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## **African Migrant Traders' Experiences in Johannesburg Inner City: Towards the Migrant Calculated Risk and Adaptation Framework**

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### **Abstract**

Globally, migrants face numerous socio-economic and institutional impediments that hinder their participation in the labour market of host cities and/or countries. This motivates them to join the informal economic sector to make a living. Applying the concept of tactical cosmopolitanism to understand the social and economic agency of African migrants, this article reports on an explorative analysis of the experiences of informal African migrant street traders (African migrant traders) operating in Johannesburg inner city, Gauteng, South Africa. The study revealed that African migrant traders left their countries of origin to secure better opportunities and to escape hostile conditions in their home countries. Despite the host city turning out to be more hostile and xenophobic, making life and finding formal employment opportunities more challenging, the thought of the more difficult life conditions in their home countries has led them to trading on the streets. Given the risks and challenges,

including hostile and xenophobic situations that African migrant traders face in Johannesburg inner city, they have adopted dynamic and agentic strategies to survive and continue operating their businesses. Such findings pointed towards and assisted in the development of the Migrant Calculated Risk and Adaptation Framework.

**Keywords:** African migrant traders; calculated risk; adaptation; Johannesburg inner city

## **Introduction and Background**

Migration to South Africa, from the rest of Africa, increased after 1994 (Adepoju 2010; Palomares and Quiminal 2012). As is the case globally, this has resulted in tension between migrants and South African citizens (Mawadza and Crush 2010). A number of researchers (Abdi 2011; Crush and Tawodzera 2011; 2014; Dyers and Wankah 2012; Laher 2010; Mawadza and Crush 2010; Nyamnjoh 2006) have focused their research on the anti-foreigner debate that is aimed more at African migrants, as opposed to other groups of migrants.

We situate our article in this context by recognising that, in the case of Johannesburg inner city, African migrants face socio-economic and institutional impediments, manifesting in among others, hostility and xenophobia. This makes the lives of African migrants very difficult and undermines their chances of securing formal employment. The experience of more hostile and difficult life conditions in their home countries forces them to resort to trading on the streets in their host country (Gumbo 2015). This article presents a narrative on the business strategies and experiences of African migrant traders operating within Johannesburg inner city. It discusses tactical cosmopolitanism to provide an analytical framework and follows with an explanation of data gathering and analysis procedures and the presentation of materials gathered during the interviews. The findings point towards and assist in the development of a theoretical framework, the Migrant Calculated Risk and Adaptation Framework, which is a novel way of looking at the experiences of African migrant traders.

## **Theoretical Considerations**

Studies by Landau (2009) and Landau and Freemantle (2010) have shown that discrimination, hostility, harassment and xenophobia directed at African migrants, results in “tactical cosmopolitanism” (Landau and Freemantle 2010, 376). Tactical cosmopolitanism by African migrants includes attempts at overcoming “opposition to their presence” by drawing

“on a variegated language of belonging that makes claims to the city”. Such attempts at inclusion illustrate their agency to mitigate the effects of xenophobia. This, they do, by inserting themselves into city life as well as by distancing themselves from it (Landau and Freemantle 2010, 380). The strategies that African migrants use to insert themselves include liberation philosophies based on the argument that many South Africans sought refuge in the countries from which the migrants come. For instance, some Nigerians claim that university education for African National Congress (ANC) activists was funded by the Nigerian government at the expense of Nigerian citizens (Landau and Freemantle 2010). Migrants from several Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries also claim that they suffered destabilisation of their countries by the apartheid government for supporting the ANC’s fight for democracy (Landau 2009; Landau and Freemantle 2010). The arguments by African migrants symbolise their attempt to make a claim at being in South Africa, even if it is temporary.

Linked to this is the fact that African migrants also advance a Pan-Africanist philosophy that South Africa is part of Africa. This is particularly designed to erode the barriers that separate migrants from South Africans (Landau 2009, 208). In some parts of South Africa, African migrants have formed organisations which “negotiate membership in South Africa communities” in an attempt to advance their own rights, a practice called “negotiated denizenship” (Scott 2013, 521–522). A study of an organisation formed by African migrants (known as Solidarity Forum in Hout Bay, Cape Town), illustrates African migrants’ active participation in “local politics” and governance systems, helping to reduce distance between them and South African citizens (Scott 2013, 532).

