## (RE)ORDERING AND (DIS)ORDERING OF STREET TRADE

The case of Recife, Brazil

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#### Declaration

This thesis has not been submitted in support of an application for another degree at this or any other university. It is the result of my own work and includes nothing that is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated. Many of the ideas in this thesis were the product of discussion with my supervisors Professor Niall Hayes of the Department of Organisation, Work and Technology and Professor Monideepa Tarafdar of the Department of Management Science, both at Lancaster University, UK. Excerpts of this thesis are under revise and resubmit second round for the following journal:

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Presentation document: <u>https://www.slideshare.net/ruiramos/assembling-difference-through-digitised-music-the-case-of-urban-piracy-in-recife-brazil</u>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Presentation document: <u>https://www.slideshare.net/ruiramos/the-formalising-regime-and-its-formalising-technology-the-case-of</u>

(RE)ORDERING AND (DIS)ORDERING OF STREET TRADE

This dissertation is firstly dedicated to all street traders I have met and, more broadly, to the generous and bighearted people of Recife which have open their offices, street stalls, homes and hearts to me during fieldwork in Recife, Brazil 2014/2015.

#### Abstract

Informal urban street trade is a prevalent feature across the Global South where much of the production and/or buying and selling of goods and services is unregulated. For this reason, local authorities have historically seen it as backward, inefficient and detrimental to the development of urban areas and have thus developed formalisation programmes aimed to control and ultimately make it disappear. Critics argue that the design and implementation of these programmes can marginalise and disempower informal traders as it acts against the traders' livelihoods and long-established practices they have developed for decades. This research speaks to these concerns and aims to investigate how informal urban street trade manages to continuously reproduce itself despite formalising efforts to make it vanish. The study follows a post-structuralist approach informed by post-development sensibilities (Escobar, 2011). The purpose is two-fold. First, to critically investigate the implications of imposed power-knowledge essentialism inherent to formalisation processes (Foucault, 1980). Second, to analyse the ways in which cultural and socioeconomic development is enacted through the daily assembling of informal urban street trade (Farías and Bender, 2012; McFarlane, 2011).

The research offers a thick ethnographic inquiry, conducted over a one year-long period (2014-2015) in the urban centre of Recife, Northeast capital of Pernambuco state, Brazil. Recife is a particularly rich site to investigate these issues as informal urban street trade has historically been pervasive of its squares and streets and the municipally has in place a formalisation programme aimed to gather information about traders, license them and relocate them into purposefully-built facilities. The ethnographic inquiry focused on the practices, knowledges, materials and technologies associated with the daily work of both informal traders, selling on the streets, and governing officials implementing the formalisation programme, both on the streets and on the City Council office. Primary data collection was gathered through ethnographic observations and fieldnote diaries enriched with pictures and audio recordings of the day-to-day sensorial experience of informal urban street trade. This was enhanced with informal conversations as well as semi-structured and unstructured interviews with governing bodies' officials, licenced and unlicensed street traders, formal shop owners, and a diversified set of urban citizens.

The thesis highlights that formalisation, through the introduction of regulations, classification schemes and practices of classifying traders through an information system, seeks to establish and expand an individualistic developmentality among all actors. Through this, formalisation aims to shape and normalise their everyday practices to focus on the City Council's agenda of rendering informal street trade as problematic and turning the solution of formalised trade not only unquestionable, but desirable by all. More problematically, the formalisation programme's overdetermination of what a socioeconomic order is to be and its imposition of individualising subjectivities to assist in its implementation acts against the traders' collective and community-based understanding of work and livelihoods which, contrary to the formalisation discourse, greatly benefit the cultural and socioeconomic development of these communities. This is achieved through the traders' daily assembling of work, value and supply on the streets. The findings reveal that the collective organisation of traders' work is strongly based on a 'cooperative ethos' that is not only efficient in taking advantage of and adapting to the challenging conditions of street markets, but also is key on the ongoing fostering and strengthening of the local community identity. The findings also show that traders, through their tacit knowledge of the best fits between products, services and sites, are key in shaping the valuation of both formal and informal enterprises as well as urban sites thus bolstering the local economy. Lastly, the findings also reveal that, through their interactions with formal and informal supply circuits, street traders are fundamental for the distribution and promotion of local artists and producers thus helping on the support and fostering of local culture.

