's main duty was to transport goods from the market to bus rings for selling (Mafutha personal interview 4/5/11).

Eric Mthethwa

Eric Mthethwa is 35 years old (born in 1976) and is married with six children. His uncle, a fellow barrow operator, introduced him to this type of employment as his first job. Eric dropped out of school in 1998 and began working in Warwick Junction shortly after. He has many customers (18 traders in all) including Lindiwe Zondo, a bovine head cooker. Eric has three assistants that help him service all of his customers and he pays each assistant R500 per week.



Eric Mthethwa after completing his morning shift for Lindiwe at 4 AM (4/20/11)

Eric begins his day at 2:30 AM when he starts bringing Lindiwe's goods from the storage area a few blocks away to the Bovine Head area of the market. Eric is only responsible for transporting Lindiwe's meat and cooking materials. Lindiwe uses another barrow operator to transport water to use for cooking. Eric finishes transporting goods for his customers in Warwick Junction around 4:4:30 AM and then goes and washes up. Afterwards he goes to

the Workshop, another large market in downtown Durban, to begin servicing his seven customers there with his assistants when the storage at the shopping center opens at 6 AM. He transports goods at the Workshop until 8 AM when he goes back to the storage areas in Warwick to sleep for a few hours, while his assistants continue to service his customers in the Workshop and Warwick Junction. Then, he begins his afternoon shift at the Workshop followed by his afternoon shift in Warwick Junction, moving the goods back from the stalls to storage areas. His day ends around 10 PM and then Eric goes to sleep for a few hours on boxes in the storage areas, so he can sleep while simultaneously looking after his customers' goods (Mthethwa personal interview 4/8/11).

Eric allowed Patric and me to follow and photograph his morning shift (2:30 AM-4/4:30 AM) moving goods from the storage areas to Lindiwe's stall.



View from back alley that connects street to storage (4 AM April 20th, 2011)



Eric and friend move a box full of goods onto a barrow in a storage area (4 AM April 20th, 2011)



Following Eric Mthethwa on his route from the storage center to the Bovine Head area (4 AM 4/20/11)



Eric crossing a main road in route to bovine head area from the storage area (4 AM 4/20/11)



Eric approaching the bovine head area (4 AM 4/20/11)



Once at his trader's stand, Eric unloads the goods off of his barrow (4 AM 4/20/11)

Thamisanga Khwashube

Thamisanga is easily the oldest and most experienced barrow operator in all of Warwick Junction. Thamisanga is around 80 years old and has 10 kids and 20 grandchildren. Originally he came from the Eastern Cape, along with the majority of the barrow operators in Warwick Junction and Durban as a whole. He used to operate as a rickshaw puller, which is the industry that has been developed into barrow operating. As a rickshaw puller, Thamisanga pulled rickshaws and transported people around the city because historically there were no buses that operated downtown. The rickshaw pullers' main route was bringing people between the beach and the market. He charged R0.10 per passenger per ride on this route. However, when buses were introduced, rickshaws were forced to only run along the beach by the government.

When he worked as a rickshaw, Thamisanga would make anywhere from R0.20 to R6 per day. However, when the rickshaws moved to the beach, Thamisanga became a barrow operator and since then has had 50+ years of experience working on the north side/entrance of the Early Morning Market. He brings goods to and from informal trader sites and bus/taxi rings and also goes into the market and buys and transports goods in bulk for customers. Eventually, after apartheid ended, informal trading was legalized. Business blossomed because barrow operators could make more money, since they could legally transport goods to traders from storage areas and from other areas in Durban.

Thamisanga admitted that because of his age, he is not as strong as he was before. He is now reliant on traders who sell clothes because these goods weigh much less than the fruits and vegetables that he used to transport. However, this change in the goods he

transports has also led to a decline in earnings. Thamiswa has not begun to collect his old age grant, which he attributes to an inefficient home affairs department. Nonetheless, he has applied for the grant and is waiting to hear back from the department.

On an average day, Thamiswa works from around 2:30 AM-9 PM, with breaks during midday. He believes that Warwick Junction is one of the busiest areas in Durban when it comes to traffic, so he and other barrow operators avoid transporting goods during rush hour in mornings and afternoons. Barrow operators have been successful in this way, because there have been very few barrow operator accidents in the past decade due to avoiding the heavy traffic times (Khwashube personal interview 4/7/11).



