Research Office
Legislative Council Secretariat

Information Note

Promoting street markets in Singapore and London

IN23/2024

1. Introduction

1.1 In Hong Kong, there are some 5 100 licensed hawkers scattered in over 53 fixed-pitch hawker areas and cooked food bazaars right now, representing just one quarter of the 20 000 hawkers in the late 1980s. This could be attributable to public preference for more comfortable indoor shopping venues amidst increased affluence in the community, but a more restrictive hawker licence policy on the grounds of public sanitation and traffic management also contributed. After the millennium, there was nonetheless advocacy in society to revitalize local hawker culture for heritage preservation and economic diversification, resulting in establishment of two subcommittees within the Legislative Council ("LegCo") to study the issue in 2014 and 2016.[1] Members have also raised at least 19 questions on this subject in the LegCo over the past 13 years, calling for relaxation of "overly stringent" regulations.[2] More recently after the epidemic, in the face of slackened macroeconomic performance, local hawker trade is increasingly seen as a means to boost local consumption and tourism. As such, the Government launched day and night markets on streets in various districts in September 2023.

1.2 Globally, regulators of hawker trades are striking a balance between the objectives of keeping public order and environmental hygiene on the one hand, and preserving local culture and creating business opportunities for low-income people on the other. For instance, while Fukuoka city in Japan resumed public recruitment for operators of its iconic on-street food stalls in 2017, New York City of the United States loosened the cap on street vendor licences in 2021. In Seoul and Shanghai, the local governments have actively organized theme-based street markets in designated areas for promoting the night economy in 2024.

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1 Subcommittee on Hawker Policy (2015) and Subcommittee on Issues Relating to Bazaars (2018).

2 GovHK (2024a).

1.3 At the request of Hon KWOK Wai-keung, the Research Office has studied the policies taken in Singapore and London to promote vibrant street markets, focusing on hawkers at fixed locations rather than itinerant hawkers.[3] For **Singapore**, its hawker culture (mainly food stalls) was already inscribed as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ("UNESCO") Representative List in 2020. For **London**, its mayor established a dedicated London Markets Board in 2017 for development of the street markets. The street market policies of both cities are widely acclaimed as good practice.[4] This ***Information Note*** begins with an overview of global trends in regulation of street markets and hawker trade, followed by a brief discussion of major issues of concerns in Hong Kong. It then examines the respective regulatory measures in Singapore and London, accompanied by a concise comparison table for easy reference (**Appendix**).

2. Recent global developments

2.1 **Hawking is an informal economic activity with visible social benefits**. They include **(a)** providing a low-cost entrepreneurial pathway for individuals, especially the young with limited capital; **(b)** diversifying local economic activities; **(c)** preserving local culture as a tourism resource; **(d)** vitalizing street vibrancy in urban areas; and **(e)** facilitating public access to affordable goods and food especially for low-income communities.[5] However, there are also concerns over public safety, environmental hygiene and traffic safety for both pedestrians and vehicles, as well as their unfair competitive advantage over stores paying higher rentals.[6]

2.2 With a view to maintaining public order and cleanliness, most of the global regulatory frameworks over hawker trade take the following elements into account. ***First***, it is very common to set a maximum number of hawker licensees, subject to stringent conditions for succession and transfer. ***Secondly***, hawking is restricted to certain designated areas for supervision. ***Thirdly***, hawker licences specify the types of products to be permitted for sale in bazaars. ***Fourthly***, some governments relocate hawkers to purpose-built off-street hawker centres or public markets with better facilities.[7]

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3 In this study, street markets refer to hawker stalls located in covered and open-aired markets and bazaars that operate regularly or temporarily.

