

Bottom-up Collaborative Governance of Street Vending in Bangkok

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ABSTRACT

Street vendors influence the informal economy of low- and middle-income countries, as many customers depend on them for essential goods. Conventional top-down governance strategies often fail to address the distinct requirements of street vendors, resulting in policy inefficiencies and ongoing discord between vendors and municipal authorities. This qualitative research examines the collaborative, bottom-up governance framework of street vending in Bangkok, focusing on how inclusive governance may more effectively support informal economies. Data was gathered through comprehensive interviews with street vendors, municipal officials, and civil society representatives based on 28 stakeholder interviews and field observations. Results are that vendor-led initiatives have promoted communication among different stakeholders, helping to develop responsive, effective urban policies to increase vendor participation and equity. Bottom-up governance structures boost inclusivity and support sustainable urban development by addressing operator needs in the informal economy. Therefore, municipal authorities, street vendors, and stakeholders should adopt collaborative governance to enhance engagement and heed the voices of marginalised groups. In this way, the informal economy, urban equity, and sustainable economic growth will be bolstered, especially for low- and middle-income workers.

Keywords: Bangkok, bottom-up policy, collaborative governance, street vendor, urban governance

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INTRODUCTION

Informal employment is a significant element of labour markets worldwide, sustaining millions, particularly in developing economies. The International Labour Organisation (2023) reported that informal workers make up 58% of global employment, with even higher percentages in lower-income countries.

The share of informal employment is 89% in low-income countries, 81.6% in lower-middle-income countries, and 50% in upper-middle-income economies. These statistics highlight the persistence of informality in the global economy, in which street vendors, domestic workers, and the self-employed face daily economic uncertainty.

Since 2011, in the middle-income trap, Thailand is among the nations with a high ratio of informal workers (World Bank, 2023). The National Statistical Office defines informal workers as unintegrated into any social protection system without adequate labour protection. As of 2024, the working-age population numbered 40 million, 21.1 million of whom, or 52.7%, were informally employed (National Statistical Office, 2023).

Street vendors in Thailand are among the most visible informal workers, as they tend to operate in bustling urban areas (Batréau & Bonnet, 2016; Pulliat et al., 2024; Renwick, 2021; Yasmeen & Nirathron, 2014). They contribute significantly to the economy by providing opportunities for easy income and helping individuals get through difficult times. They serve a wide range of urban residents by providing convenient and affordable goods that many people rely on in their daily lives. This function is considerably more potent in the Bangkok metropolitan city. The city remains Thailand's economic hub, accounting for over 46.6% of the nation's total production in 2022. In 2023, households in Greater Bangkok made almost 35% more than the national average (National Statistical Office, 2024). Due to these economic disparities, a

large number of people from neighbouring provinces come to the capital, increasing the prevalence and visibility of street vendors.

Street vending management generally aims to organise and embellish the city. But due to its conspicuousness in public spaces and informality, street vending is often seen as a source of urban disorder, squalor, and an obstacle to pedestrian and driver rights (Meneses-Reyes & Caballero-Juárez, 2014). It has often been subject to interventions pertaining to the urban landscape (Bromley, 2000; Roever, 2016; 2020).

From 2014 to 2021, the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), representing Thailand's recent military junta government, implemented a stringent social orderliness policy. It eliminated informal economic activities, including street vending, from urban areas. The revocation of designated vending locations in Bangkok has impaired the sustenance of displaced vendors, lower-income consumers who depend on their offerings, and associated supply chain producers and workers.

