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Urban analysts in the global South are concerned with the failure of African urbanization to resonate with the theories of urbanization. Countries in the global South are urbanizing at a very fast rate into what Davis (2004) calls 'a planet of slums'. Rather than a strong middle class evolving in the cities, a larger subaltern population is emerging that lives in slums and ekes out its livelihood in the informal economy (Beall et al. 2010; Simone 2001b). Urban planning theorists are therefore interrogating whether a metropolis that is based on subaltern urbanism can actually be formed.

Economic informality abounds in Africa. Its activities include hawking, market trade, craftsmanship, manufacturing and repairs. While economic informality provides livelihood and employment to a majority of the urban population, it has been a major source of conflict with modernity and order in the city. In southern Africa, for example, Kamete (2013a) documents how the cities in the region, faced with informality, have faced an uphill task in restoring order. In Nairobi, city authorities have for a long time struggled with the management of economic informality.

African cities have tried to address economic informality without understanding how it functions. Women constitute an important constituency of the urban population and the majority are in the informal economy. One cannot speak of the informal economy in Africa without thinking about women. Urban markets in Nairobi, Lagos and Accra are dominated by women, who are responsible for a massive trade in food and clothes. Any analysis of the role of women in African city dynamism is fairly limited and tends to treat women as victims (Potts 1995). The crucial question is whether women in economic informality have the agency to be a productive part of the urban dynamism that is taking place in contemporary African cities. Kinyanjui (2013) has demonstrated how women in economic informality have navigated the journey from the margins to the centre in Nairobi.

Cities are highly complex social, economic and physical systems, and the success of these systems depends on various actors, elements and forces. The dynamic dealings between people, place and economy can be mutually supportive and self-reinforcing. Addressing these relations effectively also requires an integrated approach that considers the ripple effects of each action on the other

aspects of the situation. Using the case study of women in economic informality in Nairobi, on the one hand this book illustrates women's agency and how they are negotiating their way into the centre of the city to be part of the urban dynamism, and on the other it recounts how the city of Nairobi has struggled with economic informality over time and how economic informality has resisted removal and penetrated the central business district (CBD).

Two incidents prompted me to write this book: a YU mobile phone advert on television and a visit to Taveta Road in Nairobi's CBD in 2009. The YU commercial depicted two women transacting business in one of the gated communities in Nairobi. One of the women, an African *mama mboga* (greengrocer) had bought a new mobile phone and was using it to contact her Asian customer in a high-rise building. To receive the vegetables, the Asian lowered a bag towards the vegetable vendor using a rope. Undoubtedly, the two women are confined to specific spaces in the city but one physically crosses the boundary and is further aided by mobile phone technology to bridge the socioeconomic gap in pursuit of livelihood negotiation.

While on a window-shopping spree in Nairobi's CBD in 2009, I visited Taveta Road. I observed that the street no longer looked the way it had when I visited it in 1994 when I started working at the University of Nairobi, situated at the western end of the CBD. Most of the shops on Taveta Road had been subdivided into stalls or kiosks and the shops were no longer dominated by male Asian and African shop attendants. Women had taken over. I wondered how this had happened within a short time, given that women had been historically disadvantaged by patriarchal planning ideologies.

The advert and the visit triggered me to think about the state and the impact of African women in economic informality after two centuries of urbanization in Nairobi. I carried out a questionnaire survey of women in selected areas of Nairobi where economic informality thrives, including Gikomba, Kenyatta Market, Kamukunji, Uhuru Market, Githurai, Westlands Market, Kawangware and Taveta Road. I supplemented the information garnered from the survey with semi-structured interviews of 53 women along Nairobi's Taveta Road and I followed this up with in-depth interviews involving key informants and case histories of selected women in Taveta Road. My sole aim was to find out about the role of women in economic informality, what participation in economic informality meant to them, and the strategies that the women in question used to overcome the barriers created by planning ideologies and gender insensitivity.