From left to right: Qoshile Makhamsa and Thamiswa Khwashube (4/7/11)

Qoshile Makhamsa

Qoshile is 59 years old and was born in 1952. He works on the north side of the Early Morning Market as a barrow operator who transports mostly fruits and vegetables to bus/taxi rings that ultimately are sent throughout the city and to suburbs. He has around 30 years of experience and is good friends with Thamisanga Khwashube (Makhamisa personal interview 4/7/11).

Ntsikelelo Nozana

Ntsikelelo works for Victor Mnomiya outside of Victoria Street Market. He is 24 years old and is married with one child. Like almost all barrow operators, Ntsikelelo comes from the Eastern Cape. He began working as a barrow operator when he was 16 years old in 2003.

Originally Ntsikelelo began working as a trader in Harding, but after realizing he was not making enough money, he came to Durban. In Durban, most men from the Eastern Cape were working as barrow operators, so he joined them. As a barrow operator, Ntsikelelo feels that he does not make much money, but he acknowledges that he makes more than he did as a trader.

Ntsikelelo has five regular customers and is unique in the sense that he owns his own barrow. He borrowed money from a friend to pay for the R400 barrow and has since paid his friend back. Ntsikelelo and Victor both claim to own the barrow, so it is unclear as to who is correct. Ntsikelelo says that he only lends his barrow to Victor but that Victor does own the box that he transports goods in on the barrow.

Ntsikelelo says that he does not mind carrying the heavy hardware because the fruits and vegetables are actually the most difficult and heavy goods to transport. He feels

that a barrow operator must be patient, hardworking and must not mind being underpaid by traders. Additionally, he says that barrow operators must either accept or know how to handle being taken advantage of by the traders they work for. Usually barrow operators do not stand up to their traders because they know that the traders can easily replace barrow operators since there are so many of them that work in Warwick Junction.

Barrow operators are underpaid, and barrow operators rarely ask for pay increases, and if they do, they may be able to get R1 more per trip. When traders' businesses begin to do better the barrow operators begin to be responsible for more goods. Even then, after working more for the same amount of money, barrow operators are hesitant to ask for a pay increase because they know it probably won't occur.

Ntsikelelo prefers working during the winter because it is much cooler and easier to transport his barrow when the pavement is not hot and sticky. He is also able to work more quickly and get paid for spending less time transporting goods, because he is paid per trip and not by the amount of time it takes him to make each trip (Nozana personal interview 4/11/11).

Informal Interview with Four Barrow Operators

I had a conversation with four barrow operators and they gave me a generalized profile of what average barrow operators, who work outside Victoria Street Market, are like. Barrow operators that carry hardware transport up to 500 kg (~1100 lbs.) in an average trip. However, depending on the day and time, the amount can be much more.

The barrow operators carry the goods in a large wooden box that they attach to a barrow,

and most often both the box and the barrow belong to the informal trader and not the barrow operator. The barrow operator is just responsible for providing the manpower.

Barrow operators spend about R30-R40 per day on food (including breakfast, lunch and dinner). On a good day they make R100-R150 and on a bad day they can make as little as R30. On the bad days the barrow operators make just enough to feed themselves and are unable to make any form of profit.

Almost every barrow operator speaks Xhosa and originates from the Eastern Cape (~400 km south of Durban). Most of these men struggle to find work in the rural areas, so they come to Durban to work so they can send money home to their families. It may not seem that these men make significant incomes, but they often do much better working in the city than they would if they worked in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape. Barrow operators go back to the rural areas anywhere from once a month to every three months (depends on the barrow operator). They ask for an early leave from their traders, and amongst the two of them they form an agreement on the length and date of the visits. The barrow operators bring their money home for their families that will sustain them as much as possible until their next visit. Barrow operators either keep all of their money on them when they work in Durban or they keep their money in bank accounts.