The main contribution of this research is it offers novel empirical and theoretical insights on the ways in which formalisation and informality are performed. It richly reveals the contested nature of development that is negotiated daily between the individualist developmentality imposed by formalisation and the communitarianbased development possibilities which are enacted through informal trading practices. These developmental possibilities are turned invisible by formalisation as classification enforces a strong reading of street trade which is ontologically distant and even contrary to the community-based values which make street trade not only resilient to formalising efforts but also adaptive to the challenging conditions and, more importantly, central to the cultural and socioeconomic development of these communities.

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(RE)ORDERING AND (DIS)ORDERING OF STREET TRADE

#### CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Informal urban street trade is a prevalent feature of cities and towns across the Global South where much of the production and/or buying and selling of goods and services is unregulated. It takes place on the streets and sidewalks of urban centres where informal workers interact with people through improvised arrangements of stalls, products, plastic chairs, etc. These activities are often framed as comprising 'the production and exchange of legal goods and services that involve the lack of appropriate business permits, violation of zoning codes, failure to report tax liability, non-compliance with labour regulations governing contracts and work conditions, and/or the lack of legal guarantees in relations with suppliers and clients' (Cross, 2000, p. 580). For this reason, informal urban street trade has historically been seen by local authorities as backward, inefficient and detrimental to the development of urban areas and consequently, targeted by formalisation programmes (Cross, 2000; Bromley, 2000; Seligmann, 2001; Smith, 2005). Nevertheless, despite all the efforts made by local authorities to make informal urban street trade disappear it has shown no signs of reduction and also, perhaps surprisingly, it has been growing and expanding itself, with a recent report by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) stating that around two thirds of the world population work in the informal sector (ILO, 2018). What this says is that informality is more of the norm rather than the exception (Roy, 2005; 2009), and thus deserving more attention. This is the focus of this thesis which aims to investigate how informality manages to continuously reproduce itself despite the substantial efforts to make it vanish.

Municipalities have historically positioned informal urban street trade negatively. This is legitimised through a number of rationales which all align in placing it against the traders themselves, but also the formal vendors, the consumers, the wider population of towns and the overall urban development of cities. First, in relation to the street traders, it is argued that their activities are associated with subsistence living which is only undertaken when there is no alternative (Dibben et al., 2015; Evers and Seale, 2015). Second, in relation to formal vendors, it is argued that street traders perform unfair competition as they can sell products at lower prices due to their absence of rent, mortgage, tax, etc. (Duneier and Carter, 1999; Williams, 2014). Third, in relation to consumers, street traders are accused of selling unsafe products and/or be associated with contraband (Loukaitou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht, 2009; Williams, 2014). Fourth, in relation to the wider population of urban centres, street trade has also been associated with hindering urban mobility and having the potential to increase traffic accidents (Donovan 2008; Smith 1996). Lastly, and aligning all these arguments together is the overall framing of informal urban street trade as it being a threat to the visions of security,

orderliness and development upon which municipalities envision what a modern and civilised city should be (Turner and Schoenberger, 2012; Williams, 2014). In light of this, Municipalities design and implement formalisation programmes to contain informal trading by controlling what is sold, who is selling, and where trade is conducted which often involves relocating street traders to governmentbuilt malls or giving them specific allocated space in streets where they became 'licensed' to practice 'regulated' trading activities (Bromley, 1998). Thus, what before had tried to be 'solved' through crackdowns and raids, has in present days been replaced with formalisation policies which typically advocate the need for greater public order and state control (Cross, 2000).

