



Selling Power: A Feminist Geographical Analysis of Spatial Access and Social Positioning in Fish Markets in Negombo and Phnom Penh

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Spatial traditions: centrality and marginality

Orussey market in Phnom Penh – Cambodia



Pitipana market in Negambo Sri Lanka



Spatial traditions: 'Outside the net'



The woman that we just talked to walked to the other side of the beach seine, sat down on the sand and started making a pile of the seaweed that the men were taking out and dumping by the side of the net [...] The woman didn't touch the seaweed till it was laid on the beach, outside the net sorted by the men.

(Observational field note, 14 November 2013, Kinniya beach)

Social institutions and norms

'Norms in Cambodia generally approve of women doing independent businesses' (Kusakabe and Sereyvath, 2014)

"all of my relatives and my children, they respect me a lot. They never tell me how they perceive my role as trader (the fact that I am a trader is not referred to by my relatives). we treat both daughter and son equally. Being a woman trader is normal job (a common or usual thing since there are lots of women doing this) to me.

(Woman processed fish seller, Orussey market)

Norms have changed in Negambo Sri Lanka

- "Once fish is landed on the beach by the men-folk, the responsibility of the catch is transferred to the women, who engage shrewd marketing skills to fetch the best price for the catch" (Stirrat, 1988)
- With fish being sourced from outside Negambo, and increasingly external trading, markets have become 'vulgar'

Space as 'constellations of power': (re)negotiated and (re) configured



Space in flux

Reconfigurations within the day



Reconfigurations over time



‘This afternoon, we will move our house near our small farming plot’





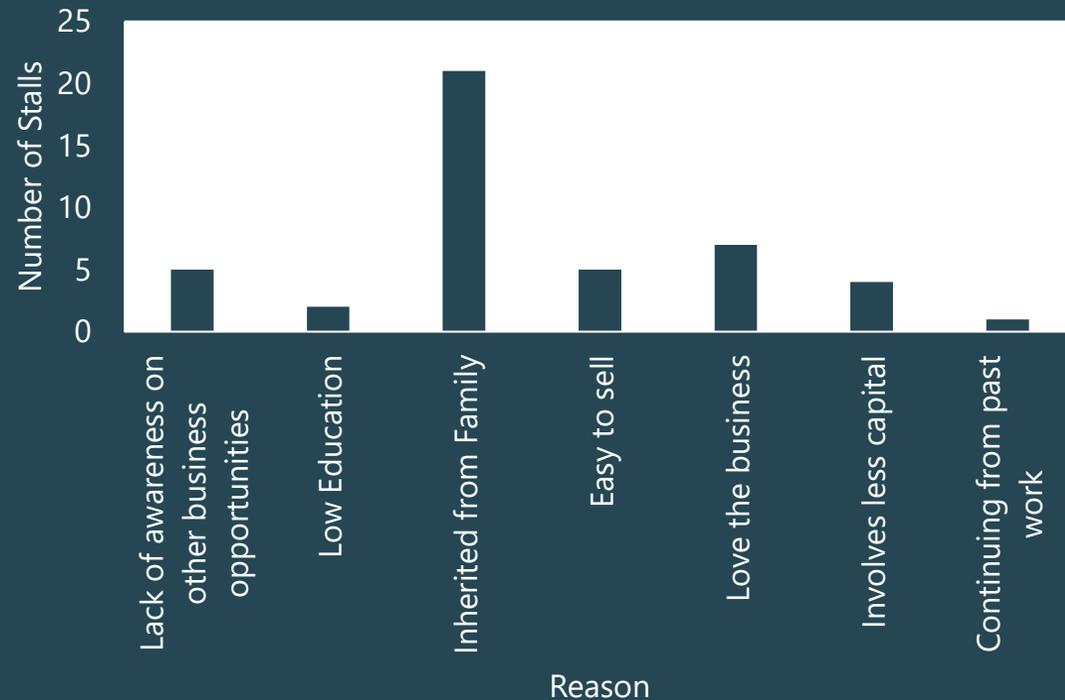
We buy fish from the fishermen, we go to the places where they catch fish. Son and grand daughter go there and bring it here. They leave at 5am and come back by 9am. During the high season relatives work full time.

Space produced through interrelations:



Kinship ties in the Orussey market

Reason for establishment



Family involvement in trade

More than half of the traders at Orussey market stated that they have other family in fish trading

“I started the business since 1990s. at that time, I was around 20-22 years old. My parents first lived around Tonle sap and then moved to Phnom Penh. Then, they run this business (sell dried fish). I spent most of my childhood around the stall and help my parents with their trade, I didn’t go to school at all. My sister also does trade like me here at the market. Family to me matters a lot. Even in the future, family continues to play an important role, to all the Cambodian people.”

(Woman, Processed fish wholesale trader, Phnom Penh-Orussey market)

Entering the market

kinship ties in Negambo markets

One of **my neighbours** had 2 businesses. She couldn't manage both businesses on her own. So, she handed over her food preparation business to me. From the money that I earned from this business, I bought a basket "*Kudaya*" and a board "*lella*" and came to the market. **Two of my sisters also sell fish** at *Aliya pola* and *kela kandawala* (two fresh fish markets nearby). They also get their fish from this market. They are mobile vendors.