Religion is an aspect of tactical cosmopolitanism. In Johannesburg inner city, this manifests in the expansion of Pentecostal churches and the messages that they transmit to their congregations. The Christian leitmotif in these churches helps in reducing differences between African migrants and South African citizens (Landau 2009; Landau and Freemantle 2010). Christian eschatology implores both African migrants and South Africans to concentrate on preparing for life after death and not fighting over ephemeral and transient issues on earth (Landau and Haupt 2007). For some migrants this suggests that they have a right to be in South Africa as they are propagating the gospel of Jesus Christ. Indeed, there has been a rise in Pentecostalism and the propagation of the “Gospel of Prosperity” in a transnational context (Falsani 2017). In Johannesburg inner city, Pentecostal churches are

mostly run by African migrants (Landau 2009; Landau and Haupt 2007). While the outcome of the “Gospel of Prosperity” can be enjoyed anywhere in the world, African migrants in Johannesburg inner city want to achieve their own prosperity which constitutes a form of tactical response on their part.

The formation of migrant communities is another aspect of tactical cosmopolitanism allowing for flexible membership opportunity which allows positioning by members in South Africa (Landau and Haupt 2007). These communities “embody a broad range of tactical abilities aimed at maximizing economic opportunities through transversal engagements across territories and separate arrangements of powers” (Gotz and Simone 2003, 125 cited in Landau and Freemantle 2010, 386). Typically, these communities “are not associations founded on preserving identity, but instead use combinations of national, ethnic and political affiliations for tactical purposes” (Landau and Freemantle 2010, 386).

Some African migrants in South Africa claim that they do not intend to stay in the country permanently, thus advancing the “rhetoric of self-exclusion” (Landau and Haupt 2007, 12). Such African migrants use this rhetoric to qualify their stay in South Africa “albeit for now”. They claim that their future is not in South Africa and they have no aspiration to be South African: They “hover above the soil ... a counter response to the hostility or exclusion they face when they arrive” (Landau 2009, 205). Through this rhetoric of self-exclusion, such African migrants justify their stay in South Africa as “temporary”, which should not create anxieties amongst South Africans. This is indeed a strategy to lay a claim to a “respectable” stay and residence in South Africa. Such African migrants “strive for a kind of usufruct rights: a form of exclusion that is partially compatible with social and political marginalisation” (Landau 2009, 205).

Literature on exclusion and tactical forms of belonging in Johannesburg inner city and elsewhere in South Africa, shows the ways in which African migrants have attempted to justify their claim to be in South Africa. This article builds on and expands this debate by focusing on livelihood strategies of African migrant traders in Johannesburg inner city. It is understood that engaging in livelihood strategies may not be tactical cosmopolitanism in the strictest sense; however, the article explores the procedures African migrant traders in Johannesburg inner city have taken, in an effort to earn a livelihood, despite the xenophobic response to their presence. We argue that these actions are the tactical responses of African

migrant traders that enable them to earn a livelihood in a place where they believe they are not wanted. This is so even though their experience is not an exception. For instance, the government-driven Operation Clean Up in September 2013 targeted all street traders. During this operation, African migrant street traders suffered the most (Moyo 2015); however they kept on fighting for their survival and insertion in such hostile environments.

This finding builds on the research of Smit and Rugunanan (2014), that explored the daily struggles and precarious existence of African refugee women in Gauteng. In their study, Smit and Rugunanan (2014, 20), concluded that “the refugees ... were, but for a single exception, either unemployed, underemployed or involved in precarious work even after being in South Africa for a number of years”. In addition, “even if prejudice against foreign nationals decreased over time, the fierce competition for employment as a result of labour surplus may trap refugee women in precarious work” (Smit and Rugunanan 2014, 21). While this may be true, it elevates a structuralist analysis, as the implication is that refugee women were victims of xenophobia and stiff competition for employment, that is, a structuralist viewpoint, as it does not show the agency of the refugee women themselves, in terms of their responses to their precarious existence. In this article a different view is argued, namely, African migrants have responded to these “threats” and/or risks and as a result we move beyond a structuralist approach towards the consideration of the agency of African migrants in the negotiation of risks that they face. We acknowledge that there are several definitions of risk and adaptation; hence, it is not the intention of the article to make reference to all of them. According to Jones and Boer (2003), risk is defined as the exposure to loss or the probability to suffer loss that is determined by the nature of hazards, state of exposure and vulnerability. This definition is adopted in the current work to mean the likelihood of occurrence of perceived or real loss associated with the African migrant traders’ street trading business. In small trading economic activities that are commonly found within the informal economic sector, the most evident risk is the compliance requirement (Bruhn 2011). There are, however, risks associated with operations, finances and recognition. Compliance risk is the most critical for street trading activities as they are required to comply with all applicable laws and regulations (Gourio 2009). In most cases new street trading businesses fail to comply with the requirements, whilst established activities are better in terms of compliance.

