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PERNICIOUS ASSIMILATION: REFRAMING THE INTEGRATION OF THE URBAN INFORMAL ECONOMY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Amin Y Kamete
University of Glasgow

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that many of the official attempts to “integrate” the urban informal economy into the mainstream economy are fundamentally flawed. An unpacking of the “integrative” agenda as pursued by planning and other governmental practices reveals that “integration”, as currently practiced, does not herald the mainstreaming of the informal economy. Drawing on research in Zimbabwe and evidence from other countries in southern Africa, I argue that what we witness is a sinister stripping away of the lifeblood of informality. This malicious form of integration entails crippling Faustian bargains. In the end, this pernicious assimilation insidiously does away with that which makes informality a livelihood haven for the majority of urbanites. I conclude that the duplicitous integration is unworkable and leaves the big questions of inclusion untouched, hence the persistence of the “problem” of informality.

Keywords: informality; governmentality; planning; inclusion; integration; Zimbabwe; southern Africa

Introduction

Prescriptions on dealing with the “informal sector” in the global South include calls to “mainstream” it into spatial planning—a prelude to the integration and inclusion of informality into the urban system (Mwenechanya, 2007; UN-Habitat, 2006; 2009). There is no shortage of proposals on how this can be accomplished. The perceived advantages of integration abound. Among other things, integration will help embattled informals benefit from their status as citizens (Kamete, 2011; Tripp, 1997); it will contribute to public coffers; and it will improve the gathering and processing of economic data (Henley *et al.*, 2006; Hussmanns, 2004). These are persuasive arguments. However, this study suggests that there are cases where in practice, stripped of their beneficent veneer, actual governmental practices to integrate the informal sector seem to have a sinister, dark side.

In this article, I argue that some official moves to integrate the urban informal economy in southern Africa are in a way fundamentally flawed, if not pernicious. While on the surface they appear to be promising, it appears that they by no means herald the “mainstreaming” of the informal economy into the urban planning system and thence the urban economy. I question claims of mainstreaming, suggesting that what we witness might be a relentless stripping away of the soul of informality. Sometimes the integration involves crippling Faustian bargains: shedding key traits—the very lifeblood—of informality and mimicking those of formality.

In the end, with regards to space and place, it could be concluded that this is a form of pernicious assimilation that takes away that which makes informality an accessible livelihood option for the majority of urbanites. If they followed the letter of the conditions of integration, the vast majority of the integrated informals would not make it. Based on a study of integration in urban Zimbabwe, I argue that the state-orchestrated integration leaves the big questions of real inclusion untouched, hence the persistence of the “problem” of informality.

This paper makes three key contributions to debates on urban informality and planning. First, at a theoretical level, it extends the debates by reframing the practice of integration as an expression of governmental rationality and situating informality within the general problem of “government” (Foucault, 2007). At empirical level, it brings insights from original ethnographic data to shed some light on specific contextual realities by not only uncovering integration in action, but also peering into the experiences of various actors on different sides of integration, namely, those doing the integration and those being integrated. At a policy/practice level, by using the term ‘pernicious integration’, the paper explicitly questions what has been considered as a panacea for the exclusion of informality: integrating it into the mainstream economy, by for example, providing new markets (UN-Habitat, 2006; Tokman, 2007; Agyei-Mensah and Owusu, 2010; Adaawen and Jørgensen, 2012).

The rest of this paper is arranged as follows: After the introduction, I will sketch out a framework for analysis where I situate informality within the general problem of “government” seen as the “conduct of conduct”. I will then provide a background to the study and go on to scrutinize “integration” in urban Zimbabwe. This will be followed by highlights of cases of pernicious integration in other parts of southern Africa. In the penultimate section, I will cast a critical gaze at the statist version of integration.

Integration as Government

The integration of the informal economy is widely seen as an important step towards inclusive urban policy (UN-Habitat, 2006, 2009). For example, UN-Habitat (2006) discusses the integration of the informal economy into national accounts, the social security system, the policy-making process, the formulation of legislation, as well as the formal legal system and city-plans. Tokman (2007) considers the integration of the informal sector into the regulatory system, the modernization process, the modern sector, and the taxation system. Evidently, integration means a lot and involves a lot. Whatever its meaning, style and activities in any particular context in time and space, as its proponents argue, integration has the potential to achieve a lot of good.

At its root, the integration of the informal economy is “an attempt to change human conduct by calculated means” (Li, 2007, 5). As such, this “inclusion” of informality belongs to practices of “government” where such practices are “deliberate attempts to shape conduct in certain ways in relation to certain objectives” (Rose, 1999, 4). For this reason, I will frame specific practices of integration through the Foucauldian analytics of governmentality (Foucault, 2000a). Governmentality is the “art of government” (Foucault, 2000a). It refers to the “rationalities and mentalities of governance and the range of tactics and strategies that produce social order” (Merry, 2001, 18). The state’s relationship to informality is embedded in this art of government. The relationship reflects the challenge of governing a sector that is seen as operating outside the state’s regulatory framework (Lindell, 2010). That is why the government of informality cannot be separated from the regulation of conduct—what Foucault terms the “guiding of the possibility of conduct” (1983, 221). This “conduct of conduct” (Foucault, 2000b, 341) to achieve desired objectives is what governmentality is all about (Huxley, 2007).

Governmentality has three axes: political rationalities, technologies of government, and the making of subjects (Inda 2005; Rose and Miller, 1992). Political rationalities are “the political reasons, ... intellectual machineries that render reality thinkable in such a manner as to make it calculable and governable” (Inda, 2005, 7). As systems of thought and intellectual machineries, political rationalities have a moral form, an epistemological character and a distinctive idiom (Rose and Miller, 1992). The moral form is concerned with the ideals and principles towards which government should be directed (Rose and Miller, 1992, 178-179). The epistemological character sees political rationalities being “articulated in relation to some conception of the nature of the objects governed” (Rose and Miller, 1992, 179). The distinctive idiom of political rationalities is about the language that constitutes political

discourse which, as argued by Rose and Miller (1992, 179), is more than rhetorical. Deploying Rose and Miller's conceptualization in the study of informality helps us to prize open the thinking and rationalization behind the integration of informality. In the handling of informality discussed in this article, it is this rationality that is translated into a programmatic form consisting of strategies and procedures of integration.

Technologies of government comprise a multiplicity of practical mechanisms that render programmes operable (Rose and Miller, 1992, 183), thereby actualising the political reasons discussed above. As articulated by Inda (2005, 9), the technological “is that domain of practical mechanisms, devices, calculations, procedures [and] apparatuses” that are deployed in the attempt to shape conduct by calculated means (Li, 2007, 3). As the programmatic form of political rationalities, technologies of government comprise a “complex of techniques, instruments, measures, and programs that endeavours to translate thought into practice and thus actualize political reasons” (Inda, 2005, 9).

