Tanzania Journal of Sociology

Volume 11 | Issue 2 Article 7

December 2025

The Mwanza Declaration: Magufuli, Street Vendors and the Right to the City in Tanzania

Sabatho Nyamsenda
nyamsenda.sabatho@udsm.ac.tz;, sabatho7h@gmail.com

Ng'wanza Kamata
ngkamata@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.udsm.ac.tz/tjso

Recommended Citation
Nyamsenda, Sabatho and Kamata, Ng'wanza (2025) "The Mwanza Declaration: Magufuli, Street Vendors and the Right to the City in Tanzania," *Tanzania Journal of Sociology*: Vol. 11: Iss. 2, Article 7.
Available at: https://commons.udsm.ac.tz/tjso/vol11/iss2/7

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by University of Dar es Salaam Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Tanzania Journal of Sociology by an authorized editor of University of Dar es Salaam Digital Commons.

Tanzania Journal of Sociology Vol. 11, Issue No.2, December 2025: 113 - 129

The Mwanza Declaration: Magufuli, Street Vendors and the Right to the City in Tanzania

Sabatho Nyamsenda
ORCID: 0000-0002-4609-0107
Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Dar es Salaam
Corresponding author
nyamsenda.sabatho@udsm.ac.tz or sabatho7h@gmail.com
&
Ng'wanza Kamata
Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Dar es Salaam
ngkamata@gmail.com

Abstract

This article seeks to understand the continuity and change in relations between the state and street vendors under the late President of Tanzania, John Pombe Magufuli (November 2015–March 2021). Focusing on the concessions made by the state to street vendors under the Magufuli regime, the article diverts from the standard characterisation of such gains as an expedient gift from an authoritarian leader to conceptualising them as a product of street vendors' struggles against eviction from the city centre. It examines the key tenets of the Mwanza Declaration on the Right to the City as well as the contestations around its application, and argues that the Declaration represented a shift in thinking on the part of President Magufuli and attributes this to street vendors' struggles.

Key Words: Street Vendors, Mwanza Declaration, Magufuli, Right to the City, Dar es Salaam.

Introduction

"Tanzania suffered wretchedly under one bullheaded socialist," wrote the *Economist* in October 2017. "It cannot afford another." The so-called new "bullheaded socialist" was none other than John Pombe Magufuli, the fifth president of Tanzania whose "economic ideas have a whiff of the 'African socialism' of Julius Nyerere" (*The Economist,* 19.10.2017). This characterisation of Magufuli superimposes the experience and fears of certain social strata – the international bourgeoisie and its domestic auxiliaries – over all the people of Tanzania, regardless of their social classes. It also wrongly equates Magufuli's economic nationalism with Nyerere's socialism, even though the two are different (Nyamsenda, 2018). Reached without studying the actual experiences of the working people under the Magufuli regime, such assumptions have been reproduced in scholarly and activist works in a way that misses the nuances of the reforms undertaken by the fifth phase government (Amnesty International, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2019; Bamwenda, 2018; Collord, 2020)

The working people in Tanzania tend to give a different narrative about their experience under the Magufuli regime (Collord and Nyamsenda, 2024). "President Magufuli has done us a great thing," Esther Mtonga, a female food vendor in Dar es Salaam told *The Citizen* newspaper in May 2019. The paper reported that "Esther and thousands more street traders enjoy unrestricted conditions for their businesses following a direct intervention by President John Magufuli" and that "the experience is not only unique to Dar es Salaam" but had spread to "other fast rising towns" (*The Citizen*, 19.05.2019). Even though it intended to raise an alarm about "the consequences of an unplanned influx of street vendors," the newspaper article gives a glimpse about the reforms pursued by the Magufuli government and how popular they were to ordinary women like Mtonga who had lived "the miserable lives of constant harassment from city militias" in the pre-Magufuli period.

These experiences from below have been partly captured in informality scholarship which documents harassment and dispossession of street vendors in the pre-Magufuli period (Ackson and Msoka, 2017) and acknowledges the shifts under the Magufuli regime (Nyirenda & Msoka, 2019; Mubarack et al., 2023). This body of work, however, has been preoccupied with *what* the changes were rather than *how* they came about. Some of the scholars describe these changes as 'tolerance' or 'accommodation', signifying the extension of the election-period tolerance mode into the post-election era, rather than a genuine shift in the outlook of some of the state actors on informality (George et al., 2023; Steiler & Nyirenda, 2021).

This article provides a holistic analysis of the reforms pursued by the Magufuli government with regard to the informal operators' spatial rights. It seeks to understand not only the substance of these reforms but also the process that brought them about. Rather than treating them as gifts from an authoritarian patron to 'his' grateful clients, the article locates these changes within the womb of struggles waged by street vendors for the right to the city. To explore these issues, the article was guided by three research questions, namely: What were the continuities and changes with regard to how the government behaved towards street vendors under the Magufuli administration? What was the character of these changes and how did they come about? The data for this article were collected in two rounds. The first round took place between September 2022 and January 2023 and the second one in March 2025. In both rounds, the study conducted in-depth interviews with 14 participants and held 2 focus group discussions (FGDs) in Jangwani and Kigamboni Ferry, that brought together a total of 16 participants. Participants for both FGDs and in-depth interviews included street vendors, leaders of street vendors association as well as government officials. Another important source of data included review of documents (including print and online media sources, government policies and academic sources).