Douglas Ngxosa

Douglas is John Khomo's barrow operator and works outside of Victoria Street Market. Douglas was born in 1954 in the Eastern Cape and is currently 57 years old. He is married with 6 children, and two of them are still attending school. Before working as a barrow operator, he worked as a miner but decided to come to Durban to work as a

barrow operator, like many of his friends had done. Douglas thought that he would make more money as a barrow operator but was disappointed to find out that he actually makes less. However, Douglas believes that working as a barrow operator has taught him to budget because he knows how hard he works for his money and he looks after each cent.

Douglas believes that as a barrow operator, he provides transport and security for his traders' goods. He looks after his goods as if they were his own because he understands he has made a commitment to his traders. Also, he understands that his earnings come from the incomes of the traders he works for. Douglas works long days, from 6:30 AM – 6 PM, seven days a week (Ngxosa personal interview 4/11/11).

I interviewed and conducted brief life histories on three informal street traders and one informal street trader leader from Brook Street, outside Victoria Street Market and in the Bovine Head area:

Lindiwe Zondo

Lindiwe was born in 1971 and is 40 years old. Her mother used to be a bovine head cooker and in 1994 Lindiwe took over for her. Lindiwe is the only breadwinner in her household, which she attributes to the high unemployment rate in South Africa. Lindiwe believed that she had no other option but to become an informal trader because she has 12 dependents and only four collect child support grants. Lindiwe spends R30 per day on transport and pays R20 for water to be transported for her. Additionally, she also pays her barrow operator, Eric Mthethwa, R20 to transport her materials to and from her

storage area a few blocks away. Lindiwe and Eric have a good relationship and she phones Eric on days when she is unable to work, and he still looks after her goods for her.



Lindiwe, a bovine head cook, at work (4/7/11)

Eric's additional duty is to organize the storage area and Lindiwe pays the storage fee to Eric, as long as her goods are intact and transported on time. Eric transports the goods to the Bovine Head area at 3 AM and back to the storage area at 7 PM. The goods are transported early because many bovine head cooks, including Lindiwe, begin work at 4 am. Sometimes bovine head barrow operators will wait at the site until the informal trader arrives, but this is not always the case. Many leave directly from the Bovine Head area to go to the

Workshop to begin their work for their

other clients. After finishing work in the Workshop, the barrow operators come back to Warwick Junction and sleep in their storage areas before they begin their afternoon shift. However, while Eric is sleeping, Lindiwe is able to call and ask Eric to bring more water or goods because technically he is on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, besides the

time he is working at the Workshop for his other customers: 3 AM-6 AM and 3 PM-6 PM (Zondo personal interview 4/7/11).

Victor Mnomiya

Victor is a street trader that has his stall outside Victoria Street Market. He is 38 years old and has been working as an informal trader here since 1996. Previously Victor worked as a car mechanic, but was not technically qualified and instead just had a large amount of experience in the field. After leaving work as a mechanic, Victor began working as an assistant trader at Feza Market (another market in South Africa). Victor eventually started working outside of Victoria Street Market, his current trading location, and sold clothing. However, a friend introduced him to selling hardware a few years ago, which allowed his business to prosper. Hardware cannot be ruined easily and is in constant demand, so Victor has been able to make much more money than he had been making previously.

Victor has had his barrow operator, Ntsikelelo Nozana, working for him since 1996. Ntsikelelo delivers Victor's goods to his stall at 7:30 AM and then returns the goods to the storage areas at 6:30 PM (Mnomiya personal interview 4/11/11).

John Khomo

John is an informal trader who sells fruits, vegetables and various other goods at his stall right outside Victoria Street Market. He is 62 years old and is married with 11

children. He has been working as an informal trader since 1992 and at the beginning of his trading days sold cosmetics, shoes and sneakers. However, he quickly realized that those goods were not in demand so he changed the products to selling mostly fruit and vegetables. John is very well known around the market because he is extremely experienced and because he is a member of Traders Against Crime (TAC). TAC is an organization of traders who are committed to making Warwick Junction a safe area. Members do various things around the market, such as hold meetings and accompany tours by *Asiye eTafuleni*. John works long days, 7:30 AM – 6 PM.