It is through these technologies of government that “authorities of various sorts have sought to shape, normalize and instrumentalize the conduct, thought, decisions and aspirations of others in order to achieve the objectives they consider desirable” (Miller and Rose, 1990, 8). In a way, the handling of informality, including strategies of integration is a reflection of “the deliberations, strategies, tactics and devices employed by authorities for making up and acting upon a population and its constituents *to ensure good and avert ill*” (Rose 1996, 328; my emphasis). The challenge is to decipher what the authorities perceive to be the “good” that has to be ensured and what they consider to be the “evil” that has to be averted. These are the matters that we need to peer into when we deconstruct state-directed policies and strategies to “facilitate” the informal sector (Tripp, 1997, 12) through integration or inclusion.

As regards the making of subjects, governmental practices and programmes seek to cultivate particular types of individual and collective identity as well as forms of agency and subjectivity (Inda, 2005, 10). Needless to say, government is intimately involved in making modern subjects: citizens, business people, consumers, workers and so on. Thus, when the state tries to make informals behave in certain ways, such as operating from a fixed spot without roving the city, it is actually making up subjects who fit into the state's conception and mould of responsible citizenship and orderly business behaviour that is compatible with their vision of the modern city (Kamete, 2013a).

Before looking at integration on the ground, it is helpful to consider the neutral, uncoloured and “unlocalised” definition. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) (Integration, 1989) “integration” is “the bringing into equal membership of a common society those groups or persons previously discriminated against”. Integration then is about the cessation of discrimination, the bestowing of equal status. As a verb, to “integrate”, as defined by the *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (CALD) can mean either of two things. The first one involves people and is viewed from the perspective of the one being integrated. It entails mixing with and joining a group “often changing to suit their way of life, habits and customs” (Integrate, 2008, 751). The second sense is about things and involves the combining of “two or more things in order to become more effective” (Integrate, 2008, 751). As I will argue below, in Zimbabwe’s state-directed practices aimed at the government of informality, integration is a complex phenomenon. As a noun, it does not satisfy the OED definition. As a verb, it straddles both senses in the CALD definition: It is ostensibly done with the second sense in mind but often entails the first sense. This is what makes this form of state-initiated integration potentially pernicious.

Perspectives on and the Government of Informality

To understand and interpret informality, it is important to examine dominant perspectives on informality and the authorities’ responses to it.¹ Here I will briefly look at the three that could be deployed in southern African cities and towns. The first one is the modernisation perspective. This longstanding perspective regards informality as a pre-modern phenomenon. As such, the informal sector is a residue, a leftover from a backward pre-modern period (Williams and Gurtoo, 2012). In the modernisation perspective, the formal economy is the embodiment of progress. True to the precepts of modernisation theory, the perspective holds that the inevitable trajectory of development will see the replacement of informal enterprises with tangible manifestations of urban modernity such as shopping complexes. Informality, with its disorderliness, inefficiencies and parasitic tendencies will (or has to?) disappear (see Bromley, 2007). In much of southern Africa, this perspective has taken a normative and programmatic dimension. Many authorities and bureaucrats associate informality with backwardness and disorder. Unsurprisingly they are obsessed with urban modernity (Kamete, 2013). They are convinced that the backward sector has to disappear because according to them, it is a pathology that is “both undesirable and illegal” (UN-Habitat 2009, xxvi; Kamete, 2013b). Over the years, they have attempted to get rid of

informality and attain the desired modern city through strategies involving outright eradication, de-informalization and formalization (see Kamete, 2013a).

The other dominant perspective is the structuralist one. Rooted in political economy, this perspective views informality as a “necessity-driven activity” (Williams and Lansky, 2012, 394). Necessity here may be seen from two angles. First, the operators are forced into the informal sector because there is no livelihood alternative (Williams and Gurtoo, 2012, 394). Second, instead of being a remnant of pre-modern backwardness, “informality is part and parcel of the processes of modernization” (Fernandez-Kelly, 2006, 18); it plays an important part in the accumulation practices of modern economies (Williams and Lansky, 2013, 363). This perspective thus usefully distinguishes between “a survivalist informal sector” that operates at the margins of the modern formal economy, and a “productive informal sector” which is an integral component of capitalist accumulation (Bhattacharya, 2007, 6). This political economy approach suggests that there is (or should be) no one-dimensional response to informality. Whether governmental practices seek to eradicate, de-informalize, formalize or even ignore informality (see Kamete, 2013a), depends on the dominant view of particular informalities in given contexts at given times.

The neoliberal perspective argues that informality is a manifestation of rational choice, not a consequence of the absence of livelihood alternatives (Perry et al, 2007). Informal sector operators and workers have voluntarily exited the overregulated and costly formal economy (Becker, 2004) in pursuit of the “autonomy, flexibility and freedom” that is found in the formal sector (Williams and Lansky, 2013, 364). Escaping from the burdensome controls of the formal economy such as taxes, licences, registration, planning regulations, and public health codes are some of the reasons why people voluntarily exit the formal economy (Kamete, 2004; see Nwazugbor 2005; Perry et al, 2007). In terms of a response, the authorities address this haemorrhaging of the formal economy by typical neoliberal remedies that revolve around the removal of bureaucratic controls and rolling back the state. Liberalization, deregulation and privatisation are some of the favoured policies. The goal is to (re)formalise the disenchanted entrepreneurs and keep those who are in the formal economy from exiting.

Considering urban contexts in much of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), it can be argued that most of the informality is not a result of people voluntarily exiting the formal economy. It is taken up by people driven by necessity. They have no access to state benefits or have been “excluded from ... the circuits of the modern economy” (Perry et al, 2007, 1). In SSA, 53 per cent of non-agricultural employment is in

the informal economy (ILO, 2013, 7). The people working here are among the multitude who live in urban areas with limited wage employment opportunities in a restricted, dwindling or underperforming formal economy—this in the absence of welfare benefits. These people find themselves offloaded onto the only livelihood alternative available: informality. Little wonder then that the authorities’ dominant responses to informality are de-informalization, formalization, eradication, dislocation or doing nothing² (see Kamete, 2013a).

Integrating Informality in Urban Zimbabwe

The Study

In the rest of this paper, I will analyse real-life integration in Harare, Zimbabwe. This analysis is based on a qualitative study comprising semi-structured interviews with bureaucrats and activists as well as two focus group discussions with informal sector operators in Harare in 2010 (see Table 1). The study sought to garner perspectives on the *what, why, how* and experience of integration. My focus was on the spatial aspects of integration, hence the preponderance of planners among the bureaucrats.