4 Davies (2019) and Chiu and Zhang (2022).

5 Subcommittee on Issues Relating to Bazaars (2018) and Li et al. (2024).

6 International Labour Office (undated) and WIEGO (undated).

7 WIEGO (2018) and South China Morning Post (2022).

2.3 It is noted that some governments of advanced cities have relaxed their hawker regulations due to economic and cultural considerations in recent years. For instance, **New York City** passed legislation in January 2021 to raise the maximum number of street food vendor licences. It planned to issue 4 450 new licences over the next 10 years, aiming to combat illegal licence leasing and to facilitate entry of more aspiring traders to the market.[8] Likewise, **Los Angeles City** lifted its ban on hawkers operating at popular tourist locations in February 2024, seeking to provide employment opportunities for new immigrants while preserving hawking as part of the city's culture.[9] For **Fukuoka City,** it is home to 95% of street food stalls in Japan and had resumed public recruitment of new operators in 2017, aiming to leverage the city's globally renowned food scene for tourism promotion.[10] This represented a policy reversal, after prohibiting licence succession and transfer for over three decades. In **Seoul**, after legalizing street hawking in 2019, the city has proactively hosted themed night markets across 72 street markets since May 2024 to attract young people and foreign tourists.[11]

2.4 Turning to the **Mainland**, the Central Government has directed local governments to develop the "street economy" after the epidemic, in an attempt to stabilize the job market and boost retail consumption. Many city governments have thus relaxed restrictions on hawker trade and introduced support measures for regulated street vending.[12] Taking **Shanghai** as an example, the municipal government first amended its regulations on city appearance and environmental sanitation in December 2022, permitting hawking under supervision. This was followed by the issue of "Guiding opinions on street stalls operation" in June 2023, allowing district authorities to set up three types of hawker areas (i.e. divert spots, control spots and characteristic spots) based on certain criteria (e.g. traffic safety, environmental hygiene and public security).[13] These hawker areas have attracted both individual vendors and various famous brands, offering "high-end" and trendy products that showcase creativity, craftsmanship and local culture.[14] Coupled with waiving penalties for minor hawking offences, these hawker areas were reportedly well-received by both residents and tourists.[15]

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8 Eyewitness News (2024) and New York City Independent Budget Office (2024).

9 CBS News (2024).

10 Yoka Navi (2023, 2024).

11 Seoul Metropolitan Government (2018, 2024).

12 South China Morning Post (2023c) and Reuters (2023).

13 Traditional vendors selling daily necessities and fresh produce operate in divert spots and control spots under strict regulations. The 62 characteristic spots comprise "theme-based" street markets and pedestrian zones in prime locations, managed by local authorities and private operators. See 上海市人民政府(2023) and 澎湃新聞(2024).

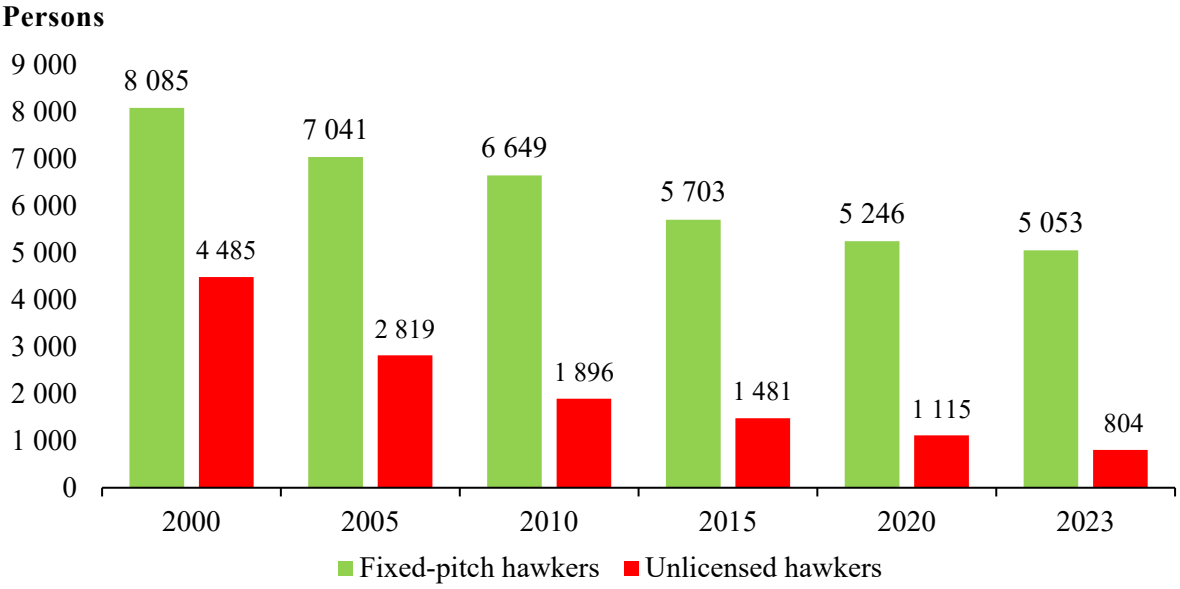
14 文匯網(2023) and 上觀新聞(2023).

