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in Hong Kong:
A Proposed Analytical Scheme

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HAWKERS AND THEIR RELOCATION
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by

Andrew L.C. Lu and H.K. Tsoi

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Introduction

This small paper is one of the products of the Hawker Study Programme carried out by the Social Research Centre, the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The study is primarily funded by the Hong Kong Lotteries Fund, and is subsidized by the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The research programme is designed, on the one hand, to stimulate research on important local problems, and on the other, to provide local agencies with a sound factual basis for policy formulation and administration.

The Hawkers Relocation Study, one of the projects of the Hawker Study Programme is composed of two parts. In part one the formation of a relocation programme and the procedures involved in carrying it out are examined. What are the decision-making processes involved in relocating a particular group of hawkers? Are they based on a plan or on ad hoc considerations? How does information about which hawkers to relocate reach the government? What criteria are used in choosing and designing a new site? What procedures are involved in 'negotiating' with hawkers?

Part two entails a study of the factors which would influence the attitude of hawkers towards relocation. What makes the hawkers accept or object to a deliberate move of site is what we are interested to know. Is the hawkers' resistance to relocation really based on a true perception of their interests? With these questions in mind a colony wide survey was launched in early 1972. Using a one-stage cluster sampling design, we interviewed 1084 hawkers in different districts.

In short, several approaches to the problem are used.

1. Interviews with officials in government departments which have had dealings with hawkers over a long period of time, interviews with the top personnels of hawker associations and with other informants, such as Kaifong leaders are conducted.
2. With the help of trained interviewers, structured interviews are carried out.
3. Since hawker relocation programmes, in that they are a source of conflicts between hawkers and government, invariably make news, back copies of local newspapers will be researched for historical background of the relocation policy.

The purpose of this small paper is twofold. Firstly, it is intended that the presentation will serve as a basis for discussion with those interested in hawkers and the problem of their relocation and perhaps, as a starting point of new ideas. Secondly, this analytical scheme is, in fact, a preliminary framework of a later detail analysis of the problem of relocation in Hong Kong. Hence, we hope such a theoretical paper, despite its premature form, would serve as a spearhead in illuminating those dimensions which are both relevant and essential in ensuring a "successful" relocation programme.

Background leading to the research

Relocation of hawkers is the policy most often applied to hawkers in Hong Kong as well as in other Asian cities. However, such hawker relocation programmes have been much criticized. As mentioned in T.G. McGee's report on a visit to several Southeastern Asian cities, the relocation of hawkers has been the most frequently tried; and the most frequently unsuccessful policy applied to hawkers in the Asian cities.¹ It is also clear that Government relocation of hawkers in Hong Kong is not infrequently met with resentment and resistance.² In fact, it is both logical and realistic to assume that hawkers, being deliberately and artificially placed into a new environment, will find themselves facing a number of new problems which often call for an high degree of adaptation and adjustment.

The impact of such changes and problems associated with them, both at a time and over time are among important questions to raise. Such issues call for almost immediate answers, as rising resentment about relocation among the hawkers has been observed in many recent clearance operations.³ Such resentment is likely to intensify as more hawkers may have to be relocated as a result of the implementation of the new hawker policy and the increasing urban renewal projects. A closer examination of such factors as the commuting pattern of hawkers, financial, economic and social factors and others, may provide some concrete information on the problem.

1 T.G. McGee, Hawkers in Selected Asian Cities, Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1970, p.p. 41-44.

2 See Hawker Study Programme, Newspaper clipping, Social Research Centre, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1970-1972.

3 Ibid.

Only by insuring mutual adaptation and, often, compromise, of the parties involved can planned urban change be accomplished without serious hazard to human welfare. Therefore a better understanding of the hawkers' attitudes towards relocation and the factors affecting the formulation of such attitudes may help future official relocation planning, and of course, the lesson learned from Hong Kong may also be of use to other developing cities where hawking has always remained a grave problem.

The Proposed Analytical Scheme

Owing to the general absence of other relevant studies to throw light on the present study, a comprehensive conceptual framework is in general lacking. In order to facilitate the collection and eventual analysis of data, a broad set of influential factors or working hypotheses is therefore proposed here.

(1) Degree of Local Orientation of Hawkers:

We hypothesize that hawkers most likely to object to relocation are predominantly those whose hawking businesses have had a close and frequent relationship with their customers. Such hawking units largely serve neighbourhood-type markets. Basil Zimmer, in his analysis of the socio-economic effects of relocation of small businesses had found that displacement and relocation create special problems for businesses that depend primarily on a neighbourhood market.⁴

As these hawkers are usually food-related retailers, and have a limited market area, they tend to know most of their customers who in turn, come from a particular area. Their dependency on the local market is high. Because of this close and recurrent relationship with the regular customers, who tend to live nearby, hawkers of this type are more sensitive to a change in location. Not only do they anticipate losing

⁴ James Wilson ed., Urban Renewal: The Record and the Controversy, Cambridge & London M.I.T. Press, 1968, p.p. 380-403.

their business site but they also may find themselves largely deprived of their normal and customary market area as well. For such neighbourhood type businesses, the negative consequence of relocation seem most severe. In Basil Zimmer's analysis, more than half of the neighbourhood type unit reported a salient decline in sales after relocation.⁵ It is thus predictable that such hawkers would be concerned over an expected decline in sales once they are moved to a new hawker bazaar. They suspect that the move would be harmful to their business, especially so when a large portion of their business depends on regular neighbouring customers.

Non-food and non-service related hawkers - household wares and emporium goods, for instance - seem to be less dependent on customers living in close proximity. Their business is less influenced by distance and locality, for most of the goods are bought less frequently. The harmful effects of relocation for these hawkers are not so serious in the business sense and they can effectively attract customers from greater distance or away from their previous location. As far as the move occurs within the metropolitan area, the general reaction towards relocation is expected to be relatively positive.

So, the degree of local orientation in terms of economic dependency on the local market is one major factor. The decrease of customers (perceived or real) after the move would directly affect hawkers' attitude towards relocation.

5 James Wilson, op.cit. p. 396

(2) Commuting Pattern:

Hawkers who do little commuting are more likely to reject the idea of moving their business to another location. By commuting, we mean primarily the regular movement of the hawker between his residence and his workplace. Since the supplier's location may be regarded as the "workplace" of hawkers and the movement to and from it is a regular occurrence, trips to wholesalers must also be taken as an aspect of commuting. To theorize about the concept of commuting in more depth, we may say that there is a kind of "equilibrium" between the place of residence and the place of work, which refers to the basically stabilized pattern of transportation from home to the stall and from the sources of goods supply to the stall maintained by the hawker. He regards this stable pattern as fundamentally convenient for his business, and does not want the routine to be interrupted, even though this state of equilibrium may be difficult to evaluate "objectively" and may well vary with individual commuters.

It is assumed that relocation would cause often a major shift in the existing commuting pattern and hence disturb this postulated "equilibrium". The degree of disturbance would increase with the increased distance of the place of work from the existing place of residence after the move. For those hawkers with little commuting, it takes more effort to restore the commuting equilibrium state due to the disturbance occasioned by relocation. Thus, these hawkers would respond least favourably to relocation.

It is also predictable that those hawkers who have little commuting earn lower incomes. They tend to live near their place of work so as to minimise commuting time and save transport cost. That also explains why

the lower profit-making hawkers tend to reject moving away from their original business area. In other words, this suggests that the time-cost variable may have persisted significantly as a limiting factor influencing either residential locations, or the sites for hawker establishment. The problem of space in the traditional sense seems to maintain much of its meaning in the local community setting of Hong Kong, despite marked improvements in transportation, and the ability to rely on the relatively cheap public transport system.

(3) Neighbourliness

The greater a person's pre-relocation commitment to a given area, the more likely is he to react unfavourably to relocation. One of our main hypotheses is that the strength of the unfavourable attitude towards relocation is largely a function of the prior orientation of the hawkers to the old market area. The market area is the region in which a vast and interlocking set of social networks is localized, consisting of various interrelationships which amount to structuring a basic sense of belonging. The "neighbourhood" is thus in many ways an extension of home. The satisfaction of hawkers with their business area, their acquaintance and familiarity with neighbouring hawkers, their involvement in interpersonal relationships are among the factors which would jointly influence their attitudes towards relocation in different degrees. Relocation may undermine the established interpersonal relationships and group ties of the people involved and in effect, destroy

the sense of "group identity" of a great many individuals.⁶ It is quite clear that pre-relocation social relationships do affect the attitudes towards relocation, especially in small neighbourhood types of businesses of which hawking is one.

(4) Financial Economic position:

The hawkers of businesses with higher profits would tend to be less reluctant in accepting relocation. These hawkers are in a better financial position to absorb the temporary disruptive effects of the move, whereas those profits are lower are less able to tolerate the costs and the temporary loss resulting from such a change. The small profit businesses tend to be owned by older persons and those with very limited financial resources, that is, mainly those whose hawker's licences are issued by the Social Welfare Department. Their businesses are at best marginal. They operate at minimum level nonetheless, providing a small return to the owner.

The business provides the hawker with a job as well as an income. Relocation in such cases has the effect of depriving the owners of their usual livelihood, meagre as it may have been prior to the disruption. For the most part, the owner receives no compensation for his loss, even though he has been forced to vacate from his site. Although the loss of such hawkers means little, if anything, to the city, the consequences represent real hardship for individual owners. In other words, individual cost during the move, whether perceived or real, may be an important factor accounting for the negative attitudes of hawkers towards relocation.

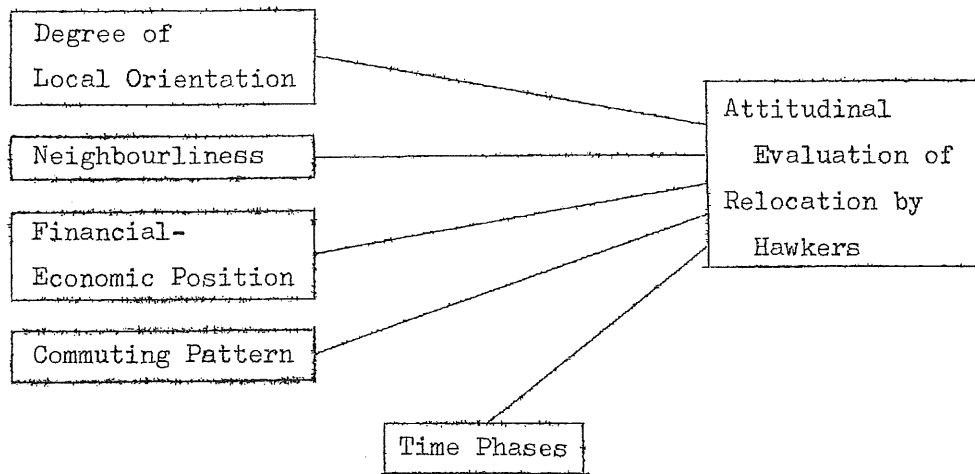
⁶ James Wilson, op. cit p. 366. Group identity is a concept originally formulated by Eric Erikson, referring to the individual's sense of belonging of being a part of the large social entity.

Lastly, there is often a simple-minded conception that relocation of hawkers is an independent social action at only a particular point in time. That is, in so far as the hawkers have been "successfully" removed to a designed area, the game is defined as being "over". In fact, a social action as such has its socio-economic consequences on the hawkers, the customers and the city at large over time. During the move and at different period after the move, not only the hawkers but also the customers, the neighbouring citizens and other relevant people would face the problem of adaptation and adjustment. When adaptation cannot be achieved in a particular time period, discontent and resentment result.

So, it is far more realistic and significant to conceive relocation as a continuous social process embracing consequences of different sorts. In other words, the time dimension must be taken into consideration in order to understand the relationship among the different socio-economic variables mentioned above - the degree of local orientation, neighbourliness, financial-economic position and commuting pattern - if we are to reveal the dynamics over time. Along the time dimension, three time phases need to be distinguished: pre-relocation, immediately after relocation, and some longer time after relocation. In each time segment, the above hypotheses need to be tested. Time, then, is taken as a significant control variable in this analytical scheme.

The four variables: degree of local orientation, neighbourhoodness, financial-economic position, and commuting pattern are treated as independent variables in the scheme while attitudinal evaluation of relocation by hawkers is considered as the dependent variable. Time segments after relocation is used as a control variable to test the relationships of the variables listed above.

Based on the working hypotheses listed above, a hypothetical model for analysing the data collected is constructed and shown below:



The proposed analytical scheme is constructed only on the basis of theoretical reasoning and on the preliminary data collected. It is thus subjected to modification as the analysis goes on until a more adequate and comprehensive picture of the data is drawn.

Some of our data allow us to subjected these hypotheses to testing. This will, of course, be done.

Operationization of the Scheme

In order to subject the above analytical scheme to test against reality, the variables listed above: degree of local orientation, commuting pattern, neighbourliness, financial economic position and attitudinal evaluation of relocation and other related variables are operationalized into several sets of interrelated items. And such items are transcribed into a semi-structured questionnaire in Mandarin. The following is a summary list of the essential items which are included in the questionnaire.

I. Basic demographic characteristics

- Licence ownership
- Licence types by commodity
- Licence types by permanency
- Nature of Operating Unit
- Location (City District)
- Operative size
- Operative area
- Status of unit (stall, cart or cloth on ground)
- Age
- Sex
- Marital status
- Place of origin
- Dialect used at home
- Education level
- Years of residence in Hong Kong
- Number of years engaged in Hawking business
- People helping the Hawker to do his business
- Number of people helping the Hawker to do his business

II. Degree of local orientation

A. Convenience for customers

Present stall's convenience for customers

Reasons for stall's convenience for Hawkers' customers

Reasons for stall's inconvenience for Hawkers' customers

If moved to a new site would old customers still come to the Hawkers' stall

Reasons for why old customers still come if the stall is moved to a new site

Reasons for why old customers would not come if the stall is moved to a new site

Depending factors which would affect old customers' willingness to come if the stall is moved to a new site

B. Dependency on local market

Percentage of customers are patronized one

Customers from where

If the present place a suitable location for Hawker's business

Hawkers' view on environmental cleanliness

Satisfaction of Hawkers of their stall and business

Have the Hawker respondent doing business at the stall since he became a Hawker

Reason for choosing this place for business

Reasons fro why the Hawker respondent move away from his/her previous stall

III. Neighbourliness

A. Acquaintance and familiarity with surrounding hawkers

Hawkers' estimation of the number of Hawkers in their area

Number of Hawkers known by the Hawker respondent

Number of Hawkers are good friends of the Hawker respondent

If neighbouring Hawkers are good friends of the Hawker respondent

If neighbouring Hawkers sometime take care of the Hawker respondent's stall

B. Complimentarity of trade

Hawkers' view on the competitiveness of business in the area

Would the Hawker respondent mind other Hawker selling same kinds of commodity around

Reasons for why the Hawker respondent doesn't mind other hawkers selling same kinds of commodity around

Reasons for why the Hawker respondent minds other Hawkers selling same kinds of commodity around

Hawkers' view of the attitude of the neighbouring shops towards hawkers around

Hawker's view in situation if he sees a Hawker being troubled by Teddy Boys

Hawker's view on the reasons for why some people become leaders and are respected

Hawker's view on the existence of Hawker leaders in the area

IV. Financial-economic position

Daily profit of Hawkers

Average business hour of Hawker

If the money earned from the stall enough for living for the Hawker and his family

Percentage of goods of the Hawker respondent which is wholesaled to other people

Stall ownership

If the Hawker respondent have another stall

If the Hawker respondent have to look after his another stall, if any

Who looks after the Hawkers respondents another stall, if any

Hawker licence ownership

If the licence is rented

If Hawking is the main job of the Hawker respondent

Number of people living together with the Hawker respondent

If the Hawkers think their business will get better or worse in the coming few years

Reasons for why business will get better in the coming few years

Reasons for why business will be the same in the coming few years

Why business will get worse in the coming few years

V. Commuting pattern

How Hawkers get their goods

Frequency to go to get goods

The place from which the Hawker respondent set out to get goods

Time required to reach the goods source

Goods storage

If the Hawkers respondent have to take a car or bus to come to the stall from home

Time required for the Hawker respondent to travel from home to the stall

How long been doing business at the stall

VI. Attitudinal Characteristics concerning relocation, Government departments and others

Hawker's view on the work of the Hawker Liaison unit

Hawker's view on which Government Department is appropriate to take care of Hawkers

Hawker's view on if the Government understand Hawkers

When the Hawker respondent have trouble as a Hawker here, if he would ask his friends for help

When the Hawker respondent have trouble as a Hawker here, if he would ask his relatives for help

When the Hawker respondent have trouble as a Hawker here, if he would ask his neighbouring stalls for help

When the Hawker respondent have trouble as a Hawker here, if he would ask the City District Office for help

When the Hawker respondent have trouble as a Hawker here, if he would ask the Kaifong Association for help

When the Hawker respondent have trouble as a Hawker here, if he would ask the Hawker Liaison Unit for help

When the Hawker respondent have trouble as a Hawker here, if he would ask the Urban Council Councilor for help

When the Hawker respondent have trouble as a Hawker here, if he would ask the Hong Kong Reform Club for help

When the Hawker respondent have trouble as a Hawker here, if he would ask the Hong Kong Civic Association for help

When the Hawker respondent have trouble as a Hawker here, if he would ask the Hong Kong United Nations Association for help

Hawker's suggestion for the improvement of the Hawker Bazaar

Willingness of the Hawker to move to a new place for business
Reasons for why willing to move to a new place for business
Reasons for why unwilling to move to a new place for business
Depending factors which affect willingness to move to a new
place for business
Hawker's view on should Hawkers concentrate at a place or scatt-
er on the streets
Reasons for why should Hawkers concentrate at a place
Reasons for why should Hawkers scatter anywhere
If the Hawker worry about heavy rain
If the Hawkers worry about shortage of goods supply
If the Hawkers worry about inadequacy of capital
If the Hawkers worry about government relocation of Hawkers
If the Hawkers worry about Police interruption
If the Hawker worry about interruption of Hawker Liasion Unit
If the Hawkers worry about interruption of illegal organisation