Table 1. Profile of study participants

Pseudonym	Details	Interview date
PLANNERS		
Mr A	Local government	19 August 2010
Mr B	Local government	19 August 2010
Ms C	Consultant	23 August 2010
Ms D	Central government	24 August 2010
Mr E	Central government	26 August 2010
Mr F	Local government	31 August 2010
OTHER BUREAUCRATS		
Mr G	Economist	17 August 2010
Ms H	Accountant	22 August 2010
Mr K	Social worker	23 August 2010
Mr L	Civil Engineer	23 August 2010
Mrs M	Legal officer	24 August 2010
Mr N	‘Very senior’ official (MLGRUD)	30 August 2010
Mrs P	‘Very senior’ official (MSMED)	30 August 2010
ACTIVISTS		
Ms Q	Youth	31 August 2010
Ms R	Informal Traders	31 August 2010

Mr S	Land and Housing	31 August 2010
Mr T	Black Economic Empowerment	1 September 2010
Ms U	Gender	1 September 2010
INFORMAL WORKERS		
Chamu	Male, 20 years old	10 August 2010
Mary	Female, 26 years old	10 August 2010
Moyo	Male, 33 years old	10 August 2010
Tino	Male, 25 years old	10 August 2010
Baba Kundi	Male, 31 years old	10 August 2010
Mukai	Female, 26 years old	11 August 2010
Ranga	Female, 19 years old	11 August 2010
Mai Joe	Female 29 years old	11 August 2010
Rati	Female, 24 years old	11 August 2010
Pepukai	Female, 22 years old	11 August 2010
Jimmy	Male, 27 years old	11 August 2010

The bureaucrats included two long-serving “very senior” central government officials involved with policy making in two key ministries: The Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprise Development (MSMED), and the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development (MLGRUD). The informality studied here belongs to the category that Bhattacharya (2007, 6) describes as “the purely marginalized or survivalist urban informal sector”. The participants are among the multitudes driven by necessity to eke a living in the informal economy.

Background

At the turn of the century, Zimbabwe started experiencing what commentators have labelled a crisis of governance (Kamete, 2010). The crisis is blamed for the political and economic problems that were plaguing the country at the time of the study (Bond and Manyanya, 2002). The economy had been in free-fall since 2000. By 2005, unemployment was estimated at an unprecedented 70%; and 80% of the population lived below the poverty threshold (IMF, 2005). The erosion of incomes and the dwindling prospects of (formal sector) employment contributed to a situation where two in five urbanites were involved in the informal economy ((IMF, 2005).

The hostile political and economic conditions directly impacted on livelihoods. The economic meltdown drove an increasing stream of urbanites into informal livelihood practices. At the time of the study, the prospect of employment in the formal economy was remote. Further, the few available jobs did not pay enough to stave off poverty, hence the flooding of the informal economy even by the formally employed.

The social and political situation made operating in the informal economy a risky enterprise. As the economy collapsed, the informal economy was routinely blamed for sabotaging the national economy (Gono, 2005). This accusation led up to *Operation Murambatsvina/Restore Order* (OM/RO), the world (in)famous 2005 urban clean-up operation. OM/RO was targeted at what the authorities labelled as “filth”. In just two months, the colossal operation almost decimated informality (Kamete 2009). The authorities’ readiness to use violence to impose and enforce their version of order made involvement in the informal economy a risky affair. The perception of urban centres as strongholds of political opposition (Kamete, 2009) did not help either.

The authorities’ war on informality is a war for contested urban spaces. In urban Zimbabwe, like elsewhere, different social groups attach different meanings, uses and values to space (Routledge, 1997, 70). These differences have generated various tensions and conflicts over the use of contested urban spaces. Faced with people who have persistently disrupted their version of order by disregarding planning regulations and controls, local authorities have regularly clamped down on informality, accusing informals of violating edicts on the ownership, occupation and use of land. The authorities’ weapon of choice has been planning. In enforcing the state’s version of order, planning has always enlisted the muscle of the local and national law-enforcement and security infrastructure to physically deal with stubborn informals (Kamete, 2008). Officially dubbed “clean-up operations”, attempts to restore order to urban spaces consist of raids, dislocation and/or relocation. These operations often involve physical assault, evictions, confiscation of merchandise, arrests, incarceration, and the exacting of fines (Kamete, 2008). Also, at the time of the study undercover law-enforcement and state-security operatives conducted covert operations targeted at informality (Kamete, 2008).

In addition to clean-up campaigns, the authorities have tried to use the carrot in the form of integration. Ostensibly aimed at “upgrading” informality, this consists of a composite process that is simultaneously formalisation and de-informalization (Kamete, 2013a). It consists of among other things licencing, registration, relocation, and the levying of rentals and user fees and charges. There have also been attempts at taxation (Dube, 2014). This “integration” of informality is the subject of this discussion.

The Meaning of Integration

The study first sought to gain insight into what various stakeholders understood by the “the integration of the informal sector”, “integrating the informal sector” and other variants of the term. The

intention was to get the sense of what the term and the practice meant to these people. I was not after a mere definition, but the *meaning* of the term and practice of integration. Most bureaucrats offered a technician understanding. Mr F³, a local government planner, insisted that integration was about “bringing the informal sector into the regulatory framework”. To him that was the “meat of it, the very essence of integration”. All twelve bureaucrats referred to what Mr N, a “very senior” government official, termed “the expansion of civilised rules and regulations, codes and whatnot ... [into] those dark murky waters of the informal [sector]” (Ms D, planner). Mrs M, a legal officer who at one time was a part-time tutor in planning law at the local university, insisted that “integration, inclusion, etc. etc., simply means regulating what has previously been unregulated”. To her, it was “all about bringing illicit businesses into the purview of the law, period”.

From what he termed “a business perspective”, Mr G, an economist, stated that integration was about “some kind of entrepreneurial graduation ... where informal units kind of become genuine business enterprises ... sort of small-scale enterprises, if you want”. Mrs P, a “very senior official” in the MSMED endorsed this view, pointing out that integrating the informal sector meant “elevating these dark Dracula-like operations from underground operations which no one knows and cares about to SMEs [Small and Medium-Size Enterprises] with a respectable legal corporate identity”. To Ms H, a local government accountant, this “upgrading is all about becoming bona fide business operations ... operating in a lawful, free and fair manner with the real possibility of succeeding or failing and paying one’s dues”.