15 上海市靜安區人民政府(2023) and 大公文匯網(2023).

3. Recent policy discussion on street markets in Hong Kong

3.1 Local street markets consist of on-street fixed hawker stalls and food stalls, scattering across 43 fixed-pitch hawker areas and 10 cooked food hawker bazaars in urban areas. While iconic markets like Temple Street and Ladies' Market have long served as tourist attractions, their appeals reportedly have waned amidst changing shopping behaviour favouring chain stores, modern shopping malls and online commerce.[16] Coupled with a more stringent hawker control policy, the number of licensed fixed-pitch hawkers have plunged by 38% to 5 053 during 2000 to 2023 (**Figure 1**). The existing hawker number represents just one-fourth of the corresponding number in the late 1980s. For unlicensed hawkers, the estimated number also shrank by 82% to only 804 over the same period, along with tighter enforcement against illegal hawking.

Figure 1 – Number of hawkers in Hong Kong



Source: Food and Environmental Hygiene Department.

3.2 On **hawker control policy**, the Government has suspended issuing new hawker licences since 1972, while relocating licensed hawkers to public markets and off-street hawker bazaars where practicable to reduce street obstruction and environmental nuisance.[17] Following a review of hawker policy in 2008, the Government relaxed some regulations and implemented new initiatives. ***First***, issuing of new hawker licences was resumed in three selected years (i.e. 2010, 2019 and 2022) just for filling over 640 vacant fixed-pitch stalls, along with

[16] South China Morning Post (2023a) and 香港01 (2023).

[17] GovHK (2017b).

continued suspension of new itinerant hawker licences.[18] ***Secondly***, succession of cooked food hawker licences was extended from the licensee's spouse to immediate family members and other interested operators in May 2010, subject to the approval of the District Council ("DC").[19] Yet such new licences do not have the right of succession. ***Thirdly***, a five-year assistance scheme was launched in June 2013 to offer a one-off ex gratia payment at HK$120,000 for surrendering fixed-pitch hawker licences, with a total of 854 approvals during 2013 to 2018.[20] ***Fourthly***, organizing temporary street bazaars should be "district-led", with "bottom-up" site proposals from organizers themselves before seeking support from the local community and DC. The Government reiterated that it had "no plan" to set up new fixed-pitch hawker areas.[21]

3.3 In April 2014 and December 2016, the LegCo had set up two separate subcommittees to discuss the issues relating to preservation of hawker culture and controversial enforcement of hawking policy. Members urged the Government to formulate a comprehensive and long-term hawker policy, advocating to adopt a "development" approach, rather than the "management and control" approach. In response to the suggestion of offering more pro-active support to district-based bazaars, the Government reiterated that it was striking a proper balance to enable licensed hawkers to operate on the one hand, and to ensure food safety, environmental hygiene and public order on the other.[22] The Government maintained that it was neither in the position to organize regular bazaars, nor to provide a list of available sites, given that the regular bazaar operations could have potential conflicts with existing designated land uses of those sites. Also, the concerns over the competition between hawkers and shops paying higher rent nearby should also be considered.[23]

3.4 Retail business in Hong Kong is in the doldrums after the epidemic, due to the reduced tourist spending and diversion of consumer spending from local residents to Guangdong. In September 2023, the Government launched temporary day bazaars and night markets across the territory to boost local consumption and tourism. By March 2024, at least eight bazaars were organized, in collaboration with the public and private sectors.[24] While these bazaars could attract a large number of visitors initially, their appeals waned after the first few weeks allegedly due to **(a)** insufficient marketing promotion,

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18 GovHK (2017b, 2024b).
19 GovHK (2017a).
20 Food and Health Bureau (2018).
21 Food and Health Bureau (2015) and GovHK (2020).
22 Food and Health Bureau (2015), Subcommittee on Hawker Policy (2015) and Subcommittee on Issues Relating to Bazaars (2018).
23 Subcommittee on Issues Relating to Bazaars (2018) and GovHK (2023, 2024b).
24 GovHK (2024a).