Calculated risk involves the identification of risks that have the potential of jeopardising the success or existence of the migrant traders’ enterprises. There is a deliberate effort to reduce

chances of failure and to prevent disastrous consequences such as the collapse of enterprises. Increased risk probabilities result in the decline or closing of migrant businesses (Gourio 2012). As with formal and established businesses, African migrant traders engage in the identification of risks, analyses of risks, adoption of operational strategies and ways of controlling risks. In this sense, African migrant traders enter the street trading business with full knowledge of particular challenges and possible solutions, which may be effective or ineffective. The street traders venture into the streets with this knowledge and are aware that engaging in street trading might result in loss and/or gain. They start ventures as the probability of gain and improvement of their welfare appears to outweigh potential losses. We view this within the prism of tactical cosmopolitanism as African migrant traders have calculated their actual and potential gains, and also losses before engaging in street trading. This demonstrates the agency of the African migrant traders to the extent that it shows a determination to manoeuvre the risks associated with street trading and survive – and is thus a tactical response.

Adaptation refers to the adjustment processes that businesses go through in order to be acceptable and sustainable (Sánchez, Lago, Ferràs and Ribera 2011). In the case of African migrant traders, they adjust to fulfil or counter the demands of municipal security personnel, national police, locals and any other relevant agencies. Adaptation thus involves confronting and/or negotiating the risks, including strategies like bribing the police, which appears to be a tactical response of African migrant traders when harassed by regulatory regimes. We thus argue that African migrant traders do not always fall victim to the risks, as they “fight” back. These actions form the essence of the Migrant Calculated Risk and Adaptation Framework, which is advanced in the article.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The study used a non-probability sampling technique of purposive sampling to select participants for the study, with whom, face-to-face in-depth interviews were later conducted. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), in qualitative research there are no defined ways of establishing a sampling frame. In this case study, the density of shops operated by African migrant traders was discovered through field observation of the Johannesburg inner city over a six-month period (prior to conducting interviews). This served as the criterion for identifying potential participants. Participants were chosen on the basis of their willingness to be interviewed. Selected participants provided the authors with data that was carefully

analysed. Therefore, the central point in this methodology is the extent to which the chosen participants represented cases, through an “orientation towards the in-depth multi-aspect and holistic investigation of one or a small number of instances” (Iosifides 2011, 202) as well as “a holistic description through an iterative process” (Easton 2010, 119).

Interaction with the participants was in English (no interpreter was used) as they understood the questions, and could communicate their responses effectively. They were interviewed in their shops and/or trading stalls on three different occasions (first phase was June to August 2012; second phase from September to November 2012; while the last phase took place from January to February 2013). The interviews lasted between 40 minutes to several hours. Repeated interviews are regarded as a quasi-experimental design and serve the purpose of generating new and deeper insights, on the basis of which theoretical abstractions can be made (Iosifides 2011).

The shops and/or stalls were located next to the street pavements which made it easy to access them physically. The researchers explained the purpose of the interviews to the migrant street traders. While some blatantly refused to be interviewed, others agreed to be interviewed, as they thought that it was important that their operations and/or challenges on the streets of Johannesburg inner city needed to be known. This formed the basis upon which trust was established between the researchers and participants as the latter identified with the aim of the research. During the data collection process, due regard was given to ethical considerations related to obtaining the participants’ consent to provide information and assurances from the researchers that data collected would be treated as confidential and that only pseudonyms would be used in the research reports. The questions that were asked focused on the participants’ demographic profiles, including their nationality and their reasons for migrating to South Africa, as well as their experiences of discrimination, harassment and xenophobia and their responses to those challenges.