Previous studies on street vendor management mainly focus on strict authoritarian control (Batréau & Bonnet, 2016; Boonjubun, 2017; Nirathron & Yasmeen, 2019); challenges faced by vendors (Langill et al., 2022; Trupp, 2015; Wattanawanyoo, 2024); and potential solutions for disputes (Boonjubun, 2017; Forkuor et al., 2017; Recio, 2022). By contrast, this article centres on street vendor governance in the framework of socioeconomic changes in Bangkok from 2014 to 2023. Instead of a passive response to external governance, vendors have shown

proactivity in leadership initiatives for diverse stakeholders to formulate Bangkok's urban policies. A bottom-up governance model is proposed by analysing successful collaborative efforts by vendors. The model underscores the potential for marginalised groups to lead inclusive, equitable urban development. Practical suggestions for rapidly urbanising regions are also offered to promote sustainable growth and social cohesion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework of the Study: Collaborative Governance, Context, Stakeholders, Process, and Outcome

For over thirty years, administration and management have collaborated extensively on national governance in democratic countries (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003; Ansell & Gash, 2007; Emerson et al., 2012; Ostrom, 1990). Collaborative governance is a methodological concept for developing and managing public policy through cooperation from governmental entities, private sector organisations, social groups, and civil society stakeholders.

Scholars describe collaborative governance concepts differently. For instance, it is characterised as the relationship established to address specific issues through engagement and processes involving independent actors or stakeholders participating in collaborative initiatives (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003). Collaborative governance refers to the management approach in which one or more public agencies, along with non-public groups, engage in the formal

processes of public policy decision-making. This consensus-oriented method permits flexible public policy development, implementation, management, and public resource stewardship (Ansell and Gash, 2007; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015). A fuller view of collaborative governance depicts it as an institutional framework created through participatory public administration, incorporating diverse stakeholders. It operates not solely through government agencies but encompasses efforts engaging many sectors and stakeholders to manage and administer policy processes (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Emerson et al., 2012).

This research uses the definition of collaborative governance by Emerson et al. (2012) to substantiate findings in Thailand. The concept is that collaborative governance represents a participatory framework comprising stakeholders from diverse sectors.

There is explicit concentration on implementation in the framework of bottom-up collaborative governance. The primary focus is on analysing grassroots collaborative processes, especially among street vendors representing the informal workers essential for urban economies. Collaborative governance is a process whereby multiple stakeholders jointly formulate policies and address challenges or develop policies to resolve different needs.

Bottom-up collaborative governance emphasises the centrality of local or less powerful stakeholders, such as street vendors, in fostering participation. This study investigates how these stakeholders

cultivate a collaborative environment to promote more equitable management of street vending in Bangkok.

Street Vending Context in Bangkok

Street vending in Thailand is shaped by two interrelated factors: national and local legal frameworks and public policy. The two key laws are the Public Health Act, B.E. 2535 (1992), and the Act on the Maintenance of the Cleanliness and Orderliness of the Country, B.E. 2535 (1992) (Bangkok Metropolis Administration, 2024). The Public Health Act, enforced nationwide, requires licensed street vendors to comply with hygiene and safety regulations stipulated by public health officers. The Maintenance Act empowers municipal authorities to regulate public space usage and determine whether street vending is permitted in specific areas. While these laws establish a basis for controlling informal trade, Thailand lacks any legal or regulatory framework explicitly promoting or supporting street vending as a viable, dignified livelihood.

Public policy, particularly decisions made at national and local administrative levels, largely shapes how street vending is managed. National urban policy agendas can impact policy implementation, such as modernising or boosting an international image and tourism. These broader national objectives often guide local enforcement practices, even when formally unlegislated. Thailand's street vending policy reflects an ongoing effort to balance the socioeconomic importance of informal trade with imperatives of urban order and public space management. A balance between economic necessity, urban governance priorities, and broader social policy concerns shapes the complex relationship between vendors and regulatory authorities. Over the past two decades, the number of street vendors in Bangkok has fluctuated in response to shifting policy orientations and political leadership. These shifts are linked to the designation or removal of permitted vending zones (locally known as 'joot phonphan') and hawker centre management in Bangkok (Figure 1).