This book is about the struggle of women in economic informality to leave the city margins and access the city centre, the planning and gender insensitivity of which largely excluded them. It uses the example of business activity along Taveta Road to illustrate how women who were restricted to the margins of the urban economy have infiltrated Nairobi's CBD and have introduced the African indigenous market system through mobility, solidarity, entrepreneurialism and

collective organization. The women are thus contributing to the complexity of the urban morphology, and, in order to do this, they have dealt with the African city reality, effects of planning ideologies, gender inequality and economic informality.

The African city in reality and theory

Women encounter the reality of the African city as it is presented in both theory and practice in their everyday livelihood negotiation. Harris (1992: x) observes that cities in developing countries are characterized by vast squatter settlements, shanty towns, a poor supply of basic amenities, rapid environmental degradation, traffic jams, violence, crime and urban sprawl that eats into the countryside. Murray and Myers (2006: 1) observe that African city life has been reduced to a dystopian nightmare manifested by limited opportunities for formal employment, a lack of decent and affordable housing, failing and neglected infrastructure, the absence of social services, pauperization, criminality and increased inequalities. Due to these flaws, cities in Africa and the developing world are considered structurally irrelevant in the realm of world cities and attract hardly any global investment (Robinson 2002).

The rapid urbanization, dominant economic informality, gender inequality and unplanned nature of African cities make them different from cities in Europe, North America, Asia and the Middle East. According to UN-HABITAT (2006), Africa will experience the most rapid urban growth in the world until 2050. It is estimated that Africa's urban population will reach 742 million by 2030, up from 294 million in 2000. The projected 152 per cent increase in Africa's urban population will be fairly large compared with Asia's (94 per cent) and Latin America's (55 per cent); this rapid growth in population is attributable to rural-urban migration as well as to natural birth rates in cities.

The question of why the making of African cities is flawed has been the subject of debate among African urban theorists (Freund 2007; Mabogunje 1968, 1984; Macharia 1997; Mbembe and Nutall 2004; Murray and Myers 2006; Robinson 2002; Simone 2004; Watson 2002, 2009). In his seminal work on cities in Africa, Mabogunje (1968) demonstrated that Nigerian cities were not different from cities in Europe and attributed their problems to their parasitic nature and to over-urbanization, whereby cities were growing at a faster rate than the creation of jobs and the development of physical and social infrastructure. In his work on backwash urbanization (Mabogunje 1984), he argued that urbanization in sub-Saharan Africa is not based on economic development but is more the product of failed development policies in both cities and rural areas, with the failure of development in rural areas generating rural-urban migrants who flood the cities. This backwash urbanization has resulted in the peasantization of cities, whereby peasant migrants with rural origins dominate the cities and introduce peasant-type lifestyles and norms of survival. These peasant-type strategies are reflected in housing and in the city environment.

In an attempt to answer the question of the urban problematic, Macharia (1997) first attributes it to the informality of the African state, which hinders Western-educated planners from creating formal nation states and cities. According to him, the Kenyan state is based on a social structure permeated by networks that operate along familial, ethnic, friendship and overwhelmingly patrimonial lines that affect its performance (Macharia 1997: 105). Second, he links it to the prevailing strong social networks that lead to informal-sector dynamism. These networks attract more people into the city and determine entry, choice of sector and transfer of skills. As more people join economic informality, they contribute to the growth and expansion of the African city.

Using the case of Johannesburg, Mbembe and Nutall (2004) highlight the complexity of the city-making process in Africa. They urge urban scholars to desist from viewing Africa as a residual entity and to negate the predominant readings on Africa that emphasize difference. They argue that Johannesburg's history, architecture and capitalist formation reflected in the city's money economy, individuality, calculability and fortuitousness (Mbembe and Nutall 2004: 365) closely fit a metropolis as defined in classical urban theory. The city, however, has shortcomings, such as ugly agglomerations and insecurity (Mbembe and Nutall 2004: 367).

The African city should be seen through its complex history, culture and economy. It should also be understood by the way in which people have transformed it and how it has in turn changed them. While literature abounds that illustrates how urbanization and urban planning have victimized Africans by condemning them to slums, street trade and the informal sector (Brown 2006; Garland et al. 2007; Mitullah 2007), there is little in the way of literature to show how Africans have configured the city through their participation in economic informality, hence the quest of this book to examine the state and impact of women in economic informality in Nairobi city.