The responses of 40 participants formed the basis of the article. These included participants from various African states as follows: Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (3), Ghana (4), Malawi (6), Mali (1), Mozambique (3), Nigeria (5), Somalia (2), Tanzania (8) and Zimbabwe (8). All the respondents had been in South Africa for periods of more than 10 years ranging from 1999 until 2013. All the participants chose Johannesburg as their destination as they believed there were opportunities that would expedite their settlement in the country. Only

six of the respondents were female. Since this is a case study of purposely sampled participants, the gender distribution should not be taken to represent the migration patterns to South Africa. The authors recommend that further research is undertaken to explore the gender profile of African migrant traders, and how gender affects migration patterns, economic involvement and experience in the street trading.

There are different ways of interpreting the data from in-depth interviews. In analysing the qualitative data, an inductive approach was followed that enabled an analysis to “build patterns, categories and themes from the bottom-up, by organising the data into increasingly more abstract units of information” (Creswell 2009, 176). The three-tier (description, classification and connection) analytical framework proposed by Dey (1995 cited in Kitchin and Tate 2000) was employed in the research. This was used together with a framework advanced by Creswell (2009) which suggests a bottom-up approach, that is, collecting raw data, organising the data for analysis, reading through all the data, coding it, interrelating it, and interpreting the data, themes and descriptions.

The study area is located in the richest, largest and most populous city in South Africa, Johannesburg (Stats SA 2011), which is also the capital city of Gauteng (Wray 2014). Migrants make up 7.1 per cent of the population in the province (Stats SA 2012), and 82 per cent of these are from the SADC (GCRO 2013). Johannesburg is described as a city of in-migration (OECD 2011) and therefore “a quintessentially migrant city”, and yet “one of the least-migrant-friendly cities in the world” (Crush 2008, 280). Murray (2010, 145) estimates that a quarter of the population of Johannesburg inner city is made up of migrants from virtually everywhere in Africa, particularly Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Congo, Ethiopia and Somalia. Johannesburg inner city was selected as the study area for this research as it is estimated the area has between 7 000 to 10 000 migrant traders (Regional Spatial Development Framework for Region F 2010–2011, 17).

### **African Migrant Traders’ Experiences in Johannesburg Inner City**

In order to improve our understanding of African migrants, it is important to highlight their reasons for migrating to South Africa; the type of business they go into; and the source of goods that they sell.

#### Reasons for Migration



The push and pull factors of migrants vary and the researchers' discussion with the participants in the research pointed to circumstances in the African migrant traders' home countries. These discussions helped the researchers to understand migrants' motivations for remaining in Johannesburg inner city despite the difficult circumstances they are faced with. This study suggests that African migrant traders from the DRC came to South Africa as a result of political problems and persecution in their country. Zimbabweans and Somalis indicated that they came to South Africa due to economic difficulties and, to a limited degree, political instability and persecution in their respective countries. Respondents from Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria and Tanzania came to South Africa for economic reasons.

#### Rejection by the Formal System, Marginalisation and Exclusion

Upon arriving in South Africa, and Johannesburg inner city specifically, African migrant traders realised that their hopes, qualifications and experience did not match their expectations. The majority faced problems in their application for resident and work permits, the requirements for which, the migrants described as stringent. As a result, migrant traders have tenuous immigration status from which employers have benefited. A case in point is that of Joe, a Malawian migrant trader, who explained that failure to obtain a work permit had reduced him to a manual labourer. As a result, he started trading on the streets, despite difficulties with the Johannesburg Metropolitan Trading Company (JMTC) to allocate him a stall (Interview with Joe, November 2012). Joe sells consumable goods, clothes, blankets and a variety of other goods. He declared that despite his negative experiences, he would continue with his business, even if this included paying occasional bribes to the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department (JMPD), who have harassed him.

Debra, a Zimbabwean migrant trader selling vegetables and clothes in a stall in Eloff Street (between Bree and Plein Streets), asserted that she came to South Africa in search of economic opportunities. However, she failed to get employment as she could not obtain a work permit. Her livelihood depended on street trading that exposed her to harassment from the JMPD. She indicated that one of her survival strategies included speaking South African languages (Interview with Debra, January 2013). Debra's testimony is similar to that of George, a Tanzanian migrant trader (at the Bree street Taxi Rank), who came to South Africa in 1999 and is married to a South African woman. The economic exclusion he has faced, forced him to join the informal sector (Interview with George, February 2013). He sells

traditional African attire, beadwork and embroidery. He intends remaining in South Africa as long as his business sustains him.