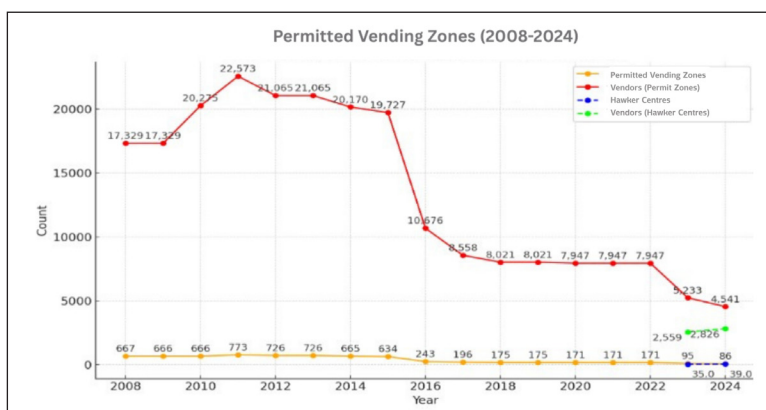


Figure 1. Number of street vendors permitted annually in Bangkok vending zones and hawker centres from 2008 to 2024 (Bangkok Metropolis Administration, 2023; 2024)

METHODS

This qualitative research adopts a case-study approach to examine street vending governance in Bangkok between 2014 and 2024, drawing on data collected from February 2022 to January 2024. During these years, the Thai government and Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) implemented an urban governance policy that impacted public vending space management. Street vending policy and its implications for the public and key stakeholders were examined. Since 2016, the BMA has begun eliminating permitted vending areas in Bangkok; longitudinal field engagement has been conducted, including document collection, semi-structured interviews, and field observation. The initial fieldwork phase explored the role of enforcement officers and the lived experiences of vendors relocated to peripheral areas. The findings examined the effects on their livelihoods, including income, expenses, and other impacts. Results adumbrated a decreased income, by over 50%, for many vendors. Some vendors had to close their businesses due to insufficient pedestrian trade in new locations (Komin & Subsing, 2017).

Evictions spread, affecting many vendors throughout Bangkok. In 2018, vendors began to appeal for assistance from relevant authorities, including the government and politicians. During this time, they were introduced to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and academics working on informal labour and street vending issues. These connections led

to consultations and discussions to improve the street vending policy.

Participatory observation of mobilisation efforts by street vendor groups and their allies was performed by liaising between vendors and government officials, academics, and politicians to facilitate consultative opportunities. Significant events were witnessed and documented, including negotiations, public meetings, and street vendor and stakeholder protests. These firsthand observations enriched the formal data collection, offering insights into stakeholder dynamics. The following section explains more about data procedures and the methodical rationale.

Data Collection

In-depth Interview

Field data were collected over two years, from February 2022 to January 2024, using semi-structured interviews and field observations. Participants were purposively selected to capture the perspectives of the seven stakeholder groups directly involved in the governance of street vending in Bangkok. The key informants were purposively selected to represent seven stakeholder groups directly involved in street vending governance in Bangkok. Comprehensive interviews with 28 key informants were deliberately selected to ensure adequate representation from relevant stakeholder groups involved in street vending governance. The stakeholders comprised policymakers, municipal officials, vendor leaders, NGO representatives, and academics, all of whom helped formulate

the street vending policy (Table 1). After the twenty-eighth interview, no additional themes emerged, indicating a sufficient sample size.

Interviews were conducted in person or online, depending on participant availability and scheduling. However, despite the ongoing Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, only three informants were contacted online. Each was interviewed for 45 to 60 minutes and audio-recorded with the participant's consent. The transcriptions were later checked for recurring themes about collaborative governance, policy negotiation, and stakeholder engagement.

Observations

Direct field observations were made at key street vending locations in Bangkok to supplement interview data. Vendor-government interactions, law enforcement practices, and negotiations with authorities were observed. Real-time field notes were captured of verbal and non-verbal interactions. The observational data validated interview findings and provided additional insights into governance processes affecting street vendors. Systematic field notes were maintained to document events accurately and impartially. Additionally, a reflexive journal recorded personal reflections and emotional responses, fostering self-awareness and a commitment to introspection and methodological rigour, which is essential in engaged qualitative research.