Magufuli and the Urban Poor

Studies on the Magufuli presidency (late 2015 – early 2021) in Tanzania have focused on the regime's anti-corruption drive (Kaunain, 2019), anti-foreign investment populist style (Makulilo, 2017) or natural wealth and resources governance (Sørreime, 2019). The general conclusion shared by most scholars has been on the deterioration of democracy in the country

due to crackdown on the opposition, independent media and the basic freedoms and liberties (Human Rights Watch, 2019; Bamwenda, 2018; Collord, 2020). Anchored on the (neo-)liberal theoretical foundation and normative commitment, this line of thinking contends that the undemocratic laws and decisions made by the Magufuli regime violated not only political rights citizens but also economic rights of (foreign) investors. Democracy or lack of thereof is conceptualised by looking at the type of the country's constitution, electoral conduct as well as guarantee of basic freedoms and liberties (Freedom House, 2019). In general, the tendency, as Mamdani (1986) points out, has been to conceive "democracy only in the forms conceptualized by the middle classes" which ends up marginalising the lived realities of lower classes.

Another line of thinking describes Magufuli's leadership style as 'elitist plebian' (Paget, 2021, 2023). Claiming to *"*have superior abilities" to "determine" people's interests, elitist plebians "are sovereign" (Paget, 2023). "In other words, like trustees of children, they are responsible for 'the people' but need not be responsive to their wishes (or will)" (Paget, 2023). Apart from homogenising CCM, a party renown for its factional struggles – which intensified instead of being extinguished under Magufuli – Paget constructs elitist plebianism as a complete ideology and governance style, made from above. As this paper will show, there is enough evidence to prove the contrary: Magufuli's economic nationalism borrowed from and was responsive to the demands from below.

While the recent literature on the informal sector tries to understand the changes under Magufuli with regard to its treatment of street vendors, it reproduces the assumptions that these changes originated from above (George et al., 2023; Mubarack et al., 2023). This scholarship is reticent on the role of struggles from below in triggering these changes (Branch & Mampilly, 2015).

Radical thoughts and actions are seldom the result of individual genius. They are consequences of contradictory social actions and movements. In his introduction to *Rebel Cities*, David Harvey (2012, xii) argues that "Lefebvre's ideas", especially his right to the city theory, "have primarily arisen out of the streets and neighborhoods of ailing cities," particularly Paris, where he lived. Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) who is celebrated for his progressive literary works admits that in spite of his earlier revolutionary credentials, it is the working poor in the outskirts of Nairobi who pushed and taught him to co-produce "a theatre of the oppressed." Using the example of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Ciccariello-Maher (2013) reiterates the significant role of the "informal proletariat" residing in the "*barrios*" (shantytowns) and earning their livelihood in the informal sector, who "created Chavez." They "not only supported Chávez but pushed him further, faster, and in more radical directions" (ibid, p.225).

In the same fashion, Shivji (2012, p. 108) maintains that popular protests led by university students in the early years of independence pushed Julius Nyerere to refine his socialist ideas, abandoning his earlier "utopian, if not Owenite" socialist thinking for a more radical conception of socialism as laid out in the Arusha Declaration. On top of nationalising the major means of production, "Nyerere's speeches and lectures in the immediate post-Arusha period were some of the most militant and articulate, increasingly showing his appreciation of the political economy of capitalism and imperialism" (ibid).

Building on these works, this article underscores the role of struggles waged by informal settlement dwellers and street vendors in changing the outlook of state actors towards informality. To examine this role, the paper is guided by the theory of the right to the city (R2C) which advocates for the collective right of lower–class urban inhabitants to not only access and use urban space but also to have a voice over how it is produced and managed (Adama, 2020; 2012; Harvey, 2012; Lefebvre, 2003). There are two strands of this theory – the revolutionary and the reformist. The former seeks to do away with the twin pillars of capitalism – private ownership of property and the state. The latter reproduces them while advocating for minimum reforms that protect the urban poor from the ravages of unbridled neoliberalism (Friendly, 2013; Purcell, 2002). While scholars have taken strong positions, choosing one strand over the other (Purcell, 2013), this paper adopts a middle ground that sees radical reforms as halfway house towards revolutionary systemic change. Evoking Shivji (1983), the article argues that, when the state is forced by the working people to make concessions such as the reformist R2C, then such gains should be understood as progressive reforms, emanating from struggles from below, instead of simply being dismissed as reactionary reforms coming as gifts from above (See also Nyamsenda, 2024).

This article locates the changes under Magufuli in the reformist variant of the right to the city theory. It argues that Magufuli's earlier outlook was predicated on the beautification of the city through the elimination of informality and shows illustrates the resistance by street vendors forced him to rethink his outlook on informality, leading to the pronouncement of the Mwanza Declaration on the Right to the City. This happened as the regime was faced with hostility from the West as well as internal pushback from the opposition which was capitalising on street vendors' grievances. In choosing to ally with the dispossessed masses over the opposition, Magufuli abandoned the anti-poor urban policy he inherited from his predecessor and embraced a more progressive urban vision based on the (reformist) variant of the right to the city theory (Nyamsenda, 2024).

The State and Street Vendors in Dar es Salaam

When the German colonial government shifted its headquarters to Dar es Salaam in the late 19th century, it planned, built and administered the city based on racial exclusion. Master races lived and worked in well–planned and serviced zones known as *Uzunguni* (European zone) and *Uhindini* (Indian zone). Africans who belonged to the subject race occupied the neglected and unserviced zone known as *Uswahilini* (Swahili Zone) (Kironde, 1994). The change of colonial powers from the Germans to the British did not change the status of Black Africans who continued to be outcasts in the city. Different pieces of legislation were enacted and eviction campaigns carried out in order to deny Africans their right to live and earn their livelihoods in the city (Brennan & Burton, 2007).

With the independence of Mainland Tanzania in 1961 and the pronouncement of the Arusha Declaration – Tanzania's socialist manifesto – in 1967, reforms were undertaken to de-segregate Dar es Salaam and bring about justice to the oppressed majority (Mamdani, 2012). Despite the progress made under socialism, the urban poor continued to face the wrath of the state that as they were forcefully deported to rural areas to engage in agricultural production.