(b) excessive focus on tourists; **(c)** changing nightlife patterns of local residents; and **(d)** growing trend of local people "going north" to shop and dine during weekends and holidays.[25]

3.5 In response to these challenges, stakeholders call for optimization of the hawker policy. These include **(a)** streamlining the application process to make it easier for street market organizers to identify suitable sites; **(b)** establishing new regular street markets to provide stable employment opportunities; **(c)** reviewing the kind of products sold in existing street markets to enhance their appeal; **(d)** attracting younger vendors to rejuvenate the ageing hawker pool; and **(e)** increasing visitor numbers in the night markets through offering incentives (e.g. consumption vouchers) and providing free shuttle services to the markets.[26]

4. Promoting street markets in Singapore

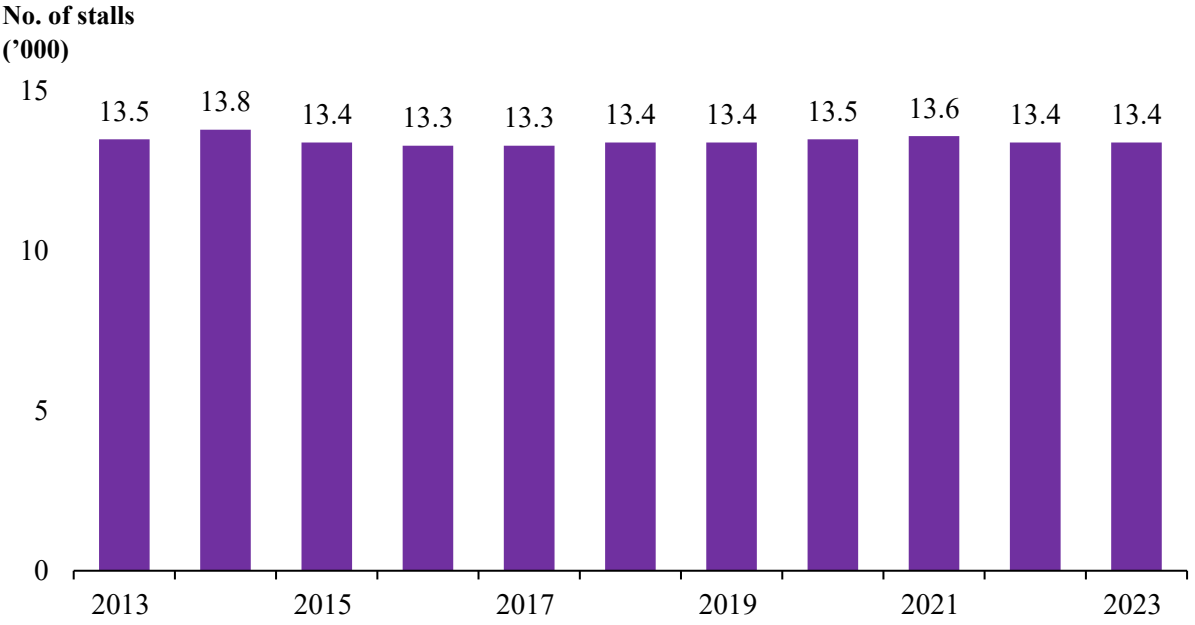
4.1 In Singapore, street hawkers used to be very common before the 1970s, leading to nuisances such as road obstruction and concerns over environmental hygiene. Between 1971 and 1986, the Singaporean government responded by building 113 covered hawker centres and markets to relocate over 18 000 licensed street hawkers. After a hiatus in the 1990s and 2000s (aiming to encourage youths to work in higher value-added sectors), the government resumed the construction of hawker centres in 2011, planning to add 20 more new hawker centres in new development areas by 2027. This policy shift is meant to address public concerns over rising rentals of hawker stalls due to inadequate supply on the one hand, and growing public demand for accessing affordable hawker food on the other.[27] At present, the National Environment Agency ("NEA") manages altogether 121 hawker centres and markets. By end-2023, there were some 13 400 hawker stalls, within which 6 000 were cooked food stalls with an average occupancy rate of 97% (**Figure 2**).