John has a very high level of respect for his barrow operator, Douglas Ngxosa, and others around the market. John believes that over 99% of informal traders use barrow operators and thinks that barrow operators and traders have a very dependent relationship: barrow operators would not exist without traders and traders would not exist without barrow operators. Traders and barrow operators are like family; they need each other. John compared barrow operators to a shareholder in a formal business. They must show interest in the business, understand its inner workings, and be honest about what occurs within the business.

John is unique in the sense that he is a trader that owns his storage area. This has allowed John to avoid stolen, damaged or lost goods. He has a very good relationship with his barrow operator because he understands that his barrow operator's time is precious and that he has more than one customer to service.

John thanks Patric and me for documenting the traders' and barrow operators' history and their contributions to South Africa's economy. He believes that no one knows

how important they are because no one has ever taken the time to ask (Khomo personal interview 4/11/11).

Kabazela

Kabazela is a trader who works on the second floor of the Brook Street Market. Kabazela is like many other traders in this area of the market, in the sense that he does not have a barrow operator. This is because the storage areas are very close to the traders' stalls and the traders are able to move their goods alone (or with the help of their assistants) from the storage areas. Kabazela is an informal trader leader, and is very familiar with the entirety of Warwick Junction, specifically the barrow operators. The following information is extracted from an interview conducted with Kabazela on April 15th, 2011.



Barrow operators are in charge of moving goods to and from storage areas to traders' stalls; however, often barrow operators do not use the storage areas for various reasons. Barrow operators sleep their goods under overhangs and protect them that way. When traders and barrow operators

have disputes, traders sometimes go to the storage owners and complain to them that their goods have been stolen. Many times the trader will then find out that their goods have not been kept at the storage area, which causes a strain in the trader and barrow operator relationship. While the trader has thought that the money has been going to storage space, barrow operators sometimes have just been collecting the storage money for their own profit.

Kabazela, as a trader leader, often gets involved at this point. Leaders help resolve disputes like this one, and the problem gets more complicated because barrow operators are paid at different rates and different amounts by their traders. The difference in wages and the difference in the frequency of payment make it difficult to monetarily resolve these arguments. When trader leaders get involved they often suggest that traders get new barrow operators because it can be easier to start a new relationship with a barrow operator rather than try to mend a previously negative relationship.

Trader leaders cannot legally order barrow operators or leaders around, so their role is to give suggestions to the people they are helping. Trader leaders do not get themselves involved; instead they wait for traders to seek them out for help. Trader leaders do not resolve disputes between only barrow operators (when no informal traders are involved).

Kabazela does not need to use a barrow operator because his storage space is right behind his trading stall in Brook Street Market. Nevertheless, he still recognizes barrow operators' importance in Warwick Junction, and Durban's informal economy as a whole.

Kabazela believes that barrow operators are very disorganized, even though they have barrow operator leaders. Like others I interviewed, he believes that barrow operator

organizations would benefit the barrow operator population. If this organization is not possible, Kabazela thinks that barrow operator leaders and trade leaders should begin to meet to discuss problems and potential solutions.

Kabazela and other trader leaders have the opportunity to discuss issues with city officials, but barrow operators currently have no representation. This lack of representation leads city officials to ignore barrow operators' interests during urban planning (Kabazela personal interview 4/15/11).

Barrow Operator and Trader Relationship

Lindiwe Zondo, the bovine head cook mentioned previously, believes that barrow operators are important because they allow informal traders to survive. Lindiwe and her barrow operator, Eric Mthethwa, have a good relationship and she phones Eric on days when she is unable to work, and he still looks after her goods for her. Lindiwe believes that a good barrow operator is one who does not drink on duty, is reliable, honest, punctual and responsible. She expects her barrow operator to find a substitute if he is sick or unable to work (Zondo personal interview 4/7/11).

Victor has had his barrow operator, Ntsikelelo Nozana, working for him since 1996. Victor believes that an ideal barrow operator is reliable and honest. He also believes a barrow operator should not steal and should be very protective of the traders' goods. Victor believes Ntsikelelo possesses all of these qualities and he thinks they have a good relationship. He believes that barrow operators are very important because without them traders would be unable to work. He needs his barrow operator because the

heavy hardware needs to be transported and is a very demanding job that he cannot do. (Mnomiya personal interview 4/11/11)

Barrow operators must be physically strong, punctual, dedicated, and able to compromise (Khomu personal interview 4/11/11). Barrow operators need to be emotionally strong as well, which can be a very difficult quality to possess, especially while working long hours in arduous conditions.

