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“Trader, Goods and City-dreams”: The micro governance of street trading in Wa, Ghana

In this thesis, I set out to provide understanding and empirical analysis of one of the contemporary emergent urban development concerns, thus the practice of street trading and its governance which dominant urbanists have been grappling with in cities particularly in the Global South. Relying on ethnographic analysis of the everyday experiences of street traders in the central business district of a rapidly urbanising Ghanaian city - Wa, I demonstrate how traders’ capacity to stitch together various state and non-state actors as well as official and unofficial procedures in the process of co-creating their trading spaces present a complex mix of realities and encounters. The stitching together metaphor is viewed through traders’ histories, their everyday trading practices and governance experiences. This offers useful framing for thinking deeply about street trader governance from three discernible perspectives: as a process, practice and product. Understanding it is located at the intersection of traders’ rationales and logics, their goods and materiality of their trading spaces. I argue that the processuality and relationality of stitching together human and non-human elements towards street trader governance are diverse and layered. Gaining understanding on these issues open-up continuum of relationships and power relations which comprise multi-scalar task of assembling and tracing how negotiations and interactions involved in street trader governance are stitched together into particular places in the city. Theorizing street trader governance within this context allow for critical understanding on its complexities and realities where by stitching together framing helps us conceive.