[25] BBC (2024), 許佳龍、吳曉雯 (2023) and 香港01 (2024a, 2024b).

[26] South China Morning Post (2023b), Legislative Council (2024), 星島網 (2023), 橙新聞 (2023), 東網 (2024) and 獨立媒體 (2024).

[27] BiblioAsia (2013), Tay (2014) and Vittles (2024).

Figure 2 – Number of licensed hawker stalls in Singapore



Source: Department of Statistics Singapore.

4.2 After five decades of development, hawker centres have become an integral part of Singaporean lifestyle. Not only do they serve as vital "social infrastructure" fostering community bonding and national identity in Singapore, they also provide affordable food and goods to low-income residents.[28] As from the 1990s, Singapore's hawker centres have also been increasingly promoted as tourist attractions. Yet the hawker trade in Singapore is facing a significant manpower challenges right now, as the median age of hawkers was as high as 60 in 2021 amidst the ageing trend. Young people are not interested in this trade because of long working hours and high start-up and operating costs.[29]

4.3 To promote hawker culture, the Singaporean government has reviewed its hawker policy on a number of occasions, first through a panel in 2012 and a committee in 2017, and concluded with a workgroup in 2019. These taskforces are well-represented (comprising government officials, business leaders, hawker associations, academics and citizens), studying the hawker trade and gauging the public views for adoption of multi-pronged strategy.[30] Key measures include:

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[28] Tan (2015) and National Library Board Singapore (2021).

[29] Tan and Khor (2024).

[30] Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources (2012) and Workgroup on Sustaining the Hawker Trade (2020).

(a) **Inscribing hawker culture as an intangible cultural heritage**: In August 2018, the then Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced Singapore's bid to inscribe hawker culture on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, stating that it would "help to safeguard and promote this unique culture for future generations". The bid succeeded in December 2020. As the Singaporean government must report to UNESCO once every six years to demonstrate its sustained efforts in protecting hawker culture, this commitment ensures continued investment in preserving the hawker trade and promoting it as a "soft cultural power" for tourism in the coming decades;[31]

(b) **Training programmes for new entrants**: The Singaporean government is keen to attract new entrants to sustain the hawker trade by launching three milestone programmes during 2018 to 2022. First on ***Incubation Stall Programme ("ISP")***, it was launched in February 2018 to provide eligible aspiring hawkers with stalls to start their business, along with a rental discount of up to 50% for the first 15 months. Secondly on ***Hawkers' Development Programme***, it was launched in July 2020, with classroom training by certified trainers on culinary and business management, followed by apprenticeship with experienced hawkers for two months. Participants will then enter the Start of Business phase where they may bid for available stalls through NEA's monthly public tender or test their business plans via ISP.

Thirdly on ***Hawkers Succession Scheme***, it was launched in January 2022 to assist veteran hawkers (with at least 15 years of experience) without family successors to pass down their skills and stalls to other aspiring hawkers. Upon pairing, the successors will undergo a three-month apprenticeship under the veteran hawkers to learn business operations and food recipes. The successor must take a food tasting test and pass it to complete the scheme.[32]

(c) **Rental concession for new hawker centres**: To support hawkers in new hawker centres built from 2019 onwards, the ***Staggered Rent Scheme*** was launched. It offers rental concessions of 10%-20% to stallholders during the first two years of operation,

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[31] The Strait Times (2018), Tan (2021) and Tan and Khor (2024).

[32] National Environment Agency (2024a, 2024c, 2024d) and Parliament of Singapore (2021a).

helping them manage operating costs while building their clientele in the neighbourhood;[33]

(d) **Productivity improvement and digitalization of hawker trade**: To alleviate manpower shortage in the hawker trade, the Singaporean government has implemented two programmes to enhance the industry's operational efficiency. First on the ***Hawkers' Productivity Grant***, it was launched in October 2017, improving hawkers' productivity in food preparation and service delivery by funding 80% of the expenses for purchasing eligible equipment (e.g. e-ordering, queue management and kitchen management system), subject to a ceiling of S$7,000 (HK$40,740).