The main issue with formalisation policies is that, not only are they failing to take informality out of the streets, but also, and more problematically, critics argue that its implementation can marginalise and disempower informal workers and ends up achieving a formalisation of the existing structures of inequality (Benjaminsen et al., 2006). They claim this happens because of a developmentalist framing within which formalisation policies are designed (Williams, 2005; Cross, 2000). This developmentalist rationale centres formalisation programmes within modernist understandings of 'development' and 'economics' which restrains the understating of informality solely in relation to its utility towards formalisation (Cross, 2000; Scott, 1998). The consequence of this is that these policies offer few to no space to include the long-established practices of these workers which are integral to their livelihoods and to how cultural and socioeconomic development is achieved daily by these populations (Escobar, 2011; Gibson-Graham, 1996; Williams 2005; Roy, 2005; 2016; Evers and Seale, 2014). For instance, a small but growing body of post-structuralist literature, broadly derived from post-development sensitivities, has offered rich ethnographic insights on the day-to-day practices of informal urban trading which expands the usual themes of labour, production, commodities, capital, and consumption towards a broader understanding of how these markets benefit cities in relation to 'employment, skills training, transport, housing, health care, innovation, belonging, cultural exchange, wellbeing, community, urban regeneration, identity formation, placemaking, recycling, and economic growth' (Evers and Seale, 2015). Findings show that informal trade is often associated with the local production of society and culture (Mete et al., 2013); enable urban participation and community building (Singerman, 1995; Nurudeen and Usman, 2010; Williams and Windebank, 2002), resilience and social capital (Lyons and Snoxell, 2005; Watson, 2009) and help with the regeneration of deprived urban areas (Middleton, 2003). What these findings suggest is that there is a broad spectrum of cultural and socioeconomic possibilities within informality which are left invisible in formalisation programmes and are at risk of disappearing due to the implementation of these policies (Musembi, 2007; Siegel and Veiga, 2009; Cousins, 2009).

This is the problem that this research aims to address. Although some studies have looked at the effects of formalisation and others have brought light to the developmental potential that informal trading has on these populations, few have focused on the ways in which informal urban street trade and formalisation are practised, organised and negotiated on the ground. In relation to this issue, post-structuralists argue it is urgent to critically question the modernist-based normative authority that has been given to 'formality' and 'formalisation' as a way to tackle informality in academia and policy. Plus, they urge for the need for more empirically-driven, practice-based inquiries which look at street trade beyond the restrictions imposed by developmentalist framings so that it is possible to shed light on the ways in which cultural and socioeconomic development is enacted daily in this context (Portes, Castells and Portes, 1989; Cook, 2008; Coletto, 2010; Bhowmik, 2012; Roy, 2004; 2005; 2016; Leyshon et al., 2003).

#### 1.1. Research aim

This research speaks to these concerns by looking at how cultural and socioeconomic development is enacted through the daily practises of both governing officials, in their daily formalisation routines, and informal street traders, in their daily trading routines. This should not only be able to critically account for the implications of signifying informality in certain ways, as it is practiced through formalisation policies aimed to '(re)order' it, but also account for its actual '(dis)ordered' operation, as traders assemble their trading activities on the streets daily, and make visible what these practices enact in relation to their lived, cultural and socioeconomic development. In light of this, the thesis adopts a post-structuralist approach informed by post-development sensibilities (Escobar, 2011) and offers a thick ethnographic inquiry into the daily operation, and *possibility*, within informality, to address the following research aim:

**(RA)** Investigate the daily operation of informal urban street trade as made of both governing officials' formalising practices and traders' informal ones, and assess how these relate to the daily achievings of cultural and socioeconomic development of street traders.

#### 1.2. Ethnographic context

The investigation was based on a one year-long ethnographic inquiry (2014-2015) into the daily operation of informal urban street trade and the implementation of a formalisation programme by governing officials in the urban centre of Recife, Northeast capital of Pernambuco state, Brazil. In Recife, street trade can be traced back to the colonial era and is still today a pervasive form of

trade which can be found throughout the urban centre in its squares and streets. Informal traders in the city have historically been targeted by policies that aim to 'revitalise the urban centre' and the Municipality has put in place more recently, in 2014, a formalisation programme aimed to gather information about traders, issuing trading licenses according to specific regulations and relocating them into purposefully-built facilities. This makes Recife a particularly rich site to pursue an investigation on the operation of informal street trade and the tensions resulting from formalisation programmes.