Freund (2007) attributes the problems in the evolution of African cities to the colonial origins of African cities, arguing that the urban dystopia in Africa accrues from the fact that a large majority of African populations were denied citizenship in the emergent cities. In Nairobi, for example, the whites who dominated the city council struggled constantly for the enforcement of pass laws, repatriation of vagrants, removal of informal housing wherever it was deemed inconvenient, and establishment of curfews and no-go areas for Africans (Freund 2007: 93). This made the African population straddlers, with one foot in the city and the other in the rural area, and as a result their participation in civic action and investment in the cities was greatly affected. However, there is significant investment and a large amount of civic engagement in African cities, particularly in economic informality: for example, 70 per cent of the population of Lusaka is dependent on the informal economy (Moser and Holland 1997). In Nairobi, 2.7 million people are engaged in the informal economy, according to the 2011 economic survey of the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics.

In addressing the evolution of cities, Robinson (2002) challenges the urban theory that categorizes cities as global cities, world cities or developing world cities. She proposes an urban theory that focuses on the ordinariness of cities in terms of their diversity, creativity, modernity and distinctiveness. This entails looking at cities in greater detail in terms of their spatiality, ideas, resources and practices drawn from a variety of places – not infinite but diverse – beyond their physical borders (Robinson 2002: 549). This is in line with the objective of this book, which urges the need to investigate the diversity and creativity within the African city in terms of the African indigenous market concept, solidarity entrepreneurship, inclusion of women in urban planning, and collective organization as a method of organizing business spatially in the centre of the city. It also means including gender in the construction of urban theory.

Urban planning

To a large extent, urban planning may be said to be gender blind. Women have had to deal with an urban planning ideology that does not include them. The failure of African planners to plan for economic informality means that they do not plan for women, who form the majority. Lack of urban planning in cities in the global South in general and in African cities in particular is a major problem; the urban sprawl that surrounds cities in Africa has defied urban planning. Informal settlements characterized by a mix of residential, economic and agricultural activities are dominant features in cities such as Nairobi, Kampala, Lagos and Dar es Salaam, where they pose significant planning challenges. In an attempt to come up with planning models in African cities, Watson (2002) proposes that planners should first seek to understand the social and political environment of the cities in which they are operating. She observes that, while the three normative planning models – communicative, multiculturalism and just city – have relevance to city planning in Africa, their application is affected by a dysfunctional civil society and a client-based relationship between state officials, politicians, political groupings and identity politics in African societies. This analysis suggests that planning an African city is a fairly complex phenomenon because of the inherent conditions existing in African societies. Further, Watson (2009) observes that:

the planning systems were inherited from previous colonial governments or were adopted from northern contexts to suit particular local political and ideological ends. In most cases, these planning systems and approaches have remained unchanged over a long period of time even though the contexts in which they operate have changed significantly (Watson 2009: 2260).

The problem of planning cities in the global South is also echoed by Roy (2009), who argues that rational planning in India is undermined by informality and insurgency. Informality in India exists because land is managed informally without fixed purposes and without being mapped according to regulations or laws.

There are no clear guidelines about what is legal and illegal, legitimate and illegitimate, authorized and unauthorized (Roy 2009: 80). According to her, while informality is a key feature of planning, it creates territorialized flexibility and paralyzes state development by rendering governance, justice and development impossible. Essentially, her analysis illustrates that an informal city is also an insurgent city and does not necessarily represent a just city because the policing of the arbitrary and fickle boundary between legal and illegal, formal and informal is not just the province of the state but also becomes the work of citizens, in this case insurgent citizens (Roy 2009: 85). She concludes that informality rather than failure of planning is responsible for the Indian urban crisis.

The planning systems in Harare (Zimbabwe) apply different measures in dealing with the spatial unruliness of the affluent and those in informality. In Operation Restore Order, illegal structures were destroyed and vagrants, street children and vendors violently relocated; however, illegal land users in affluent spaces were given a reprieve and time to regularize their properties (Kamete 2012: 67). It appears that sovereign and disciplinary power is exercised when the deviants are on the bottom rungs of society and hail from the less privileged parts of town, whereas more refined versions of disciplinary power are deployed when the offending parties are wealthier people in more affluent areas (Kamete 2012: 76). For effective planning, there is a need to reorient this kind of power-based planning whereby the sophisticated mode of pastoral power-based planning is extended to marginalized communities. This will facilitate their incorporation into orderly urban settings.