These testimonies illustrate the non-recognition of qualifications of African migrant traders. Kasongo, a DRC migrant trader who operates from Eloff/Jeppe Streets, selling cosmetics and hair products, has a degree in psychology from the DRC that is not recognised in South Africa. Thus, he is unable to find employment commensurate with his qualifications. He earns a living by engaging in street trading (Interview with Kasongo, August 2012). Germaine and Fridah, DRC migrant traders with nursing qualifications, made similar claims: “I could not find a job as a nurse” (Interview with Germaine, January 2013); “I gave up looking for a nursing job, because I was fed up of being told that I was not qualified enough” (Interview with Fridah, January 2013).

The nurses from the DRC had found it difficult to register with the South African Nursing Council (SANC). The researchers verified the requirements for the registration of nurses from foreign countries and South African nurses who trained in foreign countries. Under Section 4, Sub-section 4.1.1 (c) and (d) of the Requirements of the Registration of Nurses, it was noted that the DRC nurse was correct in her claim that she failed to get an endorsement from the National Department of Health (SANC 2012). South African nationals who trained as nurses in foreign countries were exempt from this requirement. Such exemptions are understandable if the aim is to prioritise nationals ahead of foreigners. However, the requirements are problematic in practice when two people – one a South African and the other a foreign national – have similar training obtained in a foreign country and yet are not treated equally. The DRC nurses interviewed indicated that the lack of recognition of their qualifications was tantamount to discrimination. The researchers established that, even if the nurses had submitted their qualifications to the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) for evaluation, it was not automatic that the National Department of Health would endorse such foreign qualifications and permit the registration of these nurses in South Africa.

A similar claim was made by a psychology graduate from the same country. Although it was not possible to verify these claims, the researchers visited the Health Professionals Council for South Africa (HPCSA) website, which declares that:

Applicants who are non-South Africans are required to first obtain a letter of endorsement issued by the National Department of Health in Pretoria prior to applying to the HPCSA for registration. The National Department of Health does not encourage the recruitment of individual foreign health professionals who are citizens of developing countries. ([http://www.hpcsa.co.za/.../board\\_exams/exam\\_appl\\_guide\\_meddent\\_nov2013](http://www.hpcsa.co.za/.../board_exams/exam_appl_guide_meddent_nov2013))

This requirement is not specifically related to psychologists, but as they must register with the HPCSA, it would appear that the Congolese migrant probably faced hurdles in practising his profession. While the researchers accept that requirements related to health professionals might be motivated by standards, it was clear during the interviews that the migrants perceived such requirements as hostile and exclusivist and non-recognition of their qualifications.

Muza, a Tanzanian migrant trader, responded to the researchers by explaining that: “I used to wash plates in a restaurant in Fourways and since I had a Diploma in Transport Management, this was far below what I am professionally worth” (Interview with Muza, July 2012); while Joyce, a Zimbabwean migrant trader, stated that she was a teacher in Zimbabwe for many years, but her qualifications and experience were not enough to get her a work permit and teaching job in South Africa. Her only option to earn a livelihood was to become a maid and this is the reason she now engages in street trading (Interview with Joyce, February 2013). Migrant traders from Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zimbabwe shared similar accounts of the lack of recognition of their qualifications which ranged from areas such as architecture, to town planning and philosophy. The non-recognition of qualifications held by African migrants established in the current case study is confirmed by the findings of Smit and Rugunanan (2014) specifically on refugee women from Burundi, DRC and Zimbabwe.