Study Area

Street vending governance in Bangkok was examined from the perspective of different stakeholders in this prominent informal economy sector. Bangkok has about 10 million permanent and transient residents of diverse origins, representing many professions and economic backgrounds. Consequently, Bangkok has a large concentration of informal workers, including street vendors. This article analysed substantial governance and management transformations of street vending in Bangkok from 2014 to 2023, concentrating on stakeholder collaboration and developing policies for municipal benefit (Figure 2).

Population and Key Informants

This study used structured guides to conduct in-depth interviews with 28 direct stakeholders in street vending governance in Bangkok between 2014 and 2023. Participants were classified into seven key stakeholder groups according to background and experience working with street vendor policy and implementation. These key informants were chosen purposively based on experience in street vending governance from 2014 to 2023; only individuals with experience during these years of street vending management were selected. The table below presents key informant details. The research team kept reflexive journals and engaged in team debriefings to mitigate potential bias due to close stakeholder engagement. The distribution of key informants is shown in Table 1.

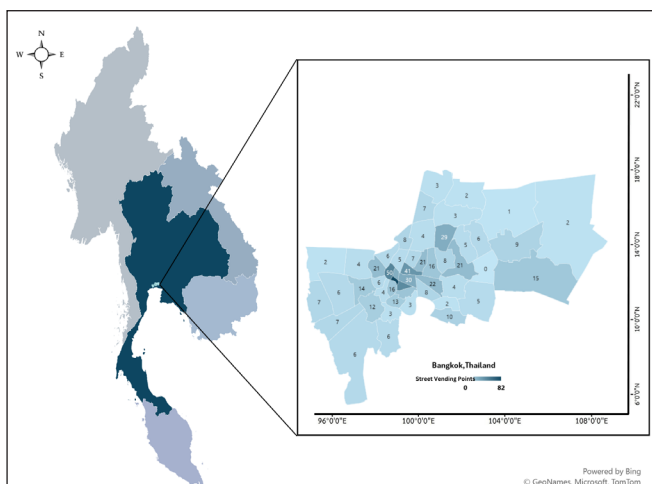


Figure 2. Map of Bangkok, the study area

Table 1
The distribution of key informants

No.	Stakeholders	Number of Informants
1.	Street Vendors	8
2.	Leaders of Street Vendor Groups	4
3.	Prime Minister's Office	2
4.	Government Officials (BMA)	3
5.	Representatives from State Advisory Organisations and the BMA Health Assembly	3
6.	Civil society members (NGOs, academic institutions)	4
7.	Representatives from community organisations, public space users, and business owners	4
Total		28

Research Instrument

Semi-structured interview guides were designed for key informants from diverse stakeholder groups. Question development was informed by a review of the literature on street vending governance, informal economy dynamics, and stakeholder roles. Each guide was designed to capture specific experiences in, practices of, and perspectives on implementation,

policymaking, and support. During the longitudinal case study, interview questions were reviewed and adjusted to reflect evolving policy changes, administrative restructuring, and shifting roles of actors involved in street vending governance in Bangkok. This adaptive approach ensured that questions remained responsive to real-time developments while maintaining consistency in core themes.

Analysis

Creswell and Poth (2016) established that a qualitative data analysis framework was adopted to entail a systematic process. This involved preparing data by transcribing in-depth interviews and observational notes from street vendors and stakeholders and organising them into categories such as vendor challenges, government enforcement, stakeholder relationships, policy responses, and collective action forms. The data were subsequently coded, and key themes were identified and labelled to address the research question. Finally, analysis results were presented in a structured format, summarising insights about stakeholder experiences, relationships, and strategies for Bangkok street vending governance. This rigorous analytical approach enabled a comprehensively reliable examination of qualitative data.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical research principles, ensuring that all participants provided informed consent before participation. Interviews were conducted confidentially, and pseudonyms were assigned to uphold anonymity. Ethical approval was obtained from Mahidol University, ensuring adherence to ethical guidelines for human subject's research. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without repercussions.