Interestingly, ten of the thirteen bureaucrats equated integration with modernization. Mr A, a planner, asserted that it was about “integrating the backward sector into the modern decent economy”. Ms C was undoubtedly reflecting the majority opinion among professionals when she opined that to integrate was “to pluck the barbarian sector [*sic*] from destructive primitive habits to civilized business practices”. This is what Mr N, the senior civil servant dubbed “bringing stone-age business operations and their caveman businessmen [*sic*] from the Stone Age into the present modern age [by] modernising both the business and the people”. Closely related to this were statements reminiscent of the Zimbabwe’s clean-up campaigns including OM/RO which equated informality with filth. Mr E, a planner, referred to integration as a “sort of policy hygiene” that involved “scrubbing and cleansing up [*sic*]” the informal sector. Mr L, an engineer, averred that integration was a form of “sectoral pest control ... for de-verminizing the severely contaminated urban business sphere”.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, activists had a different understanding. To them, integration was about “finally embracing and accepting the informal sector” (Ms R, “livelihoods advocate”). Mr K, a social worker, understood integration as “converting vendors and hawkers from second-class citizens, who are routinely trampled on by the powers that be, to real citizens with full economic rights”. Reflecting this view, Ms Q, a youth worker, defined integration as “an act of ‘citizenization’, pure and simple”. Mr S, who works in the land and housing sector, provided some sort of bridging perspective. Integrating informality to him, is about

Sensitive and sensible regulation ... where you bring informality under regulations responsive to their needs, ... where they become a special kind of recognized business with full rights and responsibilities; when finally vendors and street traders can have their labours and contributions acknowledged.

What of the operators themselves? The study captured two understandings. The first one is a negative one, which sees integration as a ploy to destroy informality. Rati, a 24-year-old vendor, stressed that integration was “a government weapon to wipe out vendors, street traders and every poor person struggling to survive in the city”. Agreeing with this perspective, Baba Kundi (age 31), a motor mechanic at a home industry (see Kamete, 2004) stressed that integration was “a weapon for dragging us into senseless and dangerous laws ... meant to destroy businesses of the poor so the rich and powerful can take over”. While sceptical, Jimmy, who constantly asked his colleagues “to give [the authorities] the benefit of the doubt”, interpreted integration as being about “promoting us the small people to real businesses, with all [the] benefits of loans, services and premises”. Mukai partly agreed with the part about integration being about promoting informal businesses to “what looks like respectable businesses” but quickly added that “the way this is done makes me smell a big fat rotten rat, and suspect that ... [integration] equals eradication of our businesses”. She asked, “Why is it always about laws, relocation, taxes and rates?” Endorsing the scepticism of the majority, Chamu dismissed attempts to integrate informality as “a government scam” in which the state was the “sweet-talking satanic conman”.

Reasons for Integration

The second theme of the interviews was to understand what the interviewees regarded as the reasons for integrating informality. There was no consensus on the part of operators. The majority (9 out of 11) believed the main reason was that the authorities wanted to “make the poor disappear from town” [*kuti varombo tishaikwe pataundi*] (Mary). The most dominant basis for this perspective was that there

was too much emphasis on “obeying the law and paying a lot of taxes and fees and a lot of other stupid charges” (Mai Joe). Said Mukai,

You can’t obey and pay and still have your business running. Obedience and payment is the end of you unless you have deep pockets and don’t care about survival. They know it and that’s why they do it, ... to eliminate our businesses.

Jimmy was more charitable. He pointed out that integrating the informal sector was meant to improve the lot of the people and make informal businesses “to become like those of white people”. This was fiercely challenged by Mr Moyo, who argued that if that was the intention, loans and other assistance would be the way to achieve it, not “*tumitemo tusina maturo* [pointless regulation] ruthless enforcement and crippling charges”. Ranga, in her first year at university, initially professed to be “objective and standing on the fence”, but quickly complained that the underlying motivation behind integration was

all about *kupfumisana* [enriching each other], ... not of every Tom and Jerry [*sic*] but enrichment of a few informal operators and many corrupt powerful people, *mazitsotsi* [thieves] who will step in when our so-called “dirty” businesses are wiped off the map. ... [Integration] is about survival of the fittest [operators], plus theft, plus invasion by the rich and powerful.

There was a feeling among some operators that whatever the reasons for integration, it had nothing to do with the “good of vendors and other small fish” (Rati). As Tino put it,

The way this whole thing is being done shows that what these people are looking for is not about us, it’s about them. ... Us, well, we are just pieces in a game that it is all about the big people. Nothing in this game has anything do with our prosperity and success.

Activists were divided on the issue. While most doubted “the sincerity and charity [*sic*] of the propagators of the concept” (Ms R), some did believe that there were in “some official quarters some good and practically sensible intentions” (Mr T). Again referring to “citizenization”, Ms Q stressed that “the real original uncontaminated reason” for integrating and inclusion is to eradicate a two-tier citizenship system where one tier runs legal businesses and another one “is an outlaw and operates underground, in the dark, in perpetual fear”. Mr T, whose views were almost the same as Jimmy’s optimistic proclamations, mentioned the concept of “black empowerment”. To Mr T “lifting the marginalized black man [*sic*] from the rubbish dump of informality is what government is looking to do when they ask people to register businesses, get licences and move to proper premises”. An interesting dimension, raised by two activists was the distinction between the “theory” and the “practice” of

integrating informality. Ms U, a gender activist, insisted that as far as “women vendors” were concerned “the so-called integration is an angelic concept with a satanic intent. ... Behind the heavenly front is a hellish backstage where good intentions are replaced with heinous plans painted in beautiful colours”. The “satanic” intention was to “bring an end to vending, street trading, cross-border trading and home-based industries.” According to Mr S, “bringing informality into the mainstream” was driven by the desire “to stop poor people from practicing businesses [*sic*] that break the law; but the actualization of this plan shows some deadly ulterior motives, ... a conspiracy to completely destroy some survival practices”.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the bureaucrats gave technical explanations. These revolved around four reasons: order, modernization, eliminating freeriding and facilitating surveillance. Of the thirteen, eleven (84%) cited the need for order as the “primary reason” for integrating informality. Mr B talked of “bringing sanity to chaos-ville” a comment that Mr F endorsed when he talked about “taming the wild-wild west created by the willy-nilly informal sector [*sic*].” In Ms D’s view, “inclusion is necessitated by the need to terminate urban disorder by parasitic unproductive pseudo businesses”. Mr N was explicit about the need for planned urban spaces, pointing out that integration was driven by the realisation that “planned cities are orderly cities and everyone, formal, informal and whatnot should be part of the crusade. ... So the informal sector has to be roped in through inclusion”. Three in four of the bureaucrats believed that one of the key purposes of integrating or mainstreaming informality was to get rid of free riders. In Mr G’s view, “if you operate a business you have to pay your dues”. Ms D stressed that “the driving force behind bringing the informal sector into the mainstream is to ensure that they pay for the privilege of benefiting from the conducive environment funded by the taxpayer.” According to Mrs M, the “ultimate philosophy” behind integration was: “You can’t benefit from the blood, sweat and tears of others [taxpayers] without contributing something.” Asked whether fundraising was the motivating factor, Ms C retorted, “Call it what you may, but in the city everyone should pull their weight.”