Barrow operators and informal traders have a very dependent relationship on one another. “If informal trading stopped, barrow operator business will end” (Khwashube personal interview 4/7/11). One cannot exist without the other and vice versa.

Leadership within the Barrow Operator and Trader Communities

Barrow operators have leaders that they elect democratically. The leaders are not elected for a specific period of time, and instead will stay in the position as long as they do their job sufficiently. If a barrow operator leader is not performing well, the barrow operators will call a meeting and new elections will be held. There are two barrow operator leaders for each side of Warwick Junction.

Barrow operator leaders must attend to complaints that can come from the trader, barrow operator or the barrow operator’s family back in the rural areas. Problems range from a trader believing that his barrow operator is stealing his goods to a barrow operator’s family, in the rural areas, believing that their husband, brother, father or son is not adequately supporting the family.

Barrow operator leaders need to be dedicated, brave, willing to listen, able to handle any situation, committed, not violent, strong and fair. Any barrow operator who

works in Durban can approach these four barrow operator leaders with any problems that they have (Malan personal interview 4/7/11).

Barrow operator leaders are very helpful, but an organization that all barrow operators could join would be very helpful. This organization could insure that barrow operators are being treated fairly, i.e. being paid enough. However, this organization would be almost impossible to assemble because barrow operators work in many different locations and take different routes. Additionally, many barrow operators are in direct competition with each other, which can cause tension (Nozana personal interview 4/11/11).

Payment

Barrow operators are paid by different criteria and at different frequencies around Warwick Junction. Below is a chart that depicts how a few of my interviewees are paid.

Name of Barrow Operator	Location of Work	Paid by trip or distance/weight	Frequency of payment	Amount paid by each Trader
Eric	Victoria Street	Trip	Daily	~R15
Thamisanga	Early Morning	Distance/weight	N/A	~R30
Ntsikelelo	Victoria Street	Trip	Depends	~R15
Douglas	Victoria Street	Trip	Daily	~R30
Long One	Early Morning	Trip	Depends	~R30

Prices on the north side of the Early Morning Market are negotiable, but on the other side, where offloading occurs, there are set prices (Khwashube personal interview

4/7/11). On the north side of the market, the majority of barrow operators are paid by distance and weight, while the barrow operators on the south side of the market are paid per trip. In other sectors of the market, like in the Bovine Head area and Victoria Street Market, barrow operators are also paid per trip (Khomu personal interview 4/11/11).

Types of Barrows

“Barrows are our livelihood, they are priceless. They are worth my entire family” (Malan personal interview 4/12/11). Barrows are the essential tool in allowing barrow operators to succeed and make a living for themselves and their families. Barrows come in many different shapes and sizes, but overall their general structure is the same. Barrow operators believe that their barrow is the perfect tool. They believe that no other model would be better. Trolleys are useful sometimes, but trolleys are harder to move and they take longer to transport goods. On barrows, more goods can be transported because the barrow is not restricting (Nozana personal interview 4/11/11)

There are three different types of barrows: new wood (usually pine), old wood (various wood types) and metal. Barrow operators used to only use wooden barrows, but in the past two decades they began to believe that metal barrows would be stronger. However, they soon realized that wooden handles are much stronger/durable than metal handles (Malan personal interview 4/7/11). Often, the nuts and bolts break first on the barrows because the bumps wear these parts out.

Barrow wheels are made out of three different types of materials: steel, rubber and plastic. Historically, rubber wheels were most widely used, but presently steel wheels are the most desired. These wheels are the most effective and have to be repaired less

frequently than rubber and plastic wheels. City officials openly condemn the use of metal wheels because they believe that this material deteriorates the pavement, which is often true. Either the barrow operators struggle using non-metal wheels, or pedestrians struggle with uneven and broken cement sidewalks. It is almost impossible to find a fair solution for this current disagreement. To further complicate the situation, plastic wheels are difficult for barrow operators to pull in the summer when the pavement is sticky and hot (Nozana personal interview 4/11/11).