The ethnographic inquiry focused on the practices, knowledges, materials and technologies associated with the processes of formalising street trade, by governing officials, and those associated with the daily work of informal street traders. The inquiry was conducted throughout the squares and streets where informal trade was prevalent and where governing officials were present, as well as within the City Council department of Mobility and Urban Control (CSURB) which was responsible for managing the implementation of the formalisation programme. Primary data collection was gathered through ethnographic observations on the day-to-day workings of both traders and governing officials as well as of the whole sensory experience of urban city life in relation to the negotiations and frictions happening between formalisation and informality. This was followed by fieldnote diaries enriched with pictures and audio recordings. These were enhanced with informal conversations as well as semi-structured interviews with governing officials, licensed and unlicensed street traders, formal shop owners, local producers and artists and a diversified set of urban citizens.

# 1.3. Research questions

With the above in mind, the ethnographic inquiry aligns a process-oriented focus on the practices, knowledges, technologies and materials involved in the processes undertaken by both governing officials and informal street traders to address the following research questions:

- **(RQ1)** In which ways are the governing officials' practices of formalising street trade implicated in the cultural and socioeconomic development of street traders?
- **(RQ2)** In which ways are the street traders' practices of street trading implicated in their cultural and socioeconomic development?

These research questions are addressed through the remainder of the thesis, as I outline next.

#### 1.4. Thesis outline

In CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW, I present a literature review of 'informal economy' in relation to the historical emergence of the field of 'development'. I discuss the modernist-based understandings of 'development' and 'the economy' where most research has been anchored and uncover the main issues in relation to developmentalist-based formalisation policies (section 2.1). I then present the post-structuralist approach to informality and describe how a post-development sensibility helps understanding street trade beyond developmentalist-based perspectives (Escobar, 2011). I describe how this thesis follows a post-structuralist approach and is informed by a *critical* lens, on the implications of formalisation (**RQ1**), and a *possibility* lens, in relation to the developmental possibilities inherent within street trade (**RQ2**) and finish the chapter with a review of ethnographic findings informed by these perspectives (section 2.2).

In CHAPTER 3. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS, I present the theoretical underpinnings used to embrace the dual lens of *critique* and *possibility* that guide this research. In relation to the *critical lens*, used to guide the first research question (**RQ1**), I outline Foucault inspired literature on power-knowledge, subjectivity, classification and governmentality (Foucault, 1977; 1980; 1982; Henman and Dean, 2010; Poster, 1990; Bowker and Star, 1999; Lie, 2015; Ilcan and Phillips, 2010) and describe how this can be productive for critically engaging with formalising practices and its effects (section 3.1). Then, aligned with the *possibility lens* used to guide the second research question (**RQ2**), I outline the concepts of assemblage thinking and urban assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Farías and Bender, 2012; McFarlane, 2011) and describe how this can be productive in engaging with the 'messy' modes of organising informal street trade and make visible what they enact in relation to the cultural and socioeconomic development of these communities (section 3.2).

In *CHAPTER 4. CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY*, I describe the empirical setting of Recife's informal urban street trade and the formalisation programme which has been introduced by the Municipality in 2014 (section 4.1). I then go on to position this thesis' 'thick ethnographic inquiry' (Geertz, 1973) in relation to the ontological scope of inquiry and describe how this has been praised by post-development scholars and urban assemblage ones for its ability in challenging modernity-based constructs (Escobar, 2011) while attending to the possibilities that lay in the 'periphery' of modernity' (McFarlane, 2011b). Following this, I describe in detail how access to the field was carried out, the methods used for data collection, the processes applied for analysis and the storytelling techniques used in relation to the presentation of findings. Overall, in the one year-long period of inquiry, I conducted rich ethnographic observations on an almost-daily basis (around 6 hours daily). This were enhanced with 98 interviews, 276 audio

recordings, more than 13 A5-sized paper notebooks with field notes, and more than 500 pictures. This was grouped into three fieldwork diaries associated with three phases of inquiry with 200 pages in total.

In *CHAPTER 5. FORMALISING STREET TRADE*, I present the ethnographic findings associated with the governing officials' formalising practices. The ethnographic narrative is presented through seven vignettes, grouped in relation to two main processes associated with the daily governing of street trade. These were the process of *legitimising* the formalisation programme (section 5.1) and the process of *classifying* street traders into the licensing system (section 5.2).