#### Hostility, Exclusion and Survival

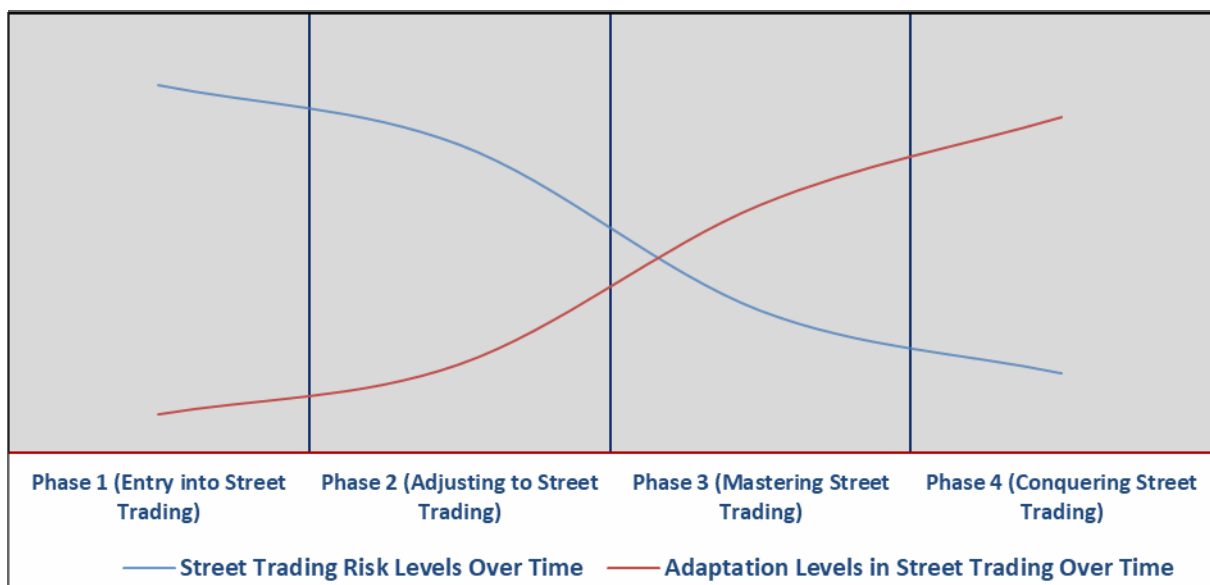
The testimonies of Malawians, Mozambicans and Zimbabweans relating to harassment of African migrants by officials from the Department of Home Affairs abound. Similar claims were made about municipal officials where the application for street trading permits was done. Other forms of harassment shared were perpetrated by the JMPD which included the confiscation of goods from the stalls with trading licences. Harassment included accusations

that the migrants were responsible for crowding and dirtying the Johannesburg inner city, and this was often by customers who took goods without paying and made xenophobic remarks.

This exclusivist response to African migrants confirms several studies (see Abdi 2011; Crush and Tawodzera 2014; Dyers and Wankah 2012; Laher 2010; Landau 2009; 2011; 2012; Mawadza and Crush 2010; Nyamnjoh 2006; Rugunanan and Smit 2011; Smit and Rugunanan 2014). Our objective is not to recite the already known xenophobic practices and other exclusivist experiences that African migrants suffer, and confirm a long list of previous studies. Rather we provide a foundation on which to analyse how African migrants, have, in creative and dynamic ways responded to these challenges in attempts to survive.

**Discussion: Towards the Migrant Calculated Risk and Adaptation Framework**

Based on theoretical considerations on tactical cosmopolitanism, insights from the interviews and experiences of African migrant traders in the preceding narratives, we advance the Migrant Calculated Risk and Adaptation Framework (see Figure 1). The framework is informed by the current study and has not been applied within the context of Johannesburg inner city.



**Figure 1:** Migrant Calculated Risk and Adaptation Framework

**Calculated Risk and Adaptation Strategies**

Given the migrants’ low resource base and weak street networks on entry into street trading, the risk is very high. They are, however, more than determined to circumvent these hurdles

(Bonin, H., A. F. Constant, K. Tatsiranos, and K. F. Zimmermann. 2006). The interview data showed that there is conviction that engaging in street trading in this way, despite the risks, enables them to escape their more difficult socio-economic circumstances. As in the case of other studies (Kibria 1994; Portes, Guarnizo and Haller 2002), migrants gather information about life on the streets. The interview data showed that, beyond making the decision to engage in street trading, the African migrant traders engage in the actual negotiation of their operations – adaptation.

African migrant traders engage in activities that attempt to modify or adjust their behaviours and characteristics to cope with the risks that are associated with their adopted trade, leading to reduced loss (Adger et al. 2003). This involves the actual bribing of officials or in some cases evading municipal regulation and/or police patrols. By deciding to pay bribes, migrants want their business to be operational in the environment they find themselves. In this, we see a tactical response by the African migrant traders to continue their street trading business, despite the challenges that they face. Migrant street trading activities also are modified over time to be able to respond to financial, operational, legal, institutional and locational demands.