My mother has been in fish selling when I was 5 years old. She took me with her for fish selling. She was selling my father's harvest. Afterward, she went to various markets and failed to sell father's harvest. So, in order to sell my father's harvest, I initiated fish selling. I studied up to grade 4 only. My mother was afraid to keep me alone in my home. So, I ceased the school education and went to markets with my mother.

(Woman fish seller, 40 years old)



'Staying power' through interrelations



- When I buy shrimp from the *Kattudel* fishers I pay them after I sell it. I don't have to pay them upfront. When I buy fish from others, I have to make an upfront payment which is not always possible. Since making this upfront payment is not easy, we prefer the *Kattudel* fisher's shrimp. At the beginning I only purchased from the *Kattudel* fishers. There is no commission as there aren't any middlemen. They give it directly to us. The price to sell the shrimp is determined with the agreement with the *Kattudel* fishers. If there is a loss, they would usually give me a small amount.



Mooi in Cambodia

Five (mooi)middlemen supply Prahoc to us. They have been working with us for a long time, from their previous generations to this generation. We do not miss their social events, if we get invited for a wedding or something, we make it a point to go there. (Fish seller, Battambang)

Changing interrelations

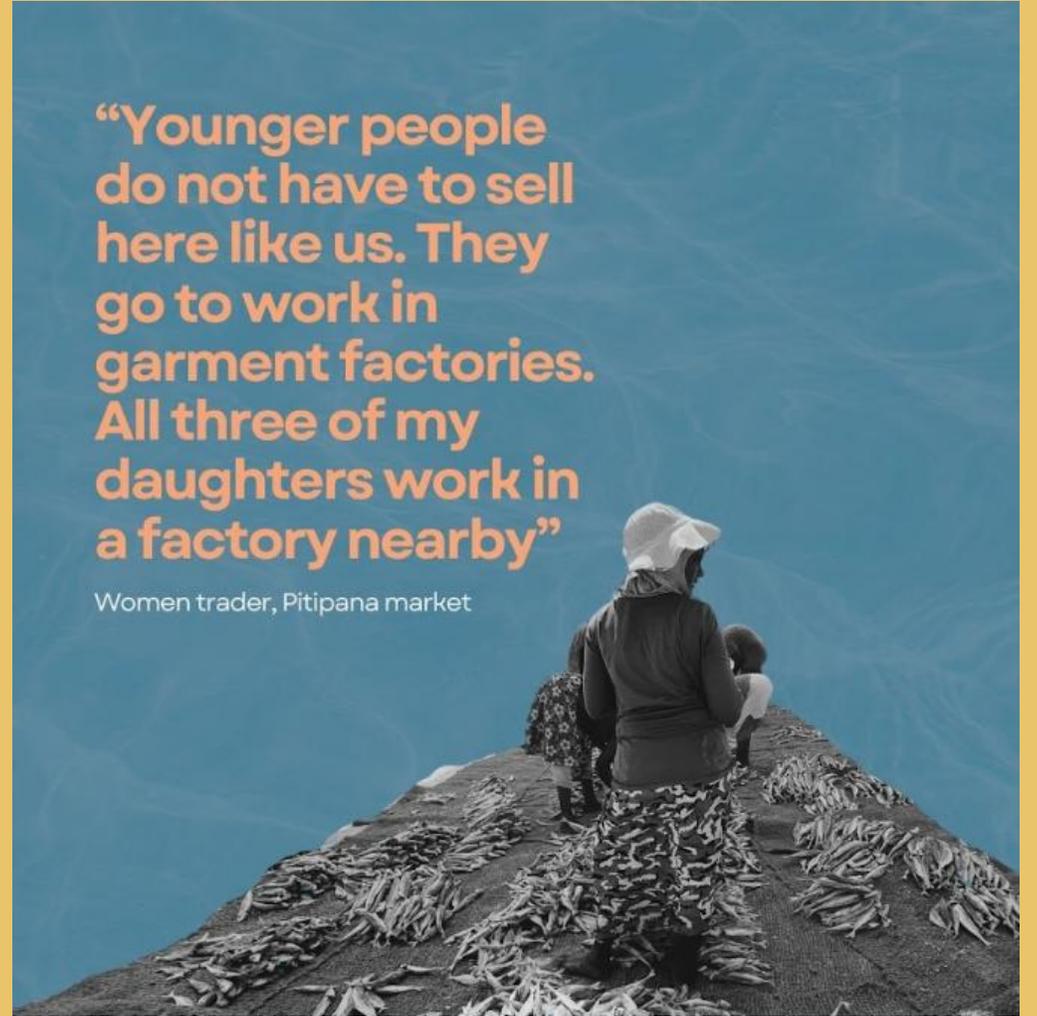
Younger generation moving out

Older sellers are supported by the next generation

Fragmenting social networks and reducing social capital

“Younger people do not have to sell here like us. They go to work in garment factories. All three of my daughters work in a factory nearby”

Women trader, Pitipana market





Conclusion

Space as a sphere of multiplicity

- Space is always contested, reflecting differences in power, inequality, and representation.
- Local and global

Space as the product of interrelations

- Space emerges from the interactions between people, places, and material processes.
- Past, present and future
- Material, ecological, social and economic

Space as always in process

- Space is never fixed; it is continually made and remade as relationships evolve.
- Temporality, emphasising that space and time are intertwined