All but one of the bureaucrats linked integration to the creation of a modern economy. According to Mr N, the informal sector is a “backward sector in urgent need of modernization, hence integration”. Passionately outlining what he said were the “chief motivations” for integration, Mr A said that it was “inconceivable to have a pre-colonial economy in a post-colonial city”. To him, this was “the long and short of bringing in all businesses into a common regulatory framework”. Mrs P insisted that “the recognition that the backward sector has to be upgraded” was the main reason for integration.

Modernising a seemingly backward sector was evidently what Mr G was hinting at when he said that informality was “the archaic economy *version X* which has to be upgraded to a modern economy *version XI0*”. Seven of the 13 bureaucrats cited surveillance as a motive for integration. Both Mrs M and Mr L stressed the need to “monitor the underground economy” as one of the reasons for “bringing it into the mainstream” (Mr L) where “it could be watched closely, like everything else in the urban sphere” (Ms M). According to Mr D, “planning does not like dead ground and dark corners; everything has to be transparent that is why everything has to be under the same transparent umbrella”. Mr E maintained that “effective urban management depended on seeing, counting, quantifying and calculating”. Counting and calculating was what Ms H said was the reason for integration. She pointed out,

We need full and comprehensive data for effective decision-making and planning. Everything and everyone needs to be enumerated. The prerequisite to accurate counting is visibility. You count what you see ... so what cannot be counted or does not want to be counted has to be dug up and brought into the light, ... into the mainstream. That is the “why” of integration.

Alluding to this, Ms C intimated that integrating the informal sector was “essential for effective decision support systems, where everything that should be seen can be seen when those who want to see it can go out to see it so that they can factor it into a proper decision-making and planning framework”.

Technologies of Integration

This part of the study focused on the actual practice of integration: how exactly the authorities go about integrating informality. Observations and interviews revealed that the main methods of integration are all technical and legal and revolve around regulation with special emphasis on “modernization”, planning controls and finance. Specific methods include registration and licensing, relocation and containment, levying taxes and other charges as well as various monitoring and surveillance practices.

Perhaps the most conspicuous practices have to do with registration and licences.⁴ It involves payment of requisite fees and “other nominal charges associated with the documentation process” (Ms H). Integration implied recognition; recognition meant being known, which in turn meant “being legit with a legal identity bestowing a kind of individuality and accountability on the business entity” (Mrs P). As put by Mr G, “You can’t exist without announcing your existence and making your identity known. Registration and licensing is that crucial announcement that you are there and you have a right to exist.” Registration and licensing were thus the “crucial first stage for inclusion and integration” (Ms D), something akin to a “rebirth into a new life—a legal existence” (Mrs M). According to Mrs P,

accomplishing these processes translates to “legalization and regularization ... the critical prerequisites [*sic*] to integration.” To underline the importance of registration and licensing there is “a strong police dimension to it” with the Licensing Inspectorate of the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) “prowling city spaces to ensure that those who operate businesses are truly legit and to flush out illegal elements” (Mr G).

As Mr A reminded me, “it should be noted that integration is not automatic”. The application, which costs more than a week’s earnings for the units studied, can be rejected. Two of the operators in the study had their applications turned down. Pointing out that “integration does not mean the end of gate-keeping”, Ms H stressed that “there are always leftovers that cannot be integrated”. According to Mr G, they are

the unavoidable *mase* [dregs] in the process: the parasitic ones from which the rest of the urban system has to be protected, ... the ones with no potential to add value to the system, ... from whom real compliant business have to be protected.

The satisfaction of this crucial first step effectively brings the individualized qualifying units within the “ambit of the regulatory framework” (Mr B). This is when the planning and financial aspects “start to kick in” (Mr E). First to “kick in” is the imposition of order in urban spaces where the business units operate. As put by Mr F, “the acquisition of a licence should not be misconstrued as a green light to operate willy-nilly. It is a contract to abide by the statutory and regulatory framework”. Operating licence and planning permission are “two separate requirements, where one does not imply the other” (Ms D). The licence is about being allowed to exist as a business entity; planning and leases are about acquiring permission to occupy and operate in particular spaces and to carry out particular practices (uses). This is an aspect that activists still failed to grasp five years after OM/RO (see Kamete, 2007). When it was explained to them Ms Q labelled it as “a totally unnecessary hurdle, ... total persecution”, while Mr T dismissed it as a “spurious gate-keeping exercise meted on businesses [*sic*] that are now legal”.

Having gained legal existence, the units have to fulfil a two-step requirement: occupation and use. First, the operators have to operate in an area they have a right to occupy. Save for those operating home-based industries, for most of them it means obtaining legal leases. Whether on the shop front, the streets, public open-spaces or public transport termini, a lease is needed to “sort of cement legality” (Ms D). For most of these places, the property owner is the city council. As the “legal the landlord [*sic*]”

council can specify, through spatial planning, “where space for particular uses is designated” (Ms D). The second step is to use the spaces for the purposes designated by the planning system. In most cases, this means relocating to appropriately plan and designated areas. As Mr A legalistically put it, like licensing,

Occupation does not mean you can do anything that comes into your head or appears attractive. You have to stick to the use class for that piece of land. Use and occupation are two things. One is a property rights issue, the other is a planning issue.

This planning requirement has frequently resulted in the forced relocation of the integrated businesses to planned spaces designated for the appropriate use: be it vegetable and fruit vending, second-hand clothes, trading, cooked food vending, services, carpentry, vehicle repairs, building materials selling, and so on. Mai Joe, Tino and Rati had been moved from a local public transport terminus and shopping centre to a “People’s Market”. Mary and Mr Moyo had been relocated from the streets to a disused city council car park. According to Mr A, the relocation means “settlement and fixity [*sic*] and the end of wandering around from place to place like Maasai herders”. According to Mr A, to “realize orderliness on abused urban land parcels”, the integrated businesses have to give up the social space of informality as they are forced to move into the abstract spaces of planned markets and home industries (see Lefebvre, 1991). For ambulant vendors such as Pepukai and Mary, integration entails having a fixed market stall and conducting their business from there. Instead of moving around looking for customers, the customers have to come to them, and in some cases find them among the hundreds of traders in the designated market or home industry. When asked about this, Mr E triumphantly declared that relocation to properly designated sites “means that finally the natural order is achieved: Muhammad has to go to the mountain instead of vice versa [*sic*]”.

Once the operators are in the planned spaces, visibility is attained and enumeration can be undertaken. This in turn makes it possible to levy a variety of charges on the operators. Where defaults and deviances are noted, appropriate penalties can be exacted. As noted by quite a few participants in the study, integration heralds the end of free riding. Apart from the rent, the operators may also be required to pay for infrastructure, utilities and other services.⁵ According to Mr L, integration entails

the elimination of free riding and shameless leeching. The [integrated] businesses have to fork out something for land, services and the infrastructure they depreciate [*sic*] and that other responsible citizens have been shouldering for them. With this process, parasites become an endangered species.

At the time of the study, there was no income or corporate tax on the operators and their businesses. A senior civil servant said that licensing and leasing of premises was an important “step towards transparency and visibility” which in turn was “a big step to eventual taxation when the informal sector is finally brought into the tax net” (Mrs P). Now that the businesses “could be seen and counted, the accounting logistics would be worked out and the informal sector would be fully integrated” (Mr G) and “tax avoidance and tax evasion in the sector will be the exception rather than the norm” (Ms H).⁶ Mr G hastened to point out that this would be “a win-win scenario [because] the informal sector will benefit from advantages like VAT and duty exemptions and reductions and so on”.

Making Subjects: Sketching the Outcomes

This part is a brief overview of the experience of integration by the operators. Eleven operators participated in the study (Table 1). Table 2 summarizes their experiences. It is clear from Table 2 that the “initial uptake ... [of integration] is always extremely very good [*sic*]” (Mr G). However, in this case, what Mrs P called the “worrying desertion rate” was high. For example, six out of the eight operators who had been “integrated” deserted the planned spaces, all within the first six months. The case of Chamu is instructive. Previously an ambulant trader in the city centre, Chamu had registered his business in June 2010. He successfully got his hawker’s licence. The authorities required him to move to a designated People’s Market at Charge Office, a public bus terminus near Harare Central Police Station. He had to “settle down” (stop being a mobile vendor) as part of the terms of his licence. He paid US\$20 for what he termed “a mere patch of paved ground” less than two square meters in size. The site was overcrowded and Chamu’s business “was invisible ... drowning [*kutonyura chaiko*] among masses of other small vendors”. From an average US\$3 a day, his takings plummeted to less than US\$5 a week. Unable to “stand the pain, loss and embarrassment anymore”, Chamu abandoned his new business place and returned to his “former way of life” in the city centre before the end of July of the same year.

Table 2. Operators’ experience of integration

Operator	“Integrated”	Moved out	Stayed	Resisted	Never “integrated”
Chamu	✓	✓			
Mary	✓	✓			
Moyo	✓	✓			
Tino	✓	✓			
Baba Kundi	✓		✓		
Mukai	✓	✓			
Ranga					

Mai Joe	✓		✓		
Rati	✓	✓		✓	
Pepukai				✓	
Jimmy					✓
Total	8	6	2	2	1

Source: Based on field work, 2010

Pepukai, a peripatetic trader whose clients were all over the CBD and residential areas, resisted “the stupid games” of integration. She did register her business “to have protection against harassment and extortion”. What she resisted was the mandatory relocation. She never allowed her business to be contained on one site, which was what that the bureaucrats at the city council advised her. Rati, never bothered to register, and needless to say, continued trading on the streets and shopping centres. Jimmy was what Ms Q called a “special case”. He would have loved to register; but did not have the money and so never managed to acquire the all-important licence. He still harboured hopes of one day registering and getting a stall at the officially designated sites. As he told me, he longed for the day when he would tell his ailing mother: “*Tapinda, tapinda*” [We are in].

Of the two who stayed, Mai Joe was a cross-border trader who imported electrical goods from Botswana and used clothes from Mozambique and Zambia. She was offered a third-floor room (which she shared with six others) in a derelict council building. She paid US\$50 a month for the former office. At the time of the study, she used the rented room as storage space because “that’s the only thing the place is good for”. She seemed quite content but indicated that she still spread her wings out by hiring people who sold her wares in various parts of the city. This was, of course, technically illegal and she had lost “a lot of goods and money” through confiscations and bribery. Baba Kundi, who remained at his new business site a year after being relocated, was easily the most law-abiding. Despite his reservations about integration, he dutifully operated at his allocated stand that he used for furniture manufacturing. He is the only one who fully adhered to the original terms of his licence. Explaining this exceptional case, Pepukai said, “It’s not like he has a choice. He can’t move around the city carrying Beds and Sofas on his head for sale, can he?”

Debating integration

Much can be said about integrating informality in urban Zimbabwe. It includes how various stakeholders define it, what they think its rationale is, and how it is executed in practice. One view looks at the positive side, the resulting benefits for the city and the informal businesses. It brings order to the

city and recognition for the informal businesses, as they are now free from harassment by the authorities. In addition, free riding is done away with as everyone pays his or her dues. In the end, integration is a win-win situation for the authorities, the city and the informality. Furthermore, professionals do not need to worry about what to do with a sector that operates outside the regulatory framework.

The other perspective, which is encapsulated in the views of the majority of informal business practitioners and activists, emphasises the dark side of integration. In this perspective, integration is interpreted as a war on informality. This standpoint focuses on what is seen as an obsession with regulation, modernization and spatial order. In this view, while it is true that in terms of definition and rationale there seems to be “some flashes of light and hope for informality” (Ms U), the odds are heavily stacked against informals from the outset.

The reasons, practices and outcomes of integration are thus highly contested. This is not helped by the divergence of views between planners and their fellow bureaucrats on one hand, and the activists and most of the operators on the other. The majority of the operators and their activist allies hold onto a welfarist conception of integration. To these ones, integration entails being accorded respect, protection and material assistance. However, listening to them, it is clear that their experiences and encounters with state agencies in clean-up campaigns and integration practices have engendered seemingly incurable scepticism about the intentions of the authorities and persistent trepidation about their methods. This is the case whether it is the spatialized violence of clean-up operations or the insidiousness of integration as seen in forced relocation and the levying of various charges. To them, the “suffocating, oppressive order” (Mr S), and the ferocious modernising logic that is behind the spatialized violence visited upon them by the authorities during clean-up operations, seems to be the same logic that is behind integration.

It seems the scepticism, trepidation and uneasiness are not without substance. From definition to rationale to execution, it appears the views of those tasked with proposing, designing and implementing “integration”, “inclusion”, “mainstreaming” or whatever the state-centred practice might be authoritatively labelled, espouse a technicist, economic, and legalistic logic. Simply put, it is seen an attempt to “reform and rationalize” informality (Foucault, 1997, 75). Unsurprisingly, the professionalized conception of integration or inclusion is dismissed as war against informality. It is de-informalization by another name—a forced conversion (Kamete, 2013a), which translates to eradication by assimilation. There seems to be a feeling that what the authorities cannot achieve by clean-up campaigns, they seek to achieve by this pernicious integration. This is how the practitioners and activists

interpret what they see as an obsession with universal regulation, visibility, modernization, surveillance and order. To them, this is just one way of governing what has been judged as disorder. Rather than mainstreaming informality, integration appears to be a “method by which human behaviour is directed via a state administration” (Foucault, 1997, 77).

Understandably, because integration is targeted at the Other in the form of the informal sector, it does not come without conditions. The Other’s difference is perceived to be incompatible with and a threat to the Same. Not that there is anything wrong with conditions per se. However, there seems to be something amiss when in an effort to make the Other less different, the conditions strip the Other of its other-ness. A closer scrutiny of the terms of inclusion suggests that Zimbabwe’s state-directed form of integration amounts to pernicious assimilation that has “de-informalization” as its ultimate goal (Kamete, 2013a). This is because integration appears to be no more than conditional inclusion where “inclusion” is based, simultaneously, on the shedding of key traits of informality and on mimicking features of formality. Hence, registration, licencing, relocation, legal tenancy, and the resultant reprieve from harassment, all too often are conditional upon losing the soul of informality.

So it is that in state-directed integration itinerant traders are made to operate from fixed places with permanent structures. Those who operate on contested spaces such as public places, roadsides and shop-fronts are relocated to peripheral areas where, they argue, business is non-existent. As baba Kundi complained, operators who have established a base and a loyal clientele in given locales are moved into “ill-equipped, poorly located and crowded market places where we are practically invisible and competition is rife”. Vendors and traders who operate after hours are forced to conform to the official working day. Entry and operational costs, which have hitherto been low, are increased through “arbitrary and exorbitant licencing and registration fees” (Mr T) as well as the cost of complying with a battery of planning, environmental and public health codes. Regular fixed taxes and rentals are imposed on people whose revenue flows, are at best irregular and unpredictable. Seen in this light, compliance with these conditions means an end to that which makes informality a ubiquitous, supple and easily accessible livelihood option.

The authorities’ offer is unambiguous: Strip away the offending traits of informality and adopt approved traits of formality and you will be co-opted. Only if they comply with these conditions are informals afforded the opportunity to be plucked from what Agamben (1998, 6) terms “the zone of ... indistinction” and perhaps become citizens. The problem here is that it is those offending traits of

informality that enable these businesses to exist, to be accessible to the less privileged, to be resilient and and/or to flourish (Hart 1970; 1973; Trip, 1997; UN-Habitat, 2009). Arguably, in urban Zimbabwe, shedding these traits and adopting the favoured characteristics of formality could result in a suicidal transmogrification of informal businesses into the country's ill-fated small-scale enterprises, which have never taken off despite numerous attempts (Kamete, 2004). In views of the foregoing, this conditional integration could be interpreted as "incorporation on particularly disadvantageous terms" (Nevile, 2007, 249). It seems this is not a simple give-and-take. It involves some crippling Faustian bargains. It is a hostile assimilation requiring the liquidation of any qualities incompatible with the authorities' modernist ideology and the simultaneous imposition of an operational monopoly.

Pernicious Assimilation in Southern Africa

In southern Africa, Zimbabwe is not unique in pursuing a pernicious form of integration. I will look at integration in Namibia, South Africa and Botswana. In Namibia the handling of informality in the capital, Windhoek, has all the hallmarks of hostile assimilation. To their credit, the authorities in Windhoek have demonstrated some degree of sensitivity to the diversity of the informal economy. The licencing regulations provide for the registration of a variety of informal enterprises including "market informal trader, ... fixed informal trader, ... roaming informal trader ... [and] temporary informal trader" (Namibia, 2007). However, it seems, even this integration has its waste products. In February 2011, the City Police removed vendors from informal markets, insisting that it would continue its "operation of cracking down on any unregistered vendors" (Kazondovi, 2011). The authorities deployed legalistic planning arguments to rationalize their actions. The vendors had to go because they were not operating in properly designated places. Thus, for all its flexibility, this is inclusion on disadvantageous terms entailing Faustian bargains. The integrated businesses were forced to discard offending traits of informality while simultaneously adopting those of formal businesses in terms of licensing, registration, land occupation and use. Arguably, these prescriptions are intended to "de-informalize" their targets by remoulding them in the image of the formal city. Of the 74 traders evicted from the contested sites, 60 were relocated to different "Community Markets". Interestingly, the remaining 14 vendors did not come back for registration and could not be contacted (Kazondovi, 2011).

South Africa has its own version of inclusion on disadvantageous terms. In official economic policy, discourse "the terms 'informal sector' and 'informality' have more or less disappeared" (Harrison *et al.*, 2008, 227). This is what integration into the mainstream entails: selling out the very identity and

soul of informality. How else can one interpret the replacement of “informal business” with a term like “small business” and “the second economy” in economic policy? Remarkably, according to Harrison *et al.* (2008, 227), this is intended to “make ... [informal businesses] more susceptible to enumeration, regulation and “development” into entities that conform more readily to a dominant modernist rationality”. It can be argued that this is pernicious assimilation at work.

In Gaborone, Botswana, integration takes on, among other things, the form of involuntary relocation. Forced to spatially operate and behave like formal businesses, informals find themselves struggling to belong (Joseph, 2011; Menyah 2011). To belong they have to sacrifice key locational features such as street trading. The official ideology is that “prosperity can be attained only by promoting large-scale public and private economic enterprises” (Jimu, 2004, 19). Accordingly, integration means being remoulded in the image of these formal-sector businesses. The integrated informals have to comply with a land use zoning system that ignores them in land allocation, and development control mechanisms that are oblivious to their spatial needs (Joseph, 2011). Integration into such a framework is pernicious. Speaking about one market designed to accommodate integrated informals, Joseph observes that “the officially (poorly) zoned market area at *Bontleng* became unattractive to even the newest entrants shifting them towards areas of high concentration of people” (2011, 8). Like their counterparts in Zimbabwe, the authorities display a modernistic preoccupation with order and classification, where everything should be in its place (see Cresswell, 1996). Officially, “streets are perceived as an abode of vehicles and ... the general sentiment is that ‘no business belongs to the streets’” (Jimu, 2004, 25). To this, we can add the official obsession with aspects like visibility and enumeration just like in Zimbabwe and South Africa. For informals to be accepted into the mainstream, a sacrifice of sorts is demanded. Predictably, it entails stripping away key aspects of informality and mimicking those of modern businesses.

So What Is the Alternative?

It is not my intention to prescribe a recipe for handling informality. Instead of a prescription, I will offer the building blocks of *alternatives*, for there is no single alternative. The study suggests that integration per se is not the contested issue. There is no doubt that properly managed, integration holds a lot of promise for the multitudes eking out a precarious living on contested urban spaces. By extension, this implies that a poorly conceived and badly executed form of integration has a dark side.

One of the major issues in this research is the divergence among stakeholder views regarding the implementation, understanding, motivation and interpretation of the practice. There are two contrasting understandings here: a welfarist form of integration versus a technicist regulatory legalistic form of integration. It is a divergence between livelihood and wellbeing on one hand and order and control on the other. The issue is not reducible to a choice between integration or letting things be – about inclusion and exclusion. Nor is it about a generalizable panacea. There is no—and should not be any—one-size-fits-all approach. There is no one “best” alternative “out there” waiting to be discovered.

Nevertheless, there is danger in “framing problems in terms amenable to technical solutions” (Li, 2007, 2), as is currently the case. An overhaul is needed. The political rationalities and technologies of government need to be re-evaluated, as should the kind of subjects the authorities are trying to make. As shown in the interviews, integration as inclusion can work and bring benefits for some enterprises in some places at some times. However, like all state-directed projects, it does not work for everyone, everywhere, at all times. Thus, modernity’s fixation with progress and order are hardly the right place to begin.

It has been shown that informality is primarily a necessity-driven activity. None of the people who participated in the study had made a rational choice by voluntarily exiting the formal sector to heroically escape burdensome controls (Perry et al, 2007). This rules out eradication as a strategy of handling informality. Eradication is a corollary of state-directed integration. This form of technicized integration has waste products: people and activities that cannot be assimilated because they are deemed to be beyond redemption or like Jimmy cannot afford the cost. Similarly, integration in the form of unilateral dislocation without agreed relocation is pernicious and has not worked (Kamete, 2013a).

Be that as it may, the quest for a universal remedy to exclusion and pernicious integration is neither possible nor desirable. The choice of a strategy should depend on context. Even in the same town or city, contexts differ socially, spatially and temporally. Context includes among other things, the type of informal activity, the place, the time, and the people involved. Understanding and accommodating specific informalities and their social, spatial, temporal, economic and operational traits is the key to stripping state-directed integration of its perniciousness. This means more than ditching generalized and generalizable notions, prejudices and built-in preconceptions about informality. It means understanding what is really going on. This in turn entails revisiting the expert-centred approaches to government. The

resultant radical approaches will require ‘de-technicizing’ the framing of informality and embracing other knowledges and other ways of knowing.

Conclusion

The integration of the informal sector is part of the preoccupation of the “art of government”. As an expression of governmental rationality, this integration is “a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons” (Gordon, 1991, 2), who in this case are those involved in informal businesses. Naturally, in southern Africa, as elsewhere, the state’s bid to govern cities has as its object the government of the economy, including the informal sector. This “conduct of conduct” is about political rationalities, which involve making reality knowable and calculable in such a way that it can be governed (Miller and Rose, 2008). It is hardly surprising that the state’s understanding of informality, as reflected by the utterances of its professionals, includes notions of visibility to enhance predictability and facilitate the application of technologies of control to tame informality. This explains the heavy slant towards “planned-ness” and spatialized order among the bureaucrats. The integrated businesses are forced to conform to the precepts of planning’s “abstract space” (Lefebvre, 1991). Perhaps predictably, once integration becomes a state-directed programme, it cannot escape the “multiplicity of endeavours to rationalize the nature, mechanisms, aims, and parameters of governmental authority” (Inda, 2005, 8).

Little wonder that integration, for all its potential and populist appeal, is sometimes caught up in pernicious technologies of government. When government takes on a technological and pragmatic form it unavoidably sanctifies, elevates and prioritises technical solutions to every issue (Kamete, 2013b). What we witness here is the “relationship between government and knowledge through which governing activities are recast as non-political and nonideological problems that need technical solutions” (Ong, 2006, 3). It is this technicization that results in “integration” becoming pernicious assimilation, reinforcing the gulf between the interpretations and expectation of, on the one hand, those in the informal sector and their sympathizers, and on the other, the state and its functionaries. So it is that in state-directed integration modernization has trumped welfare. In the case of Zimbabwe, the extension of an ill-fitting regulatory framework characterised by forced relocation and the levying of a multiplicity of charges, has become the overriding concern in the single-minded pursuit of what has become a thoroughly “governmentalized” notion. Consequently, integration has become a sanitised term for *normalization* and *de-informalization* (Kamete, 2013a; 2013b).

For all its noble intentions, the integration of the informal sector into the mainstream urban economy appears to suffer from some maladies that mar many professionalized state programmes that are tethered to technicistic, legalistic and economistic ideals. Thanks to some subtle “goal displacement” so typical of public bureaucracies (see Merton, 1957) that are tasked with operationalising it, integration is stripped of that which could make it acceptable and beneficial to the people who are supposed to be “integrated”. As noted by Warner and Havens (1968, 539), goal displacement happens when “the major goals claimed by the organization are neglected in favour of goals associated with building or maintaining the organization”. This makes bureaucracies fertile ground for the bastardization of seemingly reasonable concepts which end up failing to represent the values and qualities that which they are intended (or purported) to represent. Thus, as has happened in the preceding cases, integration is reduced to a technicized, depoliticized and legalistic notion that is insensitive to the local context and the needs of the putative beneficiaries.

Unsurprisingly, the result is a chasm between, on the one hand, the understandings and practices of the state represented by its learned bureaucrats, and on the other, the expectations and interpretations of informal businesses operators and their activist sympathizers. It is this gulf that has generated scepticism and distrust of the state’s intentions and methods. It is this rift that has contributed to widespread resistance to the bastardized integration, inclusion and mainstreaming, which on closer inspection are no more than pernicious assimilation—a malicious form of inclusion that is ultimately geared towards domesticating the Other.

Endnotes

¹ In this part, I look at three perspectives. I will not discuss the post-modernist perspective, as it does not apply to informality in the contexts that I am focusing on. For a useful summary of these perspectives, see Williams and Lansky (2013), and Williams and Gurtoo (2012).

² For a detailed discussion of these strategies and policies, see Kamete (2013a).

³ For details on all interviews, see Table 1.

⁴ At the time of the study (2010), the application to acquire a hawker’s license required a US\$20 fee. If the application was approved, the license itself cost US\$120 and was valid for one year. The operators in the study earned between US\$2 and US\$7 a day, averaging about US\$3.50 for each operator per day.

⁵ At the time of the study, the average rental for operators interviewed was \$25 per stand per month.

⁶ In the 2011 budget, the Minister of Finance outlined plans to use local authorities to collect taxes for the government and keep 10 per cent for themselves. At the time of writing, the proposal was yet to be implemented.

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