Barrows carry between 100 kg and 500 kg of goods. Barrows are expensive, and can be bought for around R3000. The majority of informal traders own the barrows that they rent to their barrow operators to use.



Older metal barrow with wooden handles



Old wooden barrow



Modern metal barrow



Shopping card barrows



Barrow in storage area outside Victoria Street Market (4/20/11)



Another barrow in the same storage area outside Victoria Street Market (4/20/11)

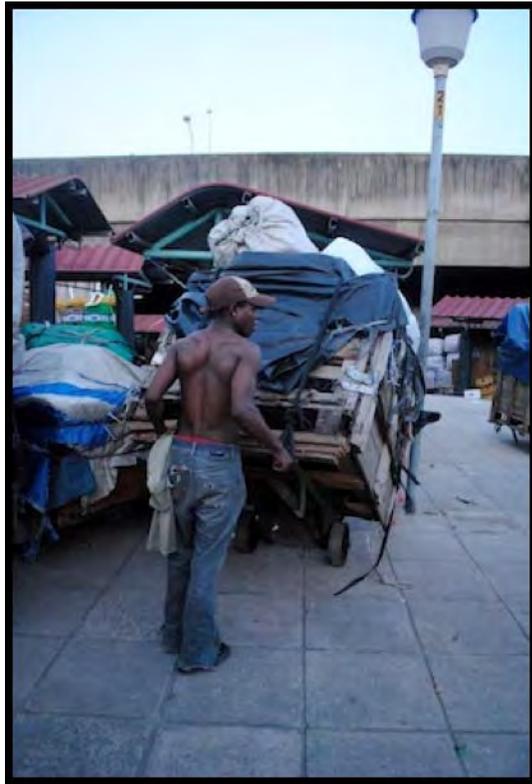


Barrows dropped off trader stalls outside Victoria Street Market (4/20/11)



Goods being offloading onto barrows on south side of the Early Morning Market (4/7/11)

Photographs of Barrow Operators Around Warwick Junction





A barrow operator on his 5 AM route (4/20/11)



A barrow operator successfully pulling his barrow over broken cement (4/20/11)



Barrow operators sleeping under blankets in storage area outside Victoria Street Market (4/20/11)



Fruits and vegetables being offloading onto barrows on south side of Early Morning Market (4/7/11)

Problems Barrow Operators Face

Barrow operators are faced with many problems, which include: the current recession, lost/stolen/damaged goods, bad relationships with informal traders, and difficult working conditions.

As mentioned previously, the informal economy and formal economy are often incorrectly separated and often incorrectly presumed to have very little impact on each other. However, barrow operators are an example of the informal economy being hard hit by the formal global economy's current recession. "This is our livelihood, we enjoy it, we are hard hit by the recession" (Malan personal interview 4/5/11). People that are struggling in the formal sector make less money, and are therefore less likely to spend

money in general (which includes the informal sector). Business for barrow operators is not as good as it used to be (Malan personal interview 4/5/11).

Lost/Stolen/Damaged Goods

Goods are either stolen after the goods are dropped off at the traders' stalls and before the trader has arrived to work for the day. Additionally, goods are stolen from the storage areas. In both instances, the trader often blames the barrow operator and makes them pay for the stolen goods (Mthethwa personal interview 4/8/11). One solution to this problem is that the barrow operator can bring the goods to stall, wait for trader to arrive and then in the afternoon the trader can pack up the goods and wait for the barrow operator to arrive to bring it back to storage (Nozana personal interview 4/11/11).

The traders are people that pay the barrow operators, so they have the majority of the control in the relationship. This corrupt system is frustrating for barrow operators and if they felt like they could have other opportunities they would leave (Nozana, John, Douglas personal interviews 4/11/11).

When barrow operators lose goods, it is fairly their responsibility to pay for the goods to the trader because the trader ultimately loses money when this occurs. However, goods can be damaged due to the potholes all over Warwick Junction. Barrow operators are forced to avoid these obstacles, which make each trip transporting goods longer. This is frustrating for the barrow operators because they lose time and money due to working conditions that they cannot control. Also, when barrows hit these potholes the goods can get damaged and it can be very dangerous for the barrow operator because they are often carrying up to 500 kg of goods.