The framework represents the journey the African migrants travel through when arriving in Johannesburg inner city. It demonstrates that the risks and adaptation processes they experience differ and take on various angles. The African migrants experience risks and attempt to adapt, they attempt to find jobs, failing which they engage in street trading and strive to insert themselves in this business enterprise. The relationship between the phases and risks as well as adaptation levels are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Phases, risks and adaptation levels

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Risk</b>	<b>Adaptation level</b>
Entry into street trading	<b>Very high</b> (e.g. exploitation, arrest by police, deportation, hostility and harm, marginalisation and exclusion by locals)	<b>Very weak</b> (e.g. attempts at establishing networks)
Adjusting to street trading	<b>High</b> (e.g. arrest by police, deportation, hostility and harm, marginalisation and exclusion by	<b>Weak</b> (e.g. learning the “rules of street trading”)

	locals)	
Mastering street trading	<b>Medium</b> (e.g. hostility and harm, marginalisation and exclusion by some locals)	<b>Medium</b> (e.g. bribing officials)
Conquering street trading	<b>Low</b> (e.g. marginalisation and exclusion by some locals)	<b>Very strong</b> (e.g. acquiring permits and National Identity Documents [sometimes fraudulently], registering their businesses and establishing more selling points, employing locals to assist with businesses)

### *Phase 1: Entry into Street Trading*

As the migrants find themselves in a foreign country with a hostile formal sector that is difficult to enter and where their qualifications are not easily recognised, they resort to doing exploitative manual and menial jobs. Many eventually join street trading business (Phase 1). This echoes Hjerm (2004; 2009)'s studies which found that informal sector migrant entrepreneurs increased as a result of discrimination.

This phase is associated with high risk and weak adaptation levels and strategies as the migrants are faced with arrest, deportation, hostility, harm, marginalisation and exclusion by locals as they enter into street business. In most cases they start their businesses with very little start-up capital and weak networks to protect them on the streets. This was often accompanied by lack of documentation, trading licences and recognition by locals and the legal system. Regardless of these challenges, migrants still forge ahead and start trading on the streets, a case of high risk levels and low adaptation levels. Similar observations have been made in Germany (Akgüç, M., X. Liu, M. Tani and Zimmermann 2015; Nee and Sanders 2010). These findings resonate with migrants across the globe who struggle when entering a foreign country and when starting small businesses (Heir and Greenberg 2002; Kibria 1994). The terms risk and adaptation mean different things when applied to different contexts by different professionals such as social scientists, climate scientists and business scholars (Allen 2003). In some situations, the terms are used interchangeably and the relationships are sometimes unclear (Brooks 2003). In climate change studies, risk is defined as the probability of occurrence of hazards that mostly likely trigger undesirable events. Thus

the event risk and outcome risk can be separated into social and biophysical vulnerability in climate change discourse (Downing et al. 2001).

### *Phase 2: Adjusting to Street Trading*

As migrants learn the “rules of street trading”, for example learning South African languages, they adjust to street trading. This is characterised by flagrant proactive risk avoidance strategies, where actions are devised to make necessary adjustments to deal with risks (Johnstone 2000). Although the risks may decrease, they are still high, for example, possible imminent arrest by municipal police. Similarly, hostility, potential harm as well as marginalisation and exclusion by citizens are some of the serious challenges faced by migrants. Accounts of looting and xenophobia by South African citizenry towards African migrant traders were heard. Some African migrant traders responded to this threat by simply accepting “it as a risk which an African migrant operating a business in Johannesburg inner city has to face” (Interview with Isabel, January 2013).

In all this, we see aspects of tactical cosmopolitanism playing out clearly as African migrant traders embark on proactive and innovative strategies to reduce risk. In most cases, migrant traders either do not or to a lesser extent adopt risk management in their enterprises due to lack of resources. Adaptation takes time due to language difficulties (Zeynep and Berry 1996) and thus in this stage, it is still weak but attempts at adjustments are made such as learning local languages. For example a Zimbabwean migrant trader, converses with customers in their own languages thereby creating the impression that she is a South African national or at least “one of them”.

### *Phase 3: Mastering Street Trading*

In this phase, the risk has lowered but there is still hostility, marginalisation and exclusion, and also potential harm. As a result, migrants devise ways of dealing with the risk. To improve their situation on the streets and resist criminal or violent xenophobic elements, some migrant traders operate closely with fellow migrant traders or compatriots (Interview with Ike, a Nigerian migrant trader, August 2012). In the study it was not uncommon to find *inter alia*, a cluster of Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, Tanzanian and Zimbabwean migrant traders operating side by side. Further adaptation strategies included locking some of their stock in lockable bags to reduce loss when they are looted and thus ensuring losses were not high (Interview with Ike, August 2012).