Secondly on the ***Hawkers Go Digital Scheme***, it was introduced in mid-2020, assisting hawkers to digitalize their operations through unified e-payment and e-ordering system, with financial incentives of up to S$1,500 (HK$8,730) offered to participating hawkers;[34]

(e) **Subsidizing organized activities in hawker centres**: Under the Vibrant Hawker Culture Programme launched in 2017, it would promote hawker culture at hawker centres and markets through activities. With an expanded scope in 2023, the programme now subsidizes the staging of eligible non-revenue generating activities (e.g. festive celebrations, art workshops, music performances) at hawker centres to attract visitors and boost their spending in the venues. Funding is capped at S$5,000 (HK$29,100) per project, up to S$10,000 (HK$58,200) per financial year for each organizer;[35]

(f) **Social enterprises managing new hawker centres**: Since 2015, social enterprises are invited to manage 13 new hawker centres, leveraging their networks to provide job opportunities for lower-income persons and fulfil the social missions of hawker centres. While those social enterprises offering lower stall rentals and better stall allocation are accorded higher priority, they have flexibility in determining their own business strategy and tenant mix. At least 50% of the operating surpluses must be ploughed back to initiatives benefiting the hawker centres and/or their stallholders

[33] National Environment Agency (2019).
[34] Tan (2021) and National Environment Agency (2024b).
[35] National Environment Agency (2024f).

(e.g. increasing customer, reducing operating costs and training of new hawkers);[36] and

(g) **Upgrading facilities of hawker centres**: During 2001 to 2014, the Singaporean government invested a total of S$420 million (HK$2.4 billion) to renovate 106 hawker centres, aiming to ensure a pleasant dining environment for patrons. The government also launched the Hawker Centres Transformation Programme in 2021 for hawker centres in need of redevelopment. This new initiative goes beyond repairs and redecoration, including installation of ventilation enhancements, automation of facilities and extensive re-tiling using latest technology. Additionally, each hawker centre undergoes periodic restoration every six to eight years to maintain its physical condition.[37]

4.4 On ***policy effectiveness***, implementation of the aforesaid measures has helped sustain the vibrancy of the hawker culture, as evidenced by the stable number of hawker stalls staying above 13 300 over the past decade in Singapore (Figure 2). They have managed to attract new entrants to the hawker trade as well. For example, 92 participants joined ISP during 2018 to 2021, 38 or two-fifths of whom became full-fledged hawkers, with a median age of only 36. For the Hawker Succession Scheme, at least seven veteran hawkers were engaged to pass their business insights to non-family successors. Three participants have completed or in the process of transferring their stalls to successors, while two others have been matched with potential successors.[38]

5. Promoting street markets in London

5.1 London is hailed as an exemplar "Market City" in Europe, on the back of its extensive network of street markets and robust support infrastructure. As an integral part of "London assets", street markets are integrated into urban planning, development strategies and policy making. According to an official study conducted by the city government, there were 280 street markets located across 33 boroughs in London in 2017, up by 72% over the 163 markets in 2010. Street markets also created 13 250 jobs or 2.8% of retail employment in London. The annual value-added derived was £248 million (HK$2.5 billion).[39]

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[36] Legislative Council Secretariat (2021) and Parliament of Singapore (2017, 2024a).
[37] National Environment Agency (2023).
[38] Parliament of Singapore (2021b, 2024a, 2024d).
[39] Greater London Authority (2017), Mackenzie (2019) and London Markets Board (2022).