RESULTS

Between 2014 and 2024, shifting political and economic conditions shaped street

vending in Bangkok. After the 2014 military coup, the NCPO imposed a top-down governance structure emphasising urban order, which displaced many vendors and restricted their negotiating abilities. As Thailand transitioned to an elected government, the political climate became more open, enabling vendors, many struggling with unemployment, to mobilise and petition authorities for support. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic further intensified economic hardship among street vendors, bringing renewed attention to their urban resilience. These evolving conditions created constraints and opportunities for stakeholder engagement, ultimately laying the foundation for the emergence of collaborative governance practices, which is the focus of this article.

The Bottom-up Collaborative Approach to Street Vending Governance

From 2014 to 2023, the NCPO collaborated with military and law enforcement agencies to regulate street vending in Bangkok, aiming to organise vending areas nationally. This initiative unexpectedly fostered participatory governance, as displaced vendors engaged with different stakeholders, including civil society, academia, and the media. This indicated a shift from unilateral enforcement to collaborative policy formulation, embracing inclusive governance principles.

This study delves into the participatory processes' specifics and outcomes, concretely illustrating collaborative governance in Bangkok's street vending policy from

2014 to 2023. The analysis is framed by collaborative governance models proposed by Ansell and Gash (2007) and Emerson and Nabatchi (2015), offering a broad perspective on street vendors and related stakeholders, their administrative processes, and policy impacts.

Over time, the rigid enforcement environment prompted street vendors to respond strategically. As they adapted to new constraints, they began initiating bottom-up actions that exemplified collaborative governance in practice. The following subsections detail five key strategies street vendors employ in this context, beginning with efforts to build internal solidarity.

Connected with Peers and Leaders

The restrictive street vending management policy was implemented without warning. This sudden upheaval left vendors uncertain about career prospects and concerned about the impact on living conditions and the duration of imposed restrictions. Street vendors in targeted trading areas sought information about the ban and ways to return. Those who had traditionally operated independently formed connections with peers. These new interactions encouraged discussion, with vendors sharing information and strategies for resolving their situation. In areas where leaders were established, they coordinated and represented fellow vendors, connecting vendors and governmental or regulatory bodies. However, in areas lacking experienced leadership, the effort to address grievances caused by vending policies had greater obstacles. The absence of

leadership compounded vendor difficulties in mobilising responses to policy changes. This case illustrates the importance of leadership and community in resolving issues due to abrupt regulatory changes. It highlights vendor resilience and adaptability in seeking solutions and advocating for their rights amidst difficulties.

Street Vendors' Appeals and Complaints to Government Agencies

As street vendor groups impacted by the vending policy began to cope with the challenges caused by these regulations, their initial lack of connections with organisations or other vendors drove them to seek support from familiar district offices overseeing their areas. Although these district offices had previously assisted street vendors, management legitimacy was determined by broader governmental and BMA policies rather than local approaches. So, vendors appealed for help from the Government House at the Prime Minister's Office Complaint Receiving Centre (CRC). Data from the centre indicate a surge in complaints about the street vending ban, from 68 in 2013 to 540 in 2014 and 687 in 2015, representing an annual increase of about 455.1%.

Additionally, some street vendors sought assistance from potential allies, such as local and national politicians. One member of the governing political party connected vendors with the party and served as an intermediary between them and high-ranking politicians. He expedited vendors' CRC visits to executive administrators and

coordinated with party administrators to support them.

Prime ministerial recognition of the vendors and their grievances was key as they presented their cases at the CRC. This heightened visibility compelled the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU) to advocate for the BMA to ensure effective responses. Engaging with politicians and policymakers was needed to catalyse policy reforms that could improve vendor conditions.