In a more recent paper, Kamete (2013b) argues that normalizing the informal sector by enforcing compliance with technical criteria such as health and safety, aesthetics and accessibility detaches the informal sector from economic and governance settings. He argues that planning standards that are generally considered normal are technical, and so the question of how to address informality has been removed from the realm of social, political and economic governance into the privileged realm of technical expertise (Kamete 2013b). This divorces informality from questions of social justice that are crucial to its existence: for example, how can women be incorporated into the urban economy if planning selectively destroys the informal economy where they abound?

Commenting on the planning of African cities, Miraftab (2009) calls for the decolonization of planners' city visions and images, emphasizing that the modernization pursued during the colonial period and perpetuated in the neoliberal era excludes some populations from the city. Using the case of South Africa's Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign, she demonstrates how insurgent planning is replacing hegemonic colonial planning regimes. The insurgent planning model aims to decolonize planning by taking a fresh look at subaltern cities and by understanding their uniqueness and values rather than seeing them in the light of planning prescriptions and fantasies of the West (Miraftab 2009: 45).

This book argues that de-westernizing or decolonizing planning theory is not enough: African aesthetics, architecture, philosophies, values and norms relating to the economy and space occupation should be introduced into the city. Women, who have been excluded from the planning realm for a long time, should be included. This means having a planning model that incorporates informality. This book documents women's struggle against urban planning ideologies, as they move from the margins to the centre, by drawing on their past cultural experiences and linking them with the present.

Gender in the city

Gender inequality in African cities is a key concern in most of the analytical works (Chant 2013; Chen et al. 2004; COHRE 2008). Women are casualties of the urbanization process, which has offered them limited options to improve themselves. A majority of women in Nairobi still work in economic informality where they are handicapped by a lack of both information and start-up capital (Macharia 1997). Despite the women's work as traders, artisans and providers of assorted services, their activities are not captured in national government statistics: while the 2011 economic survey of the National Bureau of Statistics reports there are 2.7 million workers in the informal economy in Nairobi, it does not disaggregate the figures by gender. Moreover, women's issues in the city government are covered by the social services department rather than by key departments such as finance and planning. The social services department manages the city council markets, where most of the women conduct their businesses, and their market spaces are subordinated to those in the formal sector in terms of size of stall and supply infrastructure. The women are not provided with permanent leases for their stalls: after paying the stall rent, they are given a card that clearly indicates on the back that the city council can withdraw tenancy at any time. In addition, the markets lack flexibility in terms of time since they open at 6.00 am and close at 6.00 pm, which means that traders cannot operate night shifts.

Women's representation in central government as members of parliament, and in counties as county representatives, is considerably lower than that of men. The downplaying of women's work and insufficient representation in key decision-making bodies relegates women to subalternity and invisibility in cities. Women hardly ever appear in everyday print or electronic media, their voices being confined to special features in weekly or monthly magazines. Their stories, which are packaged in songs and dances, are not part of mainstream knowledge.

In terms of their physical location, the majority of women tend to be situated in peri-urban settings, informal settlements and city council markets. These are the least lucrative spaces in the city because they have limited economic activities. They are located in these spaces because of unemployment, lack of mobility and the constraints of low income, or because their spouses have low

incomes. Women thus fail to enjoy the fruits of urbanization, unlike their male counterparts.

Indeed, according to reports from the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), women in Africa's urban settings are marginalized because of their gender as well as because of physical and social conditions (UN-HABITAT 2006). The transformation of the African family in the face of urbanization has affected women most and has led to the creation of women-headed households in cities. These women-headed households are often poorer than male-headed ones.

Until recently, women's voices have been minimal in socio-political and economic discourse. However, this scenario is changing as women continue to assert themselves, demonstrate that they can measure up to duties that are performed by their male counterparts, are given a constitutional right to self-determination, and have their plight highlighted on the international scene.