In *CHAPTER 6. INFORMAL STREET TRADING*, I present the ethnographic findings associated with the street traders' practices as they go on with their daily work on the streets. The ethnographic narrative is presented through six vignettes, grouped in relation to three main processes associated with the daily assembling of informal urban street trade as it was daily practiced by traders. These were the processes of *working* on the streets (section 6.1), *valuing* of street trade products, services and sites (section 6.2) and *supplying* of products to street traders (section 6.3).

In CHAPTER 7. DISCUSSION, I align the empirical findings with the poststructuralist dual lens of critique and possibility (Escobar, 2011) and address the research questions. First, in relation to the thesis' first research question (**RQ1**), I draw from Foucault and Foucault-inspired literature on classification (Foucault, 1977; 1980; 1982; Henman and Dean, 2010; Poster, 1990; Bowker and Star, 1999) to argue that formalisation, through its regulations and classification schemes, acts as a regime of truth which seeks to legitimise and reinforce a modernist understanding of economic life, city culture and urban development. In so doing, formalisation seeks to enact an individualist developmentality (Lie, 2015: Ilcan and Phillips, 2010) aimed to shape the conduct of conduct on all actors to align with the need to (re)order informal trade towards formalisation (section 7.1). In relation to the second research question (RQ2), I draw from assemblages and assemblage-inspired literature on the urban context (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: Farías and Bender, 2012: McFarlane, 2011) and argue that, contrary to the individualistic rationale of formalisation, the traders' practices are associated to a community understanding of work and livelihoods which, not only make for an effective means of socioeconomic ordering but also, and more importantly, are intrinsic to the establishing and strengthening of local community identity, both the formal and informal commerce and local culture (section 7.2).

Lastly, in *CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION*, I outline the main contributions and implications of this research (section 8.1), describe its limitations (section 8.2) and present potential paths for future research (section 8.3).

#### CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

# CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The objective of this chapter is to help show how this research fits amongst the existing discussions in development literature which are critical of developmentalist and modernist-based ideologies inherent to formalisation programmes (section 2.1). It follows to situate the research aims and questions in relation to the post-structuralist approach to informality and detail the post-development literature which it aims to contribute to (section 2.2).

In section 2.1. Developmentalism and formalisation, I present a brief historical review of the emergence of the concept of 'informal economy' as an academic and policy-oriented object of study and intervention. Through a review of the field of 'development' I detail the three main approaches used to understand informality: the dualist, the legalist and the structuralist approaches. I follow with implications associated with а discussion on the modernist-driven understandings of 'economics' and 'development' which are intrinsic to how formalisation policies have been designed and help explain the broad failure of its implementation worldwide. I finish the section with a summary of the shortcomings of the three approaches described earlier and summarise the rationale for this thesis' research aim (RA).

In section 2.2. *Post-development and informality*, I present the post-structuralist approach to informality and discuss the ways in which post-development sensibilities can help 'decentering' the modernist-driven understanding of 'economics' and 'development' which shape formalisation policies. I present a dual lens of *critique*, on the processes associated with the formalisation of street trade, and *possibility*, that embraces and brings visibility to the 'alternative' ways in which development is enacted through the practices of street traders. I then show ethnographic studies which adopt the *critique* and *possibility* lens and finish the chapter with a summary of the key points that inform this thesis' research questions (**RQs**).

## 2.1. Developmentalism and formalisation

Informal urban street trade has historically been influenced by the disciplines of 'development' and 'economics' from which its most common and controversial concepts have emerged – 'informal economy' and 'informal sector' (Elyachar, 2005). In this section I look at the historical emergence of these concepts in relation to the field of 'development', consider the three main approaches used to understand informality – the dualist, the legalist and the structuralist approaches – and discuss their implications in contemporary formalisation policies.