Bad Relations with Informal Traders

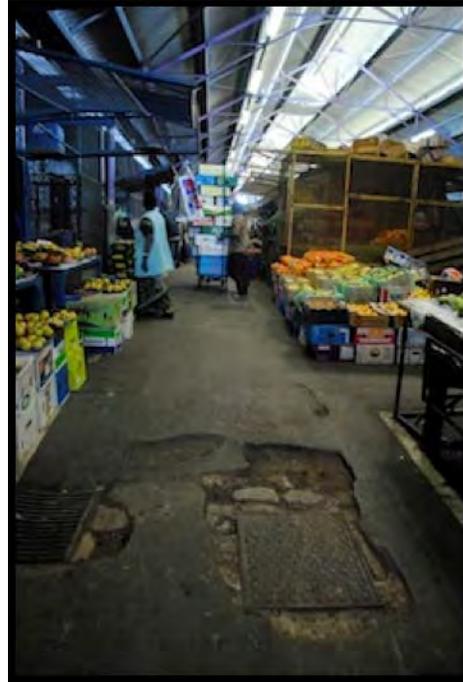
For the most part, barrow operators seem to have good relationships with the informal traders they work for, but these relationships can become strained very easily. For example, Eric finds that sometimes his traders are unwilling to pay him (Mthethwa personal interview 4/8/11). In this situation, all that barrow operators can do to retaliate is to withhold the goods. After originally withholding the goods they can tell the trade committees that they need help resolving the problem. When and if the problem is resolved the barrow operator will give the goods back to the trader. The barrow operator can then decide either to stop working for the trader or to continue working for him because it is an important source of his income.

Difficult Working Conditions

The first problem that barrow operators face is the lack of space available for them to transport their goods. They use both the sidewalk and the street to transport their traders' goods, but in both places they encounter problems. On the road, taxi drivers will deliberately block them and say that roads are for cars not barrows (Nozana personal interview 4/11/11). On the sidewalks, pedestrians will complain about barrow operators and how it is unsafe for them to transport such heavy goods at such a fast pace close to people. Barrow operators work late at night and early in the morning and they are faced with avoiding traffic and cars (Ngxosa personal interview 4/11/11). Barrow operators are difficult to see at night and cars sometimes hit barrow operators accidentally.

A second problem that barrow operators face is that when barrow operators load goods into the market, the potholes create large bumps in the trip, which damages the goods. This causes traders to complain and the barrow operators are nervous that the traders will begin deducting money from their salaries (Malan personal interview 4/7/11). Potholes also damage wheels of barrows, and the barrow operator is responsible for fixing their barrow. Replacing or repairing wheels can cost barrow operators R100 (Nozana personal interview 4/11/11).

A third problem is that barrow operators do not get a sick leave. This is less of a physical problem when compared to the problems mentioned previously, but this is an issue with the working conditions that the barrow operators are forced to face. When barrow operators are sick or need to go home to give their money to their families, they are forced to either take an early leave or they must find a substitute to move their traders' goods while they are gone (Khomu personal interview 4/11/11). Barrow operators are plentiful, but logistically it is difficult for a barrow operator to find someone who knows the correct routes and where their traders and storage areas are. It takes a large amount of planning for barrow operators not to work for a day, and when they get sick they are usually forced to work.



Potholes inside the Early Morning Market (4/7/11)



A barrow operator patches holes with pieces of broken cement to pull his barrow out of a storage area outside Victoria Street Market (4/20/11)

Goals for the Future

Traders and barrow operators alike believe that action needs to be taken to help the barrow operators in the future. First, barrow operators need barrow lanes to pull

goods. Specifically, they believe that they need barrow ramps every 50 m to get from pavement (sidewalk) to street. Additionally, they need the potholes to be fixed (Nozana personal interview 4/11/11)

Reflective jackets are also necessary for nighttime work, The jackets could have numbers to help identify the barrow operators because there are fake barrow operators/people posing to substitute for trader's usual barrow operators or just barrow operators in general (Ngxosa personal interview 4/11/11)

There should be records of which traders that barrow operators work for to avoid further disputes. Permits could help benefit organization within in the barrow operator community, but not so that the city can gain revenue from them. Barrow operators do not occupy space because they are constantly moving, so they should not have to purchase these permits if they were created. Permits could help prevent fake barrow operators from continuing to damage barrow operators' reputations.