These operations became rampant after the enactment the *Human Resource Deployment Act* in 1983 (Burton, 2000).

As Tanzania embraced neoliberalism from the mid-1980's, the informal sector ballooned as it became the main source of income to the urban poor and a complement to the meager salaries of the low and middle categories of civil servants (Maliyamkono & Bagachwa, 1990). Informality scholars initially greeted the transition from socialism to neoliberalism with a sense of optimism as they thought it would grant freedom to informal operators (Tripp, 1989). The optimism was short-lived as the state continued with the suppression of informal operators, particularly street vendors who were violently evicted from the city (Brown et al., 2015).

Hand in hand with carrying out evictions, the neoliberal regimes in Tanzania adopted formalisation approach with the purpose of facilitating the registration of informal businesses, access to credit from financial institutions and relocation informal operators to authorised business premises. Initiatives included the formulation of the *Small and Medium Enterprise Development Policy* in 2003 (URT 2003). In the same year, President Mkapa contracted the leading advocate of formalisation, Hernando de Soto, to design a policy tool specific for micro and small property and business owners. De Soto's report led to the initiation of the Property and Business Formalisation Programme (PBFP) or in Kiswahili, *Mpango wa Kurasimisha Rasilimali na Biashara za Wanyonge Tanzania* (MKURABITA). The experience of street vendors has shown that, far from being a tool of elevation from poverty, formalisation leads to further dispossession as it surrenders the urban poor to the shylocks and serves as a ground for the forceful eviction of street vendors from the city centre (FGD, Kigamboni Ferry, 25.10.2022; Shomary, 2019). In 2006, for instance, the government of Jakaya Kikwete evicted more than 1 million street vendors out of Dar es Salaam in order to keep the city clean (Msoka & Ackson, 2017). As argued in the subsequent sections, this model of dispossession was inherited by the Magufuli regime in the first six months before abandoning it for a friendlier approach that recognised and protected street vendors' spatial rights (Collord and Nyamsenda 2025).

In spite of the forceful evictions that have left many of them dispossessed and some of them physically injured, handicapped, dead or incarcerated, street vendors in Tanzania have refused to leave the city centre (Interview, Kariakoo street vendor, 26.09.22; *The Judges Media,* 21.10.21). They have used a number of tactics – from quiet re-encroachment into public spaces to violent confrontations with law enforcers – to reclaim the city and shape it according to their imaginations and needs (Interview, Mbezi Luis street vendor, 6.11.2022; Adama, 2020). Theirs has therefore been "a cry and demand" for what Lefebvre termed the "right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1996).

'Dar es Salaam Will Change'

After he was sworn in on 5th November 2015 to become the fifth president of Tanzania, Magufuli took a number of steps aiming at curbing unnecessary government expenditure, fighting grand corruption and instilling discipline and integrity among public officials. These measures earned him accolades among members of the middle and upper classes within and outside Tanzania. In what one political analyst referred to as "Maguphoria", the hashtag #WhatWouldMagufuliDo trended, making Magufuli a 'twitter darling' (Chachage, 2015).

Tanzania Journal of Sociology Vol. 11, Issue No.2, December 2025: 113 – 129

To the urban working poor, however, Magufuli's early measures brought tears. His vision of the city was predicated on a 'world class city' foundation. It would be realised, he told the elders of Dar es Salaam on 13th February 2016, through the construction of state–of–the–art infrastructural projects, like flyovers, interchanges, a six-lane highway as well as "a bridge over the ocean" (Chachage, 2018, p.379). "Dar es Salaam," he further elaborated, "is the mirror of Tanzania. Without Dar es Salaam there is no Tanzania. I want to assure you that Dar es Salaam will change" (*JamiiForums,* 13.2.2016). Change was to be brought through the mega infrastructural projects and the eradication of informality.

The war on informality had two faces: the demolition of informal settlements and the eviction of the urban poor from the city centre. The demolition of homes claimed 33 lives and triggered angry protests from the residents of the Msimbazi Basin (Mkwajuni, Jangwani and Kigogo) who blocked the highway, burned tyres and confronted the riot police with stones and non-lethal explosives (FGD, Jangwani, 2.3.2025; Nyamsenda, 2016). On top of that, aided by the Kinondoni Member of Parliament, they were granted a temporary injunction against the demolition pending the final decision of the court (Kironde, 2016).

The resistance of Msimbazi residents forced the government to give in. On January 8, 2016, the Vice President's Office issued a statement in which it stopped the city–wide demolition "to avert a humanitarian crisis and excessive economic loss" (*The Citizen,* 9.1.2016). The statement went on to state that the government had decided to adopt a new approach which would involve working with informal settlement residents to conserve the rivers instead of demolishing their homes (Vice President's Office, 2016). Magufuli became the main advocate of this position and continuously urged government officials to use wisdom instead of mechanical enforcement of the law, for "without being wise, citizens will be denied residential areas and places for carrying out production" (*The Citizen*, 8.11.2017).

While the central government rescinded the demolition of the homes of the poor, local governments continued with the eviction of street vendors and other groups of the urban poor from the city centre. Paul Makonda, who had just been promoted to Regional Commissioner of Dar es Salaam, announced his "Dar Mpya" (a new Dar) initiative. The new Dar was to be achieved through the city cleansing campaign he dubbed, "Safisha Jiji, Ondoa Uchafu" or in English, Clean Up the City, Remove the Litter (*Nipashe*, 24.03.2016). On top of declaring mandatory monthly clean up days, he ordered the forceful removal of the urban poor and informal operators from the city (*Mwananchi*, 14.4.2016).