#### Modernisation, dependency and the dualist approach

With the end of WWII and the increasing spread of economic globalisation, the concept of 'development' emerged in relation to the need to set out policies which could globally achieve capitalist progress and restore the world equilibrium. This was the 'era of development' and it set the first cut between what was considered 'developed' and 'undeveloped' or 'developing' countries. This was academically supported by the Modernisation Theory which recognised 'modernity' to be associated with a high degree in which nations, mostly western, had achieved industrialisation (Parsons 1960; Rostow, 1971; Inkeles, 1975; Moore, 1979). The modernists leveraged the values of modernity in opposition to the ones of tradition within which the clear majority of small indistinctive trading activities, mostly found in the Global South, were established. For modernists, these traditional ways of exchange were associated with 'poverty' and 'backwardness' and would soon be transitioned into the 'developed socioeconomic order' by following the 'modernisation path'. This consisted of putting in place the right set of policies following the best-known models of economic development such as the 'unlimited labour supply' (Lewis, 1954), 'phases of economic growth' (Rostow, 1960) or the 'big push' (Rosenstein-Rodan, 1961) so that a 'turning point' could be reached when the majority of the population had formal jobs with salaries above the subsistence level (Lewis, 1954). However, through the 1960s 1970s there was still no sight of this 'turning point'. Not only were the traditional modes of exchange still vastly present in the urban centres, but also poverty showed no signs of eradication by the winds of modernity. This led to increasing voices questioning the 'modernisation path'.

The Argentinian economist Raul Prebisch, as director of the United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America (ECLA), argued in the late 1940s that poverty in the south of the world was not accidental but rather the outcome of the 'path to progress' undergone by the rich nations (Prebisch, 1949). Around the same time, the German development economist Hans Singer pointed out that with technological innovations, the lifespan of populations had increased, but labour needs had diminished and this could only lead to an increasing separation between poor and rich countries (Singer, 1950). These insights were coined the 'Prebisch-Singer hypothesis' and led to the emergence of Dependency Theory as a Marxist-oriented reaction to the modernists. For the dependentists, the benefits of industrial progress and technological innovation were retained in the centre at the expense of the periphery since any capitalist growth was always dependent on poor countries' natural resources, cheap labour and market availability for products considered obsolete in the west (Singer, 1970; Furtado, 1956; Paul, 1957). This argument found a huge acceptance through the 1970s as it became evident that the development model based on economic growth was not reducing but instead further increasing the distance between the rich and the

poor (Santos ,1970; da Silva, 1971; Frank, 1971; Oliveira, 1972; Rodney, 1972). This was when two ground-breaking empirical studies were published focusing on the informal trading activities performed in developing countries giving rise to the concepts of 'informal economy (Hart, 1973), and 'informal sector' (ILO, 1973).

Anthropologist Keith Hart wrote one of the most cited articles on informality associated with his ethnographic study between 1965-68 on the economic activities of rural migrants in Accra, Ghana (Hart, 1973). His work questioned both the modernists' assumption of the binary separation between the so-called formal (as in 'modern' or 'developed') and informal (as in 'traditional', 'undeveloped') socioeconomic structures as well as the dependentists' view of informality as solely associated with survival strategies needed to cope with global capitalism. He concluded that despite these workers being associated with conditions of capitalist exploitation, their 'informal economy' also represented a high level of 'autonomous capacity for generating incomes' (Hart, 1973). In line with these insights, the International Labour Office (ILO) implemented large multidisciplinary 'employment missions' to various developing countries focusing on the populations' traditional and legal economic practices pointing out how these were integral for populations' employment and poverty reduction (ILO, 1973).

These two studies shown evidence that informal trade was not a transitional stage in capitalist development (as modernists believed), nor merely practiced to cope with it (as dependentists assumed). Rather, it was an integral dimension through which populations performed creative and efficient 'alternative income-generating activities' such as hawking, street market vending, small-scale production, etc. (Chen, 2005). However, despite these insights, the ILO missions continued to follow a 'technocratic ethos' further contributing to the maintenance of a modernistic and 'capitalocentric' framing of informality. Namely, capitalocentrism refers to the framing of any economic space from the focal point of capitalism such as 'fundamentally the same as (or modelled upon) capitalism, or as being deficient or substandard imitations; as being opposite to capitalism; as being the complement of capitalism; as existing in capitalism's space or orbit' (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. 6). In relation to informal trade this is usually referred to as the dualist approach to informality which, being strongly shaped by a modernist ideology, positioned the informal trading activities within a separate economic structuring which provided some level of income and a safety net to the poor (ILO, 1973). The dualist approach did not aim to understand the ways informality was associated with the local populations' way of life and how appropriate to their contexts was this sort of socioeconomic structurings. Rather its aim was to help uncover what characteristics made it different and distant from its formalised counterpart so that this understanding could help on reducing this distance and make it disappear from the vantage point of the desired formal, as in 'modern' and 'developed', economic structures (Bangasser, 2000).