The marginalization and invisibility of women notwithstanding, women in economic informality have been striving to overcome the confines imposed upon them by planning ideologies and patriarchy. They are doing this through mobility, solidarity entrepreneurialism and collective organization, and are thereby claiming positions in the city and contributing to the city-making process. For these women, feminism is not just about challenging male domination but acquiring space and opportunity for better living standards for themselves and their children. They are feminizing the city by sharing spaces, identifying livelihood opportunities and organizing collective action.

Economic informality in the city

A large majority of women in cities engage in economic informality. Economic informality is an enigma in cities in Africa and has attracted a wide range of scholarship trying to operationalize and theorize it. Economic informality is assumed to be an economy of the poor where people who are unemployed, partially employed, casual labourers, street subsistence workers, street children and members of the underworld derive their livelihoods (Bayat 2000: 534). The International Labour Organization (ILO 1972: 5) describes the informal economy as petty traders, street hawkers, shoeshine boys and other underemployed groups on the streets of big towns, including both male and female wage earners and self-employed people. Moser (1978) defines the informal sector as the urban poor, which includes people living in the slums or squatter settlements found in the cities of developing countries. Five perspectives – dualist, structuralist, legalist, safe haven and heroic entrepreneurship – attempt to explain economic informality, which is seen as a product of poverty or marginalization in urban settings.

The dualist perspective The dualist approach is based on the works of Hart (1973) and the ILO (1972). These works propose that two sectors of the economy

exist: the formal and the informal. The informal economy is characterized by ease of entry, reliance on indigenous resources, family ownership of enterprises, small-scale operations, labour intensiveness, adapted technologies, skills acquired outside the formal school system, and unregulated but competitive markets. The formal sector is characterized by difficulty of entry, frequent reliance on overseas resources, corporate ownership, large-scale operations, capital intensiveness, imported technology on a large scale, formally acquired skills, use of expatriates, and markets protected through tariffs, quotas and trade licences. Maloney (1999) argues that the presentation of dualism is inappropriate theoretically because unskilled workers can find jobs in both the formal and the informal sectors. Formal-sector jobs are likely to be undesirable because of labour protection taxes levied.

The structuralist approach Economic informality is also viewed as structural and closely linked to capitalism (Bromley 1978; Moser 1978). This approach critiques the dualist approach, argues that economic informality is a product of capitalism, and holds that the two sectors do not exist independently. An informal enterprise is dependent on large capital and provides subsidized goods to capitalist workers. Informality will exist only as long as large capital exists.

The informal economy in the dualist and structuralist models is positioned as being inferior to the formal sector and bent on survival rather than entrepreneurship. Using this viewpoint, it was argued that the informal sector would disappear in African economies once the survivalists' tendencies were catered for through modernization and formalization. Forty years down the line, however, the informal sector still survives in a majority of African economies. What was witnessed in the 1990s was the disappearance of the majority of import-substituting firms and government parastatals that constituted the formal sector, while export-led industrialization, the alternative strategy that was initiated to prop up the formal sector, has not been very successful as a strategy for development. In the same period, multinational corporations such as Coca-Cola adopted kiosks as part of their distributional frameworks, which meant that such firms recognized economic informality as a crucial dynamic in the distribution chain. This approach was also adopted by successful companies such as Safaricom, which integrated economic informality into its distribution model by sometimes using hawkers, as well as kiosks, to distribute its airtime credit cards. It also uses micro-retailers as agents for its monumental money transfer system M-Pesa. Equity Bank, which boasts 8 million customers, has cashed in on economic informality by situating banks in dominant economic informality spaces such as Gikomba, Kariobangi, Kawangware, Githurai, Kangemi and Ngara, to mention just a few. Other banks, such as Kenya Commercial Bank and Cooperative Bank, are also using micro-agents as distributors for their products in spaces of economic informality.

Large retailers who owned open-plan shops in Nairobi's CBD have been replaced by micro-retailers, some of whom are women (Ngwala 2011) who operate on principles of economic informality. Although the CBD was designated for formal retailers, the women have created their own terms by subdividing the shops into small cubicles or stalls. This phenomenon indicates that economic informality has survived and is resilient, despite the efforts to formalize it.