Barrow operators should nominate two men to act as leaders to attend informal trader meetings so current issues can be publicized. By addressing current problems, future conflicts can be avoided (Kabazela personal interview 4/15/11).

CONCLUSION

Through my research, I was able to tell the untold stories of the barrow operators of Warwick Junction. Though there are hundreds more I was unable to interview, this is the start in the process of finally understanding this interesting, hardworking, neglected and powerful community.

Barrow operators are extremely hardworking men whose main goal in life is to provide an income for their families. They are willing to travel more than 400 km from their homes in the Eastern Cape to Durban in an attempt to give their families better lives. As a barrow operator in Durban, they usually do not have permanent residences and are forced to sleep in storage areas with the traders' goods, or under overhangs along the sidewalk.

For the most part, barrow operators have a high respect for the informal traders they work for, and they treat their traders' goods as if they were their own. However, honest barrow operators are often faced with hardships like being paid too little or sometimes not at all. The barrow operators do not have official representation, so their issues go unresolved the majority of the time. Additionally, city officials do not acknowledge barrow operators and their needs in terms of urban planning, so barrow operators work in difficult conditions that could easily be fixed. Particularly the potholes that exist everywhere inside the Early Morning Market could be patched up with little effort and little expense, but the city refuses to improve the conditions because they do not value Warwick Junction as a venue-generating operation. Instead, the city plans to replace the market with the shopping center because they think that Warwick Junction does not benefit the country's formal economy in any way (Mncube personal interview 4/5/11).

The barrow operator community has goals to organize themselves so they will be able to make changes to fix their current hardships. However, barrow operators are a diverse community, which makes creating order very difficult.

This research project gave barrow operators, and in smaller part traders, their first opportunity to tell their stories. Their community and contributions have never been documented, and I found that people were very thankful and excited to have Patric and me listen to their thoughts and histories. This study was too short, prepared over only five weeks, and I believe that this research needs to continue. Luckily, *Asiye eTafuleni*, plans on continuing Patric and my work to show city officials and the world how important these barrow operators really are to the economy. I believe that it is important that the government conduct an in-depth quantitative and qualitative analysis of the traders' and barrow operators' value to the overall economy, confirm the critical social and economic importance of the barrow operators in Durban (and South Africa) to the South African nation, and preserve this vital community for social, cultural, and economic reasons. I believe that many people will be surprised as to how important these citizens are in allowing the economy to run smoothly and to generate economic revenue. Barrow operators are at the base of informal trading and through informal trading, barrow operators' work is able to contribute significantly to South Africa's GDP.

This research project has showed me that so much goes on behind the scenes in Warwick, and in Durban's informal economy as a whole. I hope that someday the world will finally learn how hard these people work and how little recognition they receive, both personally and economically. This project brought together, with photos, stories of a group of people, which I argue, is more important than economic value. Through simple methodologies, like interviewing and photographing, these hidden communities will finally have the acknowledgement that they have long deserved, and hopefully help the government focus on sustaining and improving their working conditions.

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- Mnomiya, Victor (informal trader) interviewed by A.Golovcsenko and P.Mncube 4/11/11.
- Mthethwa, Eric (barrow operator) interviewed by A.Golovcsenko and P.Mncube 4/8/11.
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APPENDIX

Sample Verbal Consent Form

My name is Annie Golovcsenko. I am a student in the School for International Training Program in Social and Political Transformation in Durban. I am conducting a short field study on the barrow operators in Warwick Junction. The data that I collect today will be used to write my final project paper for this program. Please note that:

- Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw your consent at any time during and after the interview.
- I will disclose your name if you give me permission to do so.
- Pictures will be used in my final report and potentially in *Asiye eTafuleni* documents (in an exhibition, posters, or on their blog) with your permission.
- The information will be stored in a safe manner at all times in a place to which I alone have access.
- You will receive printed pictures of you that I take during my study.
- I agree to participate in this study.

Thank you.