Building Allied Networks

As vendors connected, they also established relationships with supportive groups, including politicians, development practitioners, and academic institutions. This fostered mutual understanding as other social networks gained more profound insights into the circumstances and operations of the vending community.

In 2016, when the BMA cancelled the temporary permissions for trading locations in different areas, affected vendors convened at the CRC. There, they became acquainted and exchanged contact information. Later, they reconnected and shared knowledge and experiences, eventually leading to a gathering of network member representatives on 14 March 2018. The first assembly, or street vendor network for sustainable development (SVNS), included traders from 21 districts, covering 27 Bangkok-permitted vendor areas.

In 2020, some SVNS members founded a confederation of street vendors in Bangkok (CSVN), focusing on sellers in five designated areas. This group eventually

joined the Federation of Informal Workers Thailand (FIT), a collective grouping of domestic workers, motorcycle taxi drivers, and home-based workers. FIT advocates policy recommendations to support the development of the informal workforce.

Street vendors also sought guidance from the Foundation for Labour and Employment Promotion (FLEP), an NGO supporting informal workers. This organisation defends the rights and welfare of informal workers nationwide. FLEP collaborates with Women in the Informal Economy: Globalising and Organising (WIEGO), a global advocacy group for diverse informal worker populations, including street vendors. FLEP contacted academics who became allies and strove to support street vendor networks through communication and advocacy.

Public Communication and Advocacy

Street vendor networks and allies have worked closely through public communications, seminars, and discussions involving key stakeholders, such as government bodies, the BMA, and other labour organisations. In 2018, several press conferences and academic seminars were held, uniting different stakeholders in public venues such as Chulalongkorn University. Public communication is vital for advocating policy change, regardless of perspective. Vendor networks and their allies encourage public awareness and understanding of professional details, administrative policies, and impacts by recommending improved governance and management.

Mainstream media outlets, including online newspapers and digital television channels, have regularly highlighted street vending issues, often shaping public opinion in a way that helps vendors negotiate with power structures. Typically, vendors' attempts to contact powerful politicians were limited until media coverage of issues. Fearing public scrutiny, government agencies heeded vendor claims, enabling negotiations between vendors and government authorities.

Academic groups supporting fair street vending policies have been critical for creating content and public communication spaces. This network has organised academic activities, seminars, and conferences on vending policy, with mass media platforms following network communication strategies. This boosted public awareness and understanding of information and data on Bangkok street vending. The academic network engaged government agencies authoritatively in seminars, creating a place to exchange ideas and advice to innovate policy suggestions.

Negotiation Policy Reform

Complaints and data about the public impact of the street vendor ban policy enlisted many stakeholders to ask the BMA to revise vending policies: complaint centres, the Government House, national and local politicians, Interior and Labour Ministry committee representatives, as well as government and Senate advisory boards.

However, under the NCPO-appointed governorship, the BMA continued policies regulating street vendors as necessary for a hygienic city. The NCPO period was the first time that total elimination occurred without major resistance from vendors and their supporters. The BMA added that it provided trading spaces for evicted vendors to continue operating, although most rejected them. From 2014 to 2018, the number of permitted Bangkok Street vendors halved from 20,170 to 8,021.

After the national election, a new premier declared nine urgent policies to "solve the country's economic problems for the people" (Prime Minister's policy statement to Parliament, 25 July 2019). One was to review street vending management in Bangkok, with the premier assigning a Prime Minister's delivery unit (PMDU) to implement the policy.