5.2 More recently, a few privately-run street markets (e.g. Borough Market and Camden Market) in London have become popular tourist attractions, but a number of historic street markets and bazaars were demolished for redevelopment, causing some veteran street vendors to relocate to peripheral locations. Moreover, some council-operated street markets witness a drop in their sales revenue and footfall amidst fierce competition from supermarkets and online shopping, resulting in fewer new entrants into the trade. In response to public calls for preserving street markets in the early 2000s, the national Parliament and the Mayor of London reviewed the issue for at least four times during 2008 to 2017, recommending a couple of policy measures for implementation.[40] In December 2017, the London Markets Board ("LMB") was set up to advise the mayor on street market policies, in close collaboration with hawker associations and market operators.[41] Some market development teams were also set up to implement the upgrading of the street trade such as digitalization.[42]

5.3 In view of further decline in the footfall by 20% during the pandemic, the city government of London has launched additional initiatives to revive the street markets and promote tourism.[43] Major facilitation measures implemented since the 2010s to rejuvenate street markets in London are summarized below:

(a) **Preserving street markets as a high policy priority**: Under the National Planning Policy Framework promulgated in March 2012, street markets are recognized as key venues for ensuring "long-term vitality and viability" of town centres throughout England. Local governments should "retain and enhance" existing street markets and "re-introduce or create new ones" where appropriate.

More specifically on the London Plan 2021, local councils have a duty to support street markets and lay down measures to improve their management, enhance their offerings, and contribute to local identity. Furthermore, under the London's Visitor Experience

[40] Gonzalez and Dawson (2016), London Assembly (2022b) and Euronews (2023).

[41] The London Markets Board comprises 19 members including government officials, business leaders, representatives of hawker associations and academics. See Greater London Authority (2024b)

[42] House of Commons (2009), Greater London Authority (2017) and Tower Hamlets Council (2022).

[43] House of Commons (2009), London Assembly (2009), London Development Agency (2010) and Greater London Authority (2017).

Strategy released in October 2023, street markets are considered to be able offer "unique experiences" to visitors, unlike retail chains;[44]

(b) **Incubation programmes for new entrants**: In January 2019, LMB allocated £75,000 (HK$744,000) to pilot a hawker incubation programme, providing two rounds of six-month intensive business training to 30 new hawkers, targeting young people and ethnic minorities. Buoyed by positive feedback and low dropout rate, the government allocated another £150,000 (HK$1.5 million) in 2021, helping local authorities and market operators develop localised strategies and business incubation models designed to attract new hawkers. As a result, more local councils have launched similar incubation programmes in their street markets.

Additionally, LMB has subsidized hawker associations to organize youth markets where young entrepreneurs are awarded licences to trade in designated street markets to test their business plan while benefiting from reduced market fees and charges. Several local councils have adopted this initiative in recent years;[45]

(c) **Creating new street markets from underused/unused premises**: To establish more street markets with new elements, some local councils have identified empty plazas, shops and buildings near high streets to create temporary street markets, selling creative art and handmade products and street food, or hosting special events.[46]

Temporary street markets help London to implement its strategy to become a 24-hour city with a vibrant night economy. This strategy began with a pilot project of setting up a Night Time Enterprise Zone in a borough in September 2019, which was later extended to three more councils in November 2022. Each zone, supported by annual funding of £130,000 (HK$1.3 million), hosts night markets and organizes various events in vacant venues and underused buildings, boosting retail spending in town centres and provide opportunities for start-ups;[47]

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44 Greater London Authority (2021b), Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2023) and London & Partners (2023).

45 London Markets Board (2018), Greater London Authority (2021a, 2024a), Tower Hamlets Council (2022) and Hackney Council (2023).

46 Hackney Council (2023) and Greater London Authority (2024a).

47 London Markets Board (2018) and Greater London Authority (2024c, 2024d).

(d) **Inviting third-party operators to revitalize deprived council-run markets**: In view of the success of some privately-operated street markets in London, some local councils have contracted out the management of their sluggish markets with low occupancy rates to private operators or hawker associations since the early 2010s. The shift aims to introduce flexibility and new perspectives of management to these markets, similar to the practice in Singapore;[48]

(e) **Funding for upgrading street markets**: As another key measure to help street markets thrive, the Mayor of London allocated over £38 million (HK$377 million) to invest at least 67 market-focused projects between 2015 and 2021. The majority of the funding was channelled towards refurbishment of street markets and improvements to surrounding public space;[49] and

(f) **More diversity in street markets**: To prevent street markets from becoming "outdated", some local councils have reviewed their regulations to enrich the sort of goods and services sold. Major regulatory changes include: (i) allowing a wider range of goods for sale to meet evolving consumer demand; (ii) tightening regulations to prevent too many stalls selling the same products in a street market;[50] and (iii) issuing new types of licence that accommodates different operational modes, such as night markets.