To counter the harassment by the JMPD, who specifically targeted shops and/or stalls operated by African migrant traders by demanding to see registration with the JMTC or in some cases with the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC), African traders simply paid bribes to avoid their shops being closed down or the confiscation of their goods. In some cases, African migrant traders paid bribes from as low as R50 to about R200, to avoid being taken to either Johannesburg Central Police Station or Hillbrow Police Station. Those without any form of registration and money to pay bribes suffered the most and were always on the run, to evade the JMPD.

#### *Phase 4: Conquering Street Trading*

In this phase, the risk decreases and adaptation increases. Migrant traders fight off challenges and regulatory regimes and exclusion, to remain on the streets. They have learnt the language of trading on the streets and developed networks that include befriending members of the JMPD whom they continue to bribe. Some migrants choose to operate from buildings where “raids” are not feasible, while many of the Somali and Ethiopian traders along Jeppe and Bree Streets use secure buildings to operate from and store their goods. Usually, they own or rent whole buildings and use the ground floor to sell goods in areas with a high volume of people (e.g. the MTN Taxi Rank and Park Station). They store larger quantities of their goods on other floors to which they retreat in the event of random raids from the police (Interview with a Somali Migrant Trader, November 2013). There were also indications that some of the African migrant traders had secured resident permits through fraudulent means such as bribing officials at the Department of Home Affairs. Such permits enable these African migrant traders to trade legally on the streets. Waldinger (2014) found the same trend in New York where migrant entrepreneurs have successfully adapted to the market place by taking advantage of their skill and information exchanges over time.

#### **Conclusion**

To a greater extent, economic reasons explain why African migrants migrated to South Africa and to a limited extent political instability is provided as the push factor for leaving their countries of origin. This article suggests that when migrants reach Johannesburg inner city, the majority do not pursue their chosen careers as a result of politico-institutional, regulatory impediments and regimes. African migrants find themselves in vulnerable positions where



they are easily exploitable by the employers in the formal sector and tend to resort to the informal sector and in particular street trading for survival.

Life is not always easy on the streets of Johannesburg inner city. Some of the African migrant traders are granted operating licences by the JMTC, while those who fail to get such licences operate illegally. Most importantly, registered and unregistered traders face daily challenges and risks on the streets. These challenges or risks include harassment by both ordinary citizens and police, arrests, and xenophobic attacks. What is particularly significant for this article to comment on is that in the midst of these risks, African migrant traders in Johannesburg inner city cannot go back to their countries of origin as the problems or circumstances which forced them to migrate to South Africa still prevail. This means that they have to operate their businesses in Johannesburg inner city in spite of the risks and challenges which they have learnt to cope with.

Hence, to continue operating in Johannesburg inner city, the African migrant traders have engaged in dynamic ways to mitigate the risks, which often includes resorting to bribery to offset police harassment. Some enter marriages of convenience with South Africans to overcome the stringent immigration regime, while others secure residential permits using fraudulent means. Many learn local languages to survive daily attacks from South Africans. Others make use of well secured buildings, trading on the ground floors, but have the option of retreating to other floors of the same building during police raids or when under attack. Some sell a variety of goods from the same stall as a strategy to increase profits, spread and reduce losses.

While the strategies in which African migrants engage in an attempt to earn a livelihood in Johannesburg inner city are not fully tactical cosmopolitanism, the concept has however provided the researchers with a prism through which to look at the tactics that African migrants in the Johannesburg inner city engage in order to do businesses and survive. African migrants do not behave like victims of discrimination, exclusion and xenophobia. They respond to these challenges in ways that will ensure that they stay in South Africa and earn a livelihood. This parallels with “a variegated language of belonging that makes claims to the city [...and] illustrates foreigners” agency in mitigating xenophobia’s effects by at once inserting themselves into city life” (Landau and Freemantle 2010, 380). In this way study advances the Migrant Calculated Risk and Adaptation Framework. This framework provides

an expanded analysis of African migrant traders in terms of why they engage in street trading and most importantly how and why they manage to deal with challenges which would ordinarily force them to go back to their countries of origin.

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