The fact that the formal sector is using principles of economic informality in its supply and distribution points illustrates the dynamism and special role that economic informality could play if it were given the same preferences that are awarded to formal firms. The formal sector should not be seen as the institution par excellence, with the informal sector a subsidiary (Kinyanjui 2011). The favoured position of the formal sector vis-à-vis economic informality has meant that the latter always has to fight for recognition in urban spaces (Macharia 2003).

Legality Hernando de Soto, the Peruvian economist, stimulated a different pattern of thinking when he published his work on Latin America's informal sector. According to de Soto (1989), the informal sector is a response to excessive regulation by the state. He argues that micro-entrepreneurs in the informal sector choose to operate informally with a view to circumventing the costs, time and effort of formal registration. De Soto notes that micro-entrepreneurs will continue to produce informally as long as respective governments negate free market principles and continue with processes that are cumbersome and costly in terms of bureaucratic red tape, and while there is a lack of property rights and difficulty in accessing productive resources such as finance and technology. In his view, unreasonable government meddling in factors of production is stifling private enterprise. De Soto champions the respect of property rights as a means of converting the informally held property of informal entrepreneurs into real capital (de Soto 1989). De Soto and his followers hail those who generate income for themselves and their families in the informal sector as the 'real revolutionaries', as they brave all manner of regulatory odds to be productive.

De Soto (1989) advocates the transformation of the 'class struggle into a struggle for popular initiative and entrepreneurship' and argues that the masses have united in a revolutionary front, not as proletarians against capitalist exploitation but as extra-legal micro-entrepreneurs against a bureaucratic state-directed economy that excludes them from becoming full capitalists themselves. Locked out of formal jobs and denied formal, legal title to their property, they have proceeded to create their own micro-enterprises and to institute their own set of occupation-specific extra-legal norms and regulations. He rightly observes that the informal sector has the potential not only to create wealth, reduce costs and democratize politics, but also to push out and replace the formal economy. Therefore, in comparison to other scholars who see informal economies of

growth as exceptional, de Soto contends that the informal sector is filled with revolutionary potential.

De Soto (1989) argues that economic informality operates outside established laws and regulations because of the complexity of legal processes. There are many laws and regulations that economic informality entrepreneurs are required to abide by, and legislation is expensive and time-consuming for informal traders. They therefore choose to operate outside the law, with the result that informal operators are denied the rights that are accorded to businesses with formal legislation. He therefore recommends that laws and regulations that affect informality be eased.

Critics point out that, although the majority of policy makers for developing countries (i.e. the World Bank and International Monetary Fund – IMF) subscribe to this perspective, they neither offer practical solutions on how to incorporate ‘the other path’ into mainstream development nor do they possess evidence that proves that the informal economy can overcome the problems of a weak government apparatus under market liberalization (de Olarte 2001).

Larson (2002) refers to economic informality in *colonia* settlements along the United States and Mexico border as extra-legal rather than illegal. This is because informal businesses take place ‘outside the structures of government regulation in particular labour, tax, health and safety, land use and environmental, civil rights and immigration laws’ (Larson 2002: 140). She further observes that, viewed within the tradition of American social justice, informality contradicts both legality and equality and could be interpreted as an abuse of the law and a tolerance of exploitation and inequality. Arguing that the models of regulation used to maintain social justice in the American system contain unattainable standards that block the poor from providing for their basic needs, she concludes that there is a conflict of interest between legal ideals and informal realities.

The issue of informal-sector legality is a complex one. In the colonial setting, Africans were allowed to trade and to run businesses that would provide services for the African community. They were allowed to sell food, second-hand clothes, charcoal and wood and to carry out blacksmithing, to note just a few of the permitted activities. In the case of meat products, Africans were allowed to sell hooves, offal and intestines. The move behind legislating what was to be sold by Africans was spurred by the need to control and stop them from competing with the Asian and European merchant class. While African businesses were confined to African quarters, the bazaar and the CBD were the preserve of European and Asian merchants. Since it was not in the interest of the colonial government to promote an entrepreneurial African class, it thus ensured that Africans served as a reservoir of cheap labour for European and Asian businesses and farms.