5.4 On **policy effectiveness**, the above measures reportedly have fostered the hawker trade in London, renewing interest in street market trading and prompting an increase in the number of applications for hawker licences across various boroughs in recent years. For the hawker incubation programme piloted by LMB, the dropout rate was less than 10% and this programme is extended to most of the 33 boroughs in London. Moreover, the new initiatives to set up night markets in three boroughs are well-received and other boroughs reportedly intend to follow suit.[51] However, there are public concerns over inadequate funding allocated to local councils for refurbishing existing street markets.[52]

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48 Cross River Partnership (2014), Tower Hamlets Council (2022) and Hackney Council (2023).

49 London Markets Board (2021) and London Assembly (2022a).

50 Most local councils adopt a "four-pitch rule" requiring stalls selling the same goods cannot be allocated within four pitches in a street market. More recently, some local councils planned to tighten the rule to three pitches or even one pitch. See Westminster City Council (2012), Lambeth Council (2022) and Hackney Council (2023).

51 Greater London Authority (2021a, 2024d) and Tower Hamlets Council (2022).

52 The New Statesman (2022), Euronews (2023) and Southwark Council (2024).

6. Observations

6.1 In **Hong Kong**, there are high hopes in society to revitalize the hawker trade for boosting both inbound tourism and local consumer spending, in the face of slackened macroeconomic performance after the epidemic. The Government has thus organized a couple of day and night markets in various districts since September 2023, but with limited stimulus effect. Some stakeholders consider the existing hawker policies "overly stringent", urging more relaxation.

6.2 In **Singapore**, the 121 hawker centres and markets scattered across the country are globally renowned as "intangible cultural heritage" of the world, but the hawker trade is facing twin challenges of manpower ageing and shortage right now. The Singaporean government has taken a couple of measures to revive the hawker trade since the 2010s. They include **(a)** launching incubation and succession programmes to encourage new entrants; **(b)** subsidizing stall rentals, equipment, and hawker centre activities; **(c)** inviting innovative social enterprise to run the hawker centres; and **(d)** renovating and upgrading hawker centres for a pleasant dining environment for patrons.

6.3 In **London**, the Mayor of London has devoted additional resources to promote the hawker trade to address the public concerns over demolition of some old street markets. Policy initiatives include **(a)** making the need to preserve street markets explicit in national planning policies; **(b)** launching hawker incubation programmes to attract new entrants; **(c)** creating new street markets from underused or unused premises; **(d)** inviting new operators to revitalize sluggish markets; **(e)** government subsidy for market refurbishment; and **(f)** offering more diversified products in the street markets.

Prepared by LEUNG Chi-kit
Research Office
Research and Information Division
Legislative Council Secretariat
16 December 2024
Tel: 3919 3181

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Appendix

Promoting street markets in selected places

	Hong Kong	Singapore	London
1. Number of licensed hawkers[(1)]	5 053	13 430	13 250
2. Dedicated measures applied to hawkers and street markets			
(a) Preserving street markets in planning policy	×	×	✓
(b) Regular policy reviews	×	✓	✓
(c) Dedicated expert committee	×	×	✓
(d) Incubation programme	×	✓	✓
(e) Succession programme	×	✓	×
(f) Rental concessions	×	✓	✓
(g) Subsidy for purchasing equipment and digital system	×	✓	×
(h) Subsidy for activities hosted in street markets	×	✓	×
(i) Inviting new operators to revitalize street markets	×	✓	✓
(j) Creating new street markets from underused premises	×	×	✓
(k) Developing "night economy" via street markets	✓	×	✓
(l) Renovation and upgrade of street markets	✓	✓	✓
(m) Diversifying the offerings of street markets	×	×	✓

Note: (1) Figures of fixed-pitch hawkers in Hong Kong in 2023, hawker stalls in Singapore in 2023 and licensed hawkers in London in 2017 respectively.

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Hong Kong

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