After review, the PMDU officer found that all laws and regulations fail to support street vending activities: 1) Act on the Maintenance of the Cleanliness and Orderliness of the Country B.E. 2535 (1992); 2) Public Health Act B.E. 2535 (1992); and 3) Land Traffic Act, B.E. 2522 (1979). Thailand also has no law assigning principal responsibility for supporting street vendors. Additionally, the PMDU collaborated with academics and non-profit organisations to study the issue and opportunities for advancing policy. Later, the PMDU joined the Committee for Local Administration and Orderliness, which created a policy for Bangkok Street

vending management. Supported by the premier's consultant, the committee drafted guidelines, methods, and conditions for designating street vending areas, which were issued on 28 January 2020.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic delayed the implementation of new guidelines after 2022. Yet street vending governance stakeholders reiterated the employment hardship experienced by Bangkok vendors due to pandemic-related bans. Simultaneously, allies expanded to include special agencies and independent bodies, such as the COVID-19 Economic and Social Rehabilitation Committee (a governmental advisory body convened to lessen the pandemic's impact) and the National Health Assembly (NHA, an advisory organisation compiling stakeholder issue viewpoints for the government and society). Both have proposed rapidly reinstating street vendor livelihoods impacted by governmental clearing of trading spaces. However, as merely advisory organisations, they were informed by the City Law Enforcement Department Bangkok, that the BMA had done its best and could not change policy. So, street vendors have not resumed trading as they did previously.

In late 2021, before the Bangkok gubernatorial election, one candidate sought feedback from stakeholders and used street vendor-related recommendations in five of his 215 proposed policies: 1) promoting job security; 2) fostering participation from traders, the public, and the private sector

in managing vending areas; 3) registering and monitoring operations; 4) preparing vending area infrastructure support; and 5) identifying private or government land for food vending areas (hawker centres).

The newly elected governor assigned advisors to revise the street vending policy. They coordinated with management stakeholders, including the CSVB and the Network of Thai Street Vendors for Sustainable Development, NGOs, and academics, to devise a governance strategy. By 2023, the BMA appointed a new Committee for Local Administration and Orderliness to decide on the issue. Comprising three experienced pillar academics, an economist, an architect, and a social welfare expert, the committee and a governmental body issued guidelines in 2023. They approved a Bang Khun Thian trading area, responding to the demands of street vendors and their allies.

Bottom-up Collaborative Governance Model in Bangkok

Collaborative governance is a strategic methodology for addressing complex challenges, including wicked problems. Historically, ongoing scrutiny, conflicts, and disputes have shaped policy decisions regarding the management of street vending in Thailand. This study has recognised a bottom-up, or grassroots, collaborative approach in the street vending sector. The model identified in this study can be delineated in Figure 3.

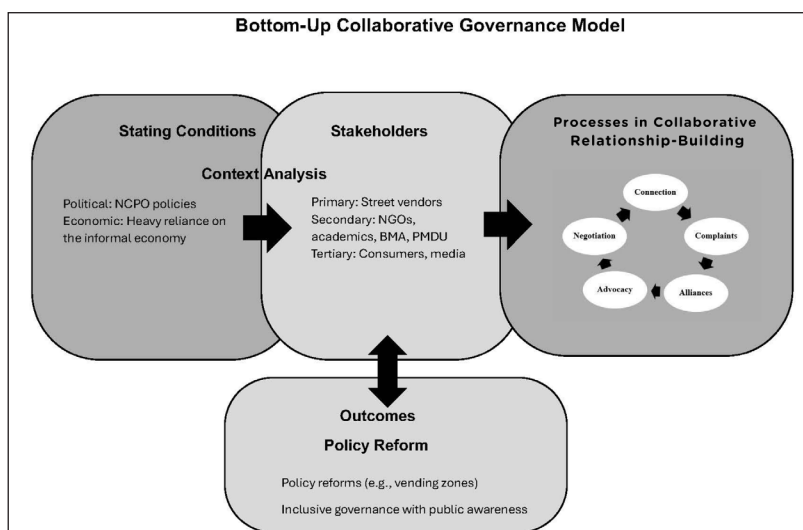


Figure 3. The bottom-up collaborative governance model

DISCUSSION

Comparative Lessons for Broader Application

Nations adopting vendor-friendly policies include India, with the 2014 Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending Act (Baud & Nainan, 2008; Roever & Skinner, 2016; Salès, 2018). This law was due to efforts by the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a grassroots, informal worker member-based organisation founded in 1972. The street vendors group and their allies negotiated with the government and local bodies to defend sellers' rights to a livelihood. In 2009, the Supreme Court of India duly recognised street vending as a legitimate livelihood. After this decision, the government set a National Policy on Urban Street Vendors (NPUSV), which was prepared for the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act 2014.

It recognised street vending as a valid occupation for Indian citizens, requiring local governments to establish town vending committees (TVCs) to license vending and specify zones for urban trading. These committees comprised related stakeholders, including administrators, civil servants, street vendors, community groups, and public sector organisations (Roever & Skinner, 2016; Salès, 2018).

India's regulatory strategy validated the profession nationally. Nationwide management relied on long-term collaboration between stakeholders, including vendors, labour organisations, and governmental agencies (Kumar, 2012; Kumar & Singh, 2018).

Similarly, Warwick Junction in Durban, South Africa, manages street vending collaboratively through stakeholders and urban planning. Initially, Warwick Junction was a traditional trading area

lacking development or access to water and electricity. In 1994, a Self-Employed Women's Union (SEWU) modelled after India's SEWA led Warwick Junction vendors to coordinate, negotiate, and collaborate with the Durban city municipality to renovate the area's physical environment. This resulted in a renowned participatory approach to street vending management, with the involvement of the sellers as the most affected stakeholders (Alfers et al., 2016; Roever, 2016; Skinner, 2008; Skinner, 2009).

However, like urban management globally, Warwick Junction encountered impediments. In 2009, a newly elected mayor proposed transforming the Warwick Junction district into a contemporary shopping complex, threatening the economic stability of local street vendors and labourers. In response, sellers, transportation employees, SEWU members, and academics formed a coalition to oppose, negotiate with, and influence municipal government. This effort led to a withdrawal by commercial interests, cancelling the Warwick Mall project.

As with India's bottom-up collaborative governance model, efforts by the SEWA, media representatives, academics, and legal experts were needed. Likewise, Warwick Junction required sustained advocacy from SEWU and its partners to convince businesspeople to yield to public opinion.

Policy and Structural Challenges in Advancing Bottom-up Governance

For bottom-up governance, vendor networks and associates have relatively little

experience in organising, negotiating, and advocating compared to SEWA or SEWU. The spatial fragmentation of Bangkok market areas obstructs unity and independent collective bargaining power. The dominant neoliberal approach to urban development also empowers the private sector over the government, further preventing policies supporting low-income workers in high-value urban areas.

The principle of collaborative governance enhances the representation of less powerful stakeholders, as well as non-governmental organisations and academia that provide historical support. However, vendor representatives have not achieved formal recognition at the decision-making level, resulting in a lack of complete stakeholder agreement on the Bangkok policy. Bottom-led governance is also vulnerable to political cycles, limited during political instability or coups when public participation declines. Conversely, this governance model augments during democratic transitions, especially when elected officials seek support from a diverse electorate. To advance inclusive urban governance, weaker groups must connect more with peers and receive organisational assistance.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This research investigated the collaborative governance of street vending management in Thailand, emphasising how the bottom-up approach cultivates an inclusive policy framework. Although this collaborative

process is promising, its policies remain unachieved as stakeholder demands remain to be addressed. One principal challenge is to level stakeholder power disparities. To manage street vendors and informal workers in competitive urban areas, policymakers must add opportunities for weaker stakeholders to express their viewpoints. Building the collaborative process produces a more inclusive, sustainable urban management approach.

Limitations of the Study

This article is based on a qualitative case study of street vending governance in Bangkok. It may not fully represent the broader context of nationwide street vending governance. In-depth interviews were done with purposefully selected participants as representatives of key stakeholder groups. The results may not fully encompass diverse stakeholder perspectives and may not yield generalizable or quantitative conclusions. Any potential bias in interpreting data was mitigated by measures to document field observation, reflexive journaling, data triangulation, and systematic reflections.

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