The then Dar es Salaam City Council relaunched its 2014 Smart Area initiative in February 2016, allocating TZS 500 million for its implementation (*Michuzi Blog*, 23.04.2014). The stated goal of the initiative was "stern enforcement of urban management laws, regulations and procedures in order to rid the city of enduring challenges caused by dirtiness" (DCC, 2016). The initiative made 21 prohibitions aimed at banning informal sector activities in general and street vending in particular in the demarcated area (Interview, Dar es Salaam City Town Planning Officer, 28.12.2022).

As part of the implementation of the Smart Area initiative and the RC Makonda's Dar Mpya, in May 2016, the Ilala Municipal Director Isaya Mngurumi issued an ultimatum for street vendors operating in the city centre, particularly Kariakoo and Mnazi Mmoja streets. He ordered them to move to four markets allocated for them: Kigogo Fresh, Ukonga, Tabata Muslim and Kivule. Combined, the four markets could only accommodate 2,000 street vendors while the number of street vendors in the city centre was far above that number (*Mwananchi*, 8.5.2016a).

Street vendors complained that the allocated markets, in addition to lacking the capacity to accommodate all street vendors to be evicted from the city centre, were not conducive for their businesses which depended on high pedestrian traffic (Interview, Kariakoo street vendor, 17.09.2022). Others argued that "to relocate them to those markets is not a suitable alternative. The municipal should instead allocate special streets for them" (*Mwananchi*, 8.5.2016a).

The forceful removal of street vendors from the city centre triggered protests that led to clashes between them and the police. Among the protests reported on the media include one that took place on May 11, 2016 with clashes happening in Congo, Mhonda and Mchikichi streets in Kariakoo (*ITV Tanzania,* 11.5.2016). Similar incidents took place in all other major cities and towns, including Mbeya, Arusha and Mwanza (*Michuzi Blog,* 27.2.2016).

Opposition councilors issued a statement to oppose the Dar RC's and Ilala Municipal Executive Director's orders on eviction of street vendors on grounds that the decision was non-consultative and did not take into account the lack of sufficient infrastructure to accommodate all the vendors. They asked the DED to stay the decision until further consultation (*Mwananchi*, 8.5.2016b). In Kinondoni Municipality, the mayor from the opposition CHADEMA visited the Kimara BRT bus terminal and assured street vendors who had not encroached into the BRT road that they would not be evicted (*Nipashe*, 6.2.2016, p.8). The opposition capitalised on the grievances of the street vendors even though it did not present any credible alternative on how to address the question of informality. It is not therefore surprising that, a few days later, opposition councilors reached a consensus with their respective municipal directors and actively took part in the relocation of street vendors in their municipalities (*Nipashe*, 23.6.2016, p.6).

Magufuli's initial intention was to break the alliance between the opposition and street vendors. However, in digging into the core of the arguments put forward by street vendors, he found himself agreeing with them and completely changed his stance towards street vendors and their place in the city (Interview, former SHIUMA chairperson, 5.10.2022). It is in this context that he issued an important statement that we call the Mwanza Declaration on the Right to the City.

The Mwanza Declaration

The Mwanza Declaration on the Right to the City was issued at Furahisha Grounds in the city of Mwanza on August 11, 2016. If Magufuli's earlier statements had closed the doors for spaces dominated by middle and upper classes, then the Mwanza Declaration opened the doors for what Chatterjee (2004) calls the "political society" and made concessions to the urban poor that were unprecedented in the neoliberal era. Marking a paradigm shift in Magufuli's outlook

on the city and street vendors, the Mwanza Declaration has three key pillars: the right to the city, transgression of unjust laws and participatory decision-making/planning.

The Urban Poor Have the Right to the City

In a plan to "clean up" the city, Mwanza authorities had decided that street vendors should be evicted from the city centre and get allocated areas outside the city. For Magufuli, this was a violation of the poor's right to operate and earn a living in the city and as such he joined the street vendors in protesting against evictions from the city centre:

> *When I arrived here, I heard about the conflict involving street vendors. They had been given an ultimatum, to leave the city centre by 20th [of August 2016]. These street vendors are the ones who elected me. And they shall NOT leave the city centre. I say this categorically, street vendors shall NOT leave... [the jubilating crowd responds, "the city centre"] (JamiiForums, 11.08.2016).*

"Everyone," Magufuli reiterated, "has the right to live in a good place. Everyone has the right of doing business in a place that has customers… You can't remove these street vendors and take them to the mountain sites [outside the city], who will go to buy second hand clothes there?" (*JamiiForums*, 11.08.2016).

We have translated the Kiswahili term "*haki*" used by Magufuli as "right" in English. However, the intended meaning is not legal rights (for the law is not on the side of the poor) but the moral claim of social justice. "In Kiswahili," as Issa Shivji (2014) aptly notes, "equity, justice and right are all connoted by the word *haki*, which is often used interchangeably." Shivji argues that the liberal conception of rights, which advocates equality before the law, is totally estranged from the social-economic realities of the society. Consequently, working poor in Tanzania have been at loggerheads with it:

> *After listening to a client – a worker, a peasant, etc. – I explain their legal rights in detail. Immediately and almost invariably, there is a retort: 'lakini hii sio haki!' (but this is not justice!) (Shivji, 2014).*

Thus, Magufuli's conception of *haki* in his Mwanza speech is embedded in the broader notion of equity and social justice as used by the poor in Tanzania. It is justified not by using legal codes but the moral claim of (social) justice: street vendors need the city to live!

The Poor Should Transgress Unjust Laws

Magufuli made it clear that the law caters to the interest of upper classes and was heavily biased against the poor. Thus, to assert their right to the city, the poor have to resist the injustice of the law and use every possible means to transgress it. Giving the example of payment of taxes, he said that for long time, it is the working poor who carried the burden of taxes. It was therefore time to tax the rich and provide the poor with tax holidays. If local governments continue to use their by-laws to impose taxes on the poor, then poor "must refuse" to pay taxes.