# Late modernity, the legalist and structuralist approaches

The 1980s saw increasing changes in the equilibrium between society and the economy. Ulrich Beck (1992) called this the era of the 'risk society' which emerged from the shift from the early modernity to the late modernity. In this so-called 'post-Fordist' era, mass-production was being reorganised into 'flexible specialisation' where economic performance and competitiveness was to be achieved via smaller, decentralised economic units. Key to achieve this was the 'informalisation' of work introducing flexible labour contracts and the outsourcing and delocalisation of production and trade to smaller, informal units (Piore and Sabel, 1986). In the South things were not different with the global international debt crises and the fall of raw materials in Latin America contributing to an increase of the so-called 'informal sector' (Lagos and Tokman, 1984). It was in this context that the existent mismatch between the dualistic approach to informality and the empirical evidence of its relational nature became more evident than ever and it was from the Latin America that two of the most influential post-dualist approaches emerged – the legalist and structuralist approaches.

The legalist approach is associated with one of the most influential books on the informal economy written by Hernando de Soto with the title 'The other path' (De Soto, 1989). This 'other path' aimed at achieving socioeconomic development but contrary to the 'modernisation path', de Soto's favoured a deregulation of markets so to facilitate entrepreneurial innovation and economic progress. In this work he looked at how people implemented informal markets on the streets of Peru and other cities in Latin American and concluded that these workers were not driven by a survival instinct, as the dependentists argued, but by an entrepreneurial mind-set. In line with this, he concluded that the reason behind their unlawful activities was the prevalence of the state's excessive regulatory schemes which made it impossible to take part in these countries' formal economies. The legalists looked at informality as a form of ground-up resistance and rebellion to the widespread regulatory state apparatuses. Thus, informality was not seen as a problem but as the point of arrival where full economic and social integration achieved through entrepreneurial capabilities (Coletto, 2010, p. 11).

The dependentist scholars were critical of De Soto's ideas. They pointed out the simplistic framing of informal workers as solely driven by rational cost/profit decisions and proposed the structuralist approach in opposition to what they saw as De Soto's neoliberal readings on informality. Manuel Castells, Alejandro Portes and their colleagues argued that informal economy was a symptom of the economic globalisation and of the disappearance of labour protection which was happening through the radical flexibilisation of work (Castells and Portes, 1989; Portes and Schauffler, 1993). For them, the ongoing 'flexible specialisation' of

work occurring on the west mirrored the 'hyper flexibilisation' existent in the informal economies of the South which were best equipped to absorb the ongoing labour changes of late modernity (Portes and Benton, 1984). Plus, and opposed to the legalists, they considered any distinctions between legal/illegal as purely instrumental and operationalised as a means to facilitate the ongoing capitalist expansion (Machado da Silva, 2003; Portes, Castells and Benton 1989).

Both the legalist and the structuralist approaches can be seen as the two extremes of the debate which arose in the 1980s 1990s as it was becoming evident the failure of the modernists' temporal and spatial dualist understandings of development in relation to what was to be considered a 'good' or a 'bad' socioeconomic organisation. For instance, both approaches denied the vision of a temporal linear progress where informality was placed within a 'transitory' phase soon to be overcome by virtue of capitalist progress. Both also denied the spatial dichotomous framing separating formal and informal work which placed informality as marginal and denied its relational nature composed of interactions happening within formal/informal socioeconomic structures. However, it was each owns' understandings concerning the causes and consequences of these interactions that separated them apart. Both lines of inquiry were based on each owns' understanding of the ways in which capitalist development was progressing in the late modernity and what was to be expected from the State in relation to this. The legalists understood that de-regulation was the point of arrival if to achieve a fair economic development to all. On the other hand, the structuralists believed that a fair regulatory scheme was necessary in order to help solve the continuing symptoms of the 'informalisation' of work felt throughout the world.