In the 1950s, when the Mau Mau freedom struggle against the British colonial government began, the government started programmes for skilled training in trades such as carpentry and metalwork at Jeans School at Kabete. Women were

organized into groups and taught arts, crafts and housekeeping. The colonial government also started issuing licences to a restricted number of people to sell tea, food, fruits and vegetables to the low-income workers working in the CBD and industrial area. Some vendors were also licensed to sell mushrooms, carvings and flowers to ‘memsahibs’ (or ladies) on street corners (Kenya National Archives 1973a). These vendors’ licences were issued by the Provincial Commissioner, who was an officer of the central government and not part of the city council. In 1954, the city council took over responsibility for African welfare through the Department of African Affairs. By independence in 1963, the number of licensed hawkers was about 1,500.

The legality of the informal sector in Nairobi could be understood within the broader question of modernization and imperialistic control of African labour. The independent city government aimed to liberate the African from subordination in the workplace and other productive spaces. It also aimed to expand education, which would enable Africans to enter the world of modern commerce and business rather than dwell in the informal sector. Its legal ideals were therefore geared towards making Africans enter into formal-sector jobs. At the same time, the city authorities engaged in licensing economic informality for those who could not access entry into the formal sector, as will be seen later.

The legal ideals of self-governance and inclusion through licensing changed in the early 1970s. Hawking was considered a danger to the cleanliness of the city, as well as causing crowding and obstruction of pedestrian movement. While kiosks were supposed to be temporary, they had now become permanent. Hawkers also sold their goods near permanent shops and hotels, and residential quarters were turned into illegal beer halls, shops and restaurants (Kenya National Archives 1974). This implies that the issue of order, aesthetics and cleanliness prevailed over the principle of licensing and inclusion.

Of great concern were the issues of legality in terms of stock worth and the definition of sectoral activities to be licensed, such as household utilities. In the case of stock, hawkers with goods worth more than KSh (Kenyan shillings) 5, 000 required a trader’s licence instead of a hawking one. However, because they were situated in temporary locations, they did not qualify for a trader’s licence. This category of hawkers was accused of cheating the government. Activity relating to household utilities was vague because the goods were unlimited (Kenya National Archives 1978).

Economic informality as a refuge or safe haven for victims of neoliberalism In the context of global economic crises and restructuring, individuals who could not cope with the consequences of neoliberal austerity measures such as retrenchment from jobs, decline in incomes and removal of welfare were pushed into the informal economy. Bangura (1994) notes that austerity measures in

Nigeria forced the previously secure middle class into economic informality. Unni (2001) observes that the adoption of structural adjustment programmes forced women to join the informal sector while subcontracting for large firms offered opportunities to some women.

In Nairobi, economic informality is older than neoliberalism. Robertson (1997) demonstrates that women have been involved for a long time in the bean trade, which formed a type of economic informality business in Nairobi during colonial times. The bean trade struggled to survive in the context of agricultural imperialism during the colonial period, when maize, imported beans and English potatoes were introduced into the country. Neoliberal policies were introduced in Africa the 1980s by the World Bank and the IMF. They contained the structural adjustment programmes that comprised: the opening up of markets, cost sharing in hospitals and schools, privatization of government services, and retrenchment of workers in public and private services, as well as liberalization of exchange rates (Easterly 2005; Kraus 1991). According to Bangura (1994), these neoliberal policies resulted in massive job losses and the massive impoverishment of a large number of people who sought livelihoods in economic informality.

However, neoliberalism accentuated the entry of more people into economic informality since it was already a well-established mode of economic organization. Macharia (2003) observes that, by the 1980s and 1990s, people were moving from the formal economy and opting to establish enterprises in the informal economy, which had already become established. This is because ‘the entrepreneurs in the informal economy gave it a new outlook and more people who could not join the formal sector felt comfortable joining the informal economy, popularly known as *jua kali*’ (Macharia 2003: 25). The activities of these entrepreneurs made economic informality look attractive as an opportunity for alternative employment, and so the sector was recognized by citizens, governments and international donors as an alternative safety net from the effects of austerity and structural adjustment.

In 1985, President Daniel Arap Moi’s visit to Kamukunji *jua kali* grounds prompted the creation of the Ministry of Research, Technical Training and Technology to spearhead the mainstreaming of economic informality, upgrade technology, ensure security of tenure of sites and organize economic informality workers into associations. Non-governmental organizations such as K-Rep, K-Map, the Small and Micro Enterprise Programme (SMEP) and Improve Your Business were supported by international donors who viewed economic informality as a safeguard for those people affected by structural adjustment programmes. These initiatives revolutionized the informal economy and labour market mentality to such an extent that most of the jobs being created in Kenya now are in the informal economy – in 2011, about 70 per cent of jobs created in Kenya were generated by the informal economy, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

Economic informality as revolutionary and heroic entrepreneurship Economic informality should not just be seen in terms of dualism, structuralist, legalist or labour market dynamics, for it carries both revolutionary and dynamic entrepreneurship (Kinyanjui 2008a, 2010, 2011). Nijman (2010) and de Soto (1989) feel that economic informality is a revolutionary and heroic entrepreneurship since individuals engaged in it exhibit resilience and determination as they go about their everyday struggle to earn a living and improve their living standards. It is the path to urban socioeconomic dynamism for a large majority of people (Kinyanjui 2008b), since they derive their livelihoods, configure their identities and claim their space in the city from it. It also gives them the rubric for collective action and agency, which in turn serves as the nucleus for resistance to everyday subordination besides serving as a medium for participation and active citizenship.

The informal economy is deeply rooted in people's cultural practices, such as those relating to personal grooming (hair fashion, for example), indigenous food and entertainment (Kinyanjui 2010). Economic informality should be seen beyond the slum culture of helplessness and hopelessness for it drives action among the ordinary or subaltern populations (Nijman 2010). Economic informality is not an abnormal way of life but a people's creative response to the innate desire for survival and self-actualization.

Therefore, the disorder that comes with informality in the city is not a result of the sector being inherently disorderly but derives from the fact that planners have failed to come up with models to accommodate it. Illuminated by the available epistemologies of dualists, structuralists, legalists and labour market dynamics, planners have assumed that economic informality will disappear from the landscape of African cities. Unfortunately, this is unlikely to happen. As will be shown in later chapters, the informal economy will reinvent itself and encroach upon the CBD, as has happened in Nairobi, where open-plan shops have been subdivided into stalls and cubicles (Ngwala 2011).

Informality in cities in the global South has attracted significant scholarship. From a theoretical and policy point of view, informality is a problem that impacts on urbanization and the welfare of the people. It affects the formal order of urbanization in most of the cities in the global South (Roy 2005); it reflects the developmental nature of the cities in the global South that are characterized by underdevelopment, poverty, environmental degradation and disease (Robinson 2002). Yiftachel (2009) defines urban informality as the grey zone situated between whiteness and blackness, where whiteness represents legally approved safe spaces in the city and blackness is symbolic of the unsafe cities characterized by eviction, destruction and death. It is a product of urban apartheid that reflects the new colonial relationships. According to Roy (2005), urban informality is a mode of urbanization characterized by a system of logic and norms that

govern the process of urban transformation. Informality is a product of state relationships that are based on exclusion and suppression of some forms of production.

From the above analysis, economic informality is a largely misrepresented and underestimated factor in urban growth. Women's participation in economic informality and the strategies they use to negotiate need further explanation. In this book, economic informality is defined as small-scale businesses that operate under the African indigenous market concept and that consist of a gathering of traders with strong social relations and associations based on friendship, kinship and ethnicity. It applies the principles of solidarity entrepreneurialism whereby traders reduce transaction costs by sharing space, transport costs and rents. The traders also offer each other financial support, as well as social insurance in the form of emotional and material support in times of crisis such as sickness and death.

The book is organized into nine chapters. Following this introduction, Chapters 2 and 3 provide a historical picture of the city of Nairobi and the relationship between the planners and economic informality. Chapter 4 documents the positioning of women in the city, and Chapter 5 discusses the role of women's mobility in economic informality, while Chapter 6 presents the characteristics of women in economic informality. Chapter 7 discusses the women's search for spatial justice, while Chapter 8 discusses women's collective organizations. The conclusions are presented in Chapter 9.