> *You are a street food vendor, and have come to the market with your small portions of vegetables that you have grown in your backyard, and then they ask you to pay taxes. No! We cannot run the country in this way. You sell rice buns by your house; you wake up before dawn to make and sell your rice buns there, and this potbellied guy comes with a receipt book, [and tells you] "pay up, mam." YOU MUST REFUSE! And from now henceforth I forbid the levying of these taxes... (JamiiForums, 11.8.2016).*

Magufuli went ahead and encouraged the working poor to devise mechanisms to evade tax payment. To smallholder farmers who combine their produce and take them to market at once, he gave a technique of transgressing the law:

> *And you, farmers, should not transport all your produce at one goal. Today, take five sacs, tomorrow another five, and the next day the same, and you will be able to sell all your produce without paying any tax. Tanzania should not be run by taxes from the poor… (JamiiForums, 11.8.2016).*

While encouraging them to evade tax payment, Magufuli called on street vendors to equally refuse being used by wholesalers as a conduit for tax evasion. When selling [imported] goods given to them by large distributors, street vendors should force shop owners to give them receipts so that the government can levy the large distributors.

Participatory Decision-Making and Planning

In order guarantee street vendors their right to the city, Magufuli called upon the city administrations to have a dialogue with representatives of street vendors' associations. "You need to meet and discuss for at least two or three months in order to reach a consensus." This is a call for an alternative form of democracy based on direct participation of grassroots organisations. Through dialogue and consensus, the working poor would not only secure their right to stay and operate in the city but also be able to transform the city to their desire. As Magufuli put it:

> *You can plan and come up with strategies…thanks to the good system established through consensus… We can even close off a road in the city so that [street vendors] can use that space to conduct their business. Does the road not belong to the government? Why should this be a problem? But we can also plan to take over specific streets within the city during the weekends and say 'Today, the only business that will operate in this area is street vending'. That's how life should be and that's how our Tanzania should be. We all have the right to be happy in Tanzania (JamiiForums, 11.8.2016).*

The city, which was hostile to the poor, would also become friendly to them by allowing them to earn their livelihood, but also to actively participate in shaping it according to their desire.

Reactions to the Mwanza Declaration

Tanzania Journal of Sociology Vol. 11, Issue No.2, December 2025: 113 – 129

There were two contradictory reactions to the Mwanza Declaration. The first one came from street vendors in Dar es Salaam and other major cities who were elated and immediately reoccupied spaces in the city to sell their merchandise (*Nipashe*, December 8, 2016). Since they had previously rallied behind the opposition, they now shifted their allegiance to President Magufuli and assured him that they would not take part in the opposition demonstration:

> *Speaking at a rally convened by the Association of Street Vendors in Mwenge, Dar es Salaam, yesterday, street vendors said they are no longer going to be used as pawns by opposition politicians because they have faith in President Magufuli who has heeded their cry and stands for the rights of the downtrodden (Tanzania Kwanza Daima, 31.8.2016).*

Through the Mwanza Declaration, Magufuli managed to rob the opposition of its traditional constituency – the urban poor.

The second reaction came from central and local government officials who were unhappy with the Declaration. These distorted its contents and intentions in order to continue with the status quo. On August 26, 2016, George Simbachawene, the Minister of State in the President's Office, Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG) stated that the president's green pass was meant for street vendors in Mwanza and as such it did not apply to other cities. "In Dar es Salaam," he said, "there are many authorised business premises like Mchikichini and Machinga Complex." But street vendors "do not want to go to those places, they want to operate on roads. This is a new Dar es Salaam and a civilised one. They must be removed, all of them. We cannot tolerate this" (*Nipashe*, 28.08.2016).

On October 27, 2016, RC Makonda issued a 14–day ultimatum to the Dar es Salaam District Commissioners to remove street vendors from the city centre and roadsides and relocate them to markets (*Mwananch*i, 28.10.2016). Makonda argued that street vendors were misinterpreting and abusing the president's statement by blocking shops and were encroaching pedestrian pavements. In direct contravention to the President's directives, Makonda said that the government would neither close streets nor change the use of its expensively built roads so they can be occupied and used by street vendors (*Global Publishers,* 27.10.2016).

In November 2016, new evictions were carried out in most major cities across the country (*Nipashe*, 01.11.2016b). On November 1, 2016, the DC of Ilala led the eviction campaign in the city centre (*Fofam Blog,* 1.11.2016). Whereas Dar es Salaam authorities claimed that the President's 'statement' was only applicable to Mwanza, the Mwanza authorities told vendors that the President's green pass had a 3–month lifetime, after which street vendors ought to go to authorised areas outside the city centre (*Nipashe,* 1.11.2016a). In both cities, street vendors protested new evictions, with leaders of street vendors associations taking the lead in publicly opposing the renewed removals (Interview, street vendor association leader 1, 8.11.2022; *Nipashe*, 25.11.2016). A newspaper article titled, "Machinga Wazidi Kumgomea Makonda" ("Street Vendors Continue to Defy Makonda's Order") captured the resistance mode of street vendors as they openly defied the RC's eviction order claiming that it contravened the President's directives (*Nipashe*, 9.11.2016).

Magufuli intervened for the second time, again taking the side of street vendors. On December 6, 2016, he said that he was appalled that his Mwanza directives were blatantly ignored and, in some cases, even distorted by appointed government officials - RCs, DCs, and DEDs - who went on with the eviction spree (Ayo TV, 6.12.2016). If such anti-poor campaigns were allowed to continue, Magufuli warned, "it means we will be creating classes among Tanzanians: that there are Tanzanians of a certain class who have the right to access the city centre while those of another class do not have that right" (Ayo TV, 6.12.2016). He ordered the regional and municipal officials to stop harassing street vendors. "If there is an RC, a DC or a DED who thinks that he does not agree with my directives, then s/he should quit" (*Ayo TV,* 6.12.2016). He made it clear that he had not prevented them from carrying out their duties "but when it comes to a problem touching the interests of the majority, they should handle it by taking into account 'utu' (dignity), 'ubinadamu' (humanness)" (*Ayo TV,* 6.12.2016).

Magufuli's second intervention shifted the balance of power in favour of street vendors. Pro-eviction elites in the state and rich shop owners were put on the defensive as informal operators through their associations and grassroots committees practiced insurgent planning that gave them access to earn their livelihood in the city centre. As an association leader puts it:

> *Rich shop owners were rendered powerless to the extent that when a shop owner went to complain to the DC [District Commissioner] about obstruction of their businesses by a street vendor, the DC would tell him: "Let me call the street vendors' leaders so you can talk to them." The street vendors' leader had a discretion of asking the vendor to adjust his/her table or simply ignore the shop owner's complaint and let the vendor operate as he wished. Before this, the rich shop owner had the power to remove the street vendor from the street using his financial muscle (Interview, street vendor association leader 2, 10.3.2025).*

These gains were further protected through the introduction of street vendors' identity cards which played a double role: protection of street vendors' spatial access and reduction of tax burden on them. Street vendors with IDs paid an annual fee of TZS 20,000/= a year instead of the daily levies collected by municipals which accumulated to between TZS 200,000/= and 350,000/= annually (Nyamsenda, Forthcoming; Steiler & Nyirenda, 2021).

The Mwanza Declaration was officially burried under the Samia regime, which came to power after the sudden death of Magufuli in March 2021. Samia barged into the ensuing struggle between street vendors and the alliance of municipal bosses and rich shop owners, decisively acting in favour of the later. As a result, violent removals of street vendors were carried out in all urban centres in the country under the banner of cleaning the city and rearranging street vendors. This triggered street vendors' protests in Dar es Salaam (Gongo la Mboto, Mbezi Luis, Mbagala), Iringa, Mwanza and Arusha (Nyamsenda, 2024). Apart from protesting, street vendors used weapons of the weak by silently re-occupying the spaces from which they were evicted, hence rendering the eviction campaigns ineffective (Nyamsenda, Forthcoming).

Conclusion

This article has provided an analysis of the circumstances that led to the pronouncement of the Mwanza Declaration by the Magufuli in August 2016. Anti-eviction protests staged by street vendors in the midst of acrimonious relations between the Magufuli regime and the Western governments, international financial institutions, foreign investors and the opposition forced Magufuli to rethink his approach to informality. In doing so, he abandoned the previous policy based on city beautification and embraced a new approach that recognised street vendors' right to the city. The three elements of the Mwanza Declaration pronounced by Magufuli in 2016, were spatial justice, tax relief as well as participatory planning. While progressive, the implementation of the Declaration did not lead to autogestion (self-management) proposed by Lefebvre. In some places, street vendors' committees and associations were coopted by state officials, run undemocratically and as such used to further private interests instead of collective welfare and popular power (Nyamsenda, Forthcoming). While criticising its limits, one should, however, be aware that the Mwanza Declaration brought relief to the working poor in the informal sector in the same way that the labour rights and welfare reforms did to the proletariat in the 19th and 20th centuries. Just as welfare reforms were abandoned when capitalists and state functionaries united in pursuit of neoliberal reforms, so was the Mwanza Declaration discarded when, after the sudden death of Magufuli, state actors joined hands with rich shop owners in evicting street vendors from the city. Despite being criminalised, street vendors in Tanzania continue to defy evictions and reclaim their right to the city.

Bibliography

Adama, O. (2020). Abuja Is Not for the Poor: Street Vending and the Politics of Public Space. *Geoforum*, 109 (Feb), 14-23.

Amnesty International. (2019). *The Price We Pay: Targeted for Dissent by The Tanzanian State*. Amnesty International.

Ayo TV. (2016, December 6). Agizo la Rais Magufuli kuhusu Wamachinga. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eoqj1rlxQVA

Bamwenda, E. (2018). The Symptoms of the Shift Towards an Authoritarian State in Tanzania's President John Pombe Magufuli's Rule. *Politeja* 56:123–50

Branch, A., & Mampilly, Z. (2015). *Africa Uprising: Popular Protest and Political Change*. Zed Books.

Brennan, J.R., & Burton, A. 2007. The Emerging Metropolis: A History of Dar es Salaam, Circa 1862-2000. In J. Brennan, A. Burton and Y. Lawi (Eds.), *Dar es Salaam: Histories from an Emerging African Metropolis*. Mkuki na Nyota Publishers & British Institute of East Africa.

Brown, A., Msoka, C., & Dankoco, I. (2015). A Refugee in My Own Country: Evictions or Property Rights in the Urban Informal Economy? *Urban Studies*, *52*(12), 2234–2249.

Burton, A. (2000). *Wahuni (The Undesirables): African Urbanisation, Crime and Colonial Order in Dar es Salaam, 1919-1961* [Doctoral Thesis, University of London].

Chachage, C. (2015, December 9). What Would Magufuli Do About the Serious Fraud Office's (SFO) Statement of Facts. *Udadisi.* Retrieved from https://udadisi.com/what-would-magufuli-do-about-serious/

Chachage, C. (2018). *A Capitalizing City: Dar es Salaam and the Emergence of an African Entrepreneurial Elite (C. 1862-2015)* [Doctoral Dissertation, Harvard University].

Chatterjee, P. (2004). *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*. Columbia University Press.

Ciccariello-Maher, G. (2013). *We Created Chávez: A People's History of the Venezuelan Revolution*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Collord, M. (2020). Tanzania's 2020 Election: Return of the One-Party State. IFRI. Retrieved from https://archives.defense.gouv.fr/content/download/602841/10148230/file/202011-Tanzanie_Afrique_australe-note-16.pdf

Collord, M. and S. Nyamsenda. (2025). 'This Country Is Free, but for the Few': Informal Labour, Class Politics, and Urban Order in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. *World Development* 192:1-14.

DCC (Dar es Salaam City Council). (2016). Smart Area. Retrieved from http://dcc.go.tz/eneo-maalum-la-usafi-jijini

Freedom House. (2019). Freedom in the World 2019: Tanzania. Retrieved from https://freedomhouse.org/country/tanzania/freedom-world/2019

Fofam Blog, (2016, November 1). Machinga Ilala, Dar 'Kiama' Chao Leo. Retrieved from http://fofam-media.blogspot.com/2016/11/machinga-ilala-dar-kiama-chao-leo.html?m=1

Friendly, A. (2013). The Right to the City: Theory and Practice in Brazil. *Planning Theory & Practice,* 14(2), 158-179.

George, C., Msoka, C.T., & Makundi, H. (2023). Formalisation of Street Vending in Dar es Salaam: Implementation and Enforcement of the Wamachinga Identity Card Initiative. *Forum for Development Studies,* 50(2), 283-302.

Global Publishers. (2016, October 27). RC Makonda Atoa Siku 14 kwa Ma-DC Kuwaondoa Wamachinga. Retrieved from https://globalpublishers.co.tz/rc-makonda-atoa-siku-14-kwa-ma-dc-kuwaondoa-machinga/

Harvey, D. (2012). *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. Verso.

Human Rights Watch. (2019). *"As Long as I am Quiet, I am Safe": Threats to Independent Media and Civil Society in Tanzania*. Human Rights Watch.

ITV Tanzania. (2016, May 11). Polisi Watanda Mitaa ya Kariakoo Jijini DSM Kuwadhibiti Wamachinga Wasipange Bidhaa Zao Chini. Retrieved from

https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=QW9sVqrSIts

JamiiForums. (2016, August 11). Magufuli Agomea Agizo la Wamachinga Kuhamishwa Mwanza. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHCzPzGtYtY

JamiiForums. (2016, February 13). Rais Magufuli Ahutubia Wazee wa Dar es Salaam. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=l4zCfQo4U3k

Kaunain, R. (2019). Overview of Corruption and Anti-Corruption in Tanzania. Transparency International. Retrieved from https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/assets/uploads/helpdesk/Country-profile-Tanzania-2019_PR.pdf

Kironde, J.M.L. (1994). The Evolution of the Land Use Structure of Dar es Salaam, 1890-1 990: A Study in the Effects of Land Policy. Volume 1 [Doctoral Thesis, University of Nairobi].

Kironde, J.M.L. (2016). Governance Deficits in Dealing with the Plight of Dwellers of Hazardous Land: The Case of the Msimbazi River Valley in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. *Current Urban Studies*, 4(3): 303–328.

Lefebvre, H. (1996). *Writings on Cities*. Blackwell Publishers.

Lefebvre, H. (2003). *The Urban Revolution.* University of Minnesota Press.

Makulilo, Alexander B. (2017). Against Foreign Capital? The Populist Temptation in Tanzania. *Seton Hall Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations,* XVIII(2), 49–65.

Maliyamkono, T.L., & Bagachwa, M.S.D. (1990). *The Second Economy in Tanzania*. James Currey, Ohio University Press, Heinemann Kenya & ESAURP.

Mamdani, M. (1986). Peasants and Democracy in Africa. New Left Review, 156(1), 37-50.

Mamdani, M. (2012). *Define and Rule: Native as Political Identity*. Havard University Press.

Michuzi Blog. (2014, April 23). Jiji la Dar es Salaam Kuendelea Kusafishwa – Mkuu wa Mkoa. Retrieved from https://issamichuzi.blogspot.com/2014/04/jiji-la-dar-es-salaam-kuendelea.html?m=1

Michuzi Blog. (2016, February 27). Vurugu za Machinga Zazua Tafrani Leo Jijini Mbeya. Retrieved from https://issamichuzi.blogspot.com/2016/02/vurugu-za-machinga-zazua-tafrani-leo.html?m=1

Msoka, C., & Ackson, T. (2017). The Politics and Regulation of Street Trading in Dar es Salaam. In A. Brown (Ed.), *Rebel Streets and the Informal Economy: Street Trade and the Law*. Routledge.

Mubarack, K., Kayunze, K., & Ringo, J. (2023). Street Vendors' Perception on the Status of Street Vending Legalization in Tanzania Before and After the 5th Government. *International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management*, 4(3), 158-180.

Mwananchi. (2016, April 14). Ombaomba Waanza Kusombwa. Retrieved from https://www.mwananchi.co.tz/mw/habari/kitaifa/ombaomba-waanza-kusombwa-2805506

Mwananchi. (2016, May 8a). Machinga Marufuku Katikati ya Jiji la Dar es Salaam. Retrieved from https://www.mwananchi.co.tz/mw/habari/biashara/wamachinga-marufuku-katikati-ya-jiji-dar-2807800

Mwananchi. (2016, May 8b). Sakata la Kuwahamisha Wamachinga Dar Lagonga Mwamba. Retrieved from https://www.mwananchi.co.tz/mw/habari/kitaifa/sakata-la-kuhamisha-wamachinga-dar-lagonga-mwamba-2807904

Mwananchi. (2016, October 28). RC Makonda Awatwisha ma-DC Zigo la Wamachinga.

Nipashe. (2016, August 28). Simbachawene: Agizo la Rais kwa Wamachinga Ni Mwanza Tu.

Nipashe. (2016, December 8). Wamachinga Dodoma Watoa ya Moyoni.

Nipashe. (2016, February 6). Manispaa ya Kinondoni Yashindwa Kuwaondoa Wamachinga.

Nipashe. (2016, Juni 23). Wamachinga Wanapaswa Kufahamu Kuwa Utii wa Sheria Bila Shuruti Una Tija.

Nipashe. (2016, March 24). Makonda Azishukia Gereji Bubu, Grosari za Mitaani. Retrieved from http://www.ippmedia.com/?l=90261

*Nipashe. (*2016, November 1a). Machinga Wagoma Kuhama Mwanza.

Nipashe. (2016, November 1b). Machinga Wawavuruga Madiwani Morogoro.

Nipashe. (2016, November 9). Machinga Wazidi Kumgomea Makonda.

Nipashe. (2016, November 25). Machinga Watunisha Misuli Kuondoka Katikati ya Jiji.

Nyamsenda, S. (2016, July 28). Magufuli: An enigma? *Pambazuka News*. Retrieved from https://www.pambazuka.org/democracy-governance/tanzania%E2%80%99smagufuli-enigma

Nyamsenda, S. (2018). Bulldozing like a Fascist? Authoritarian Populism and Rural Activism in Tanzania [Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative (ERPI) Conference, The Hague, Machi 17-18].

Nyamsenda, S. (Ed). (2024). *Wamachinga na Haki-Jiji Nchini Tanzania*. UWAWAMA.

Nyamsenda, S. (Forthcoming). *The Political Economy of Informality in Tanzania: The Case of Street Vendors in Dar es Salaam Region* [Doctoral Thesis, University of Dar es Salaam].

Nyirenda, C., and Msoka, C. (2019). City Growth and the Plight of Street Vendors in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: The Need for Policy Coordination. *Tanzania Journal of Sociology*, *5*, 32-46.

Paget, D. (2021). Mistaken for Populism: Magufuli, Ambiguity and Elitist Plebeianism in

Tanzania. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 26(2), 121–141.

Paget, D. (2023). Reinterpreting Authoritarian Populisms: The Elitist Plebeian Vision of State. *Political Studies,* 72(3), 961–983.

Purcell, M. (2002). Excavating Lefebvre: The Right to the City and Its Urban Politics of the Inhabitant. *GeoJournal,* 58 (2-3), 99-108.

Purcell, M. (2013). Possible Worlds: Henri Lefebvre and the Right to the City. *Journal of Urban Affairs,* 36(1), 141-154.

Shivji, I.G. (1983). Seven Theses on Reform and Revolution. *Journal of African Marxists,* 4 (September), 45-53.

Shivji, I.G. (2012). Nationalism and Pan-Africanism: Decisive Moments in Nyerere's Intellectual and Political Thoughts. *Review of African Political Economy* (2012): 103-116.

Shivji, I.G. (2014). Utu, Usawa, Uhuru: Building Blocks of Nyerere's Political Philosophy. In L. Praeg & S. Magadla (Eds.), *Ubuntu: Curating the Archive.* UKZ Press.

Shomary, F. (2019). How the Poor Can Fight Back Against the Banks. *Africa Is a Country*. Retrieved from https://africasacountry.com/2019/03/how-the-poor-can-fight-back-against-the-banks

Sørreime, H.B. (2019). The Shaping and Changing of Petroleum Resource Governance: Discourses of Natural Gas in Tanzania. *Forum for Development Studies* 52(1): 81–106.

Steiler, I., & Nyirenda, C. (2021). Towards Sustainable Livelihoods in the Tanzanian Informal Economy: Facilitating Inclusion, Organization, and Rights For Street Vendors [WIDER Working Paper No. 2021/53, UNU-WIDER].

Tanzania Kwanza Daima. (2016, August 31). JWTZ Sasa Kutoka Kivingine. Retrieved from http://tanzaniakwanzadaima.blogspot.com/2016/08/jwtz-sasa-kutoka-kivingine-kesho.html?m=1

The Citizen. (2016, January 9). State in Change of Heart on Sites.

The Citizen. (2017, November 8). Magufuli's Directives Spark Up Debate in Parliament. Retrieved from https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/magufuli-s-directives-spark-up-debate-in-parliament-2612150

The Citizen. (2019, May 19). Alarm as Hawkers, Food Vendors Conquer Dar es Salaam Streets. Retrieved from https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/news/-Alarm-as-hawkers--food-vendors-conquer-Dar-es-Salaam-streets/1840340-5111262-fw6gk8z/index.html

The Economist. (2017, October 19). The Dinosaur of Dodoma: John Magufuli is Bulldozing the Opposition and Wrecking the Economy, Retrieved from https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2017/10/19/john-magufuli-is-bulldozing-the-opposition-and-wrecking-the-economy

The Judges Media. (2021, October 21). Mmachinga Msomi Huyu Achimbua Mazito: Wenye Degree Wanauza Heleni Hapa, Ugali Upo Kariakoo. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBlP4a92G7k

Tripp, A.M. (1989). Defending the Right to Subsist: The State vs. the Urban Informal Economy in Tanzania [African Studies Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A., October].

Vice President's Office. (2016). Taarifa ya Serikali Kuhusu Zoezi la Kuhamisha Wakazi wa Mabondeni Katika Jiji la Dar es Salaam. January 8. Retrieved from http://www.vpo.go.tz/announcements/view_news_item.php?id=579&intVariationID=1&szTitle=Current

URT (United Republic of Tanzania). (2003). Small and Medium Enterprise Development Policy. Dar es Salaam: Ministry of Industry and Trade.

wa Thiong'o, N. (1986). *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. London: James Currey Ltd.