#### Present day's dilemma of formalisation

The 1980s/1990s were marked by the growing liberalisation of trade which opened up space for increased informal work arrangements based on 'flexible' work contracts and 'outsourcing' (Rodrik, 1997; Standing, 1999). In the Global South, informalisation was exponentiated due to the financial crisis in Asia, structural adjustment in Africa and economic transition in former Soviet Union and central and eastern Europe (Chen, 2012).

In Brazil, the 1980s/1990s were marked by the implementation of the neoliberal agenda which emerged as a response to the economic stagnation and increased inflation that was brought by the economic policy of 'import substitution industrialisation' (ISI) (Colletto, 2010, p. 99). On the political side, the overall dissatisfaction with the effects of economic protectionist strategies was accompanied with popular pressures which dictated the end of military rule and the transition towards democracy. It was within this context that a new development paradigm emerged in the country privileging a smaller role to the

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State. This was to be achieved through the liberalisation of markets and privatisation of public utilities as this was believed to help achieve a democratisation of access to markets (Schmalz and Ebenau, 2012). However, in Brazil, the elites in power during the dictatorship were the ones responsible for the democratic transition and thus, managed to maintain and even reinforce their economic positions by taking advantage of the ongoing dismantling of the role of the State in a number of national corporations (Saad-Filho, 2010). Thus, rather than democratise access of more actors to the markets, the Brazilian neoliberal experience reinforced the maintenance of a concentrated distribution of income which not only affected the working classes but also the middle classes, agrarian exporters and national industrialists (Amann and Baer, 2002; Schmalz, and Ebenau, 2012). This was a time which produced the emergence of various social movements and pro-labour parties from which the most important was the PT which got to power in 2002 by aligning with the vast and diverse segments of the population which didn't benefit from the neoliberal policies (Morais and Saad-Filho, 2005). Indeed, while inflation did fall and productivity increased with real wages rising substantially over the 1990s, unemployment rates increased as work in the industrial sector got more specialised with the vast majority of people having to switch to poorly paied jobs, insecure service sector and informal occupations (Pedroso, 2016; Mendes and Cavedon, 2012). This neoliberal reorganisation of work and the economy was expanded to the urban space where informal street trade reproduced the contemporary models of flexible work and the growing number of unemployed and marginalised people (Harvey, 2005). What this did was it created new spaces for communities to organise themselves informally and work collectively on the streets (Bromley, 1998; Geoghegan and Powell, 2008; Galemba, 2008; Sirohi, 2017).

As informalisation was globally widespread through the 1990s, this forced development scholarship to expand its materialistic focus on 'poverty' and address the non-economic aspects of capitalist globalisation resulting from the clash of different cultural norms, values and practices (Simon, 1997; Anand and Sen, 2000; Schuurman, 2000). This resulted in the human-development approach which is behind the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Human Development Report (HDR) published yearly by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) since 1990. From this perspective 'poverty' was understood in relation to the full dimension of wellbeing and the capabilities available for people to choose their own *paths* to development (Sen, 2001). In line with this, ILO followed to position informality aligned with this wider perspective of 'poverty'. Through this, informality was to be recognised within wider development policies such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the 'fight against poverty', the 'promotion of decent work' and the achievement of a 'fair globalisation' (ILO, 2002; 2004; 2013; Trebilcock, 2005). The problem with this was that while broadening the concept of 'poverty' out of materialistic and utilitarian constructs

was considered a positive move, the positioning of informality within it was overly simplistic. Plus, reducing informality in relation to its association with poverty ended up reproducing the dichotomous framing which had shaped development policies since its early days and which not only didn't solve, but had increased inequalities both globally and locally (Benjaminsen et al., 2006).

In what concerns informal urban street trade, the reality is that local governments still today persist in positioning it as backward, inefficient and detrimental to the development of urban areas (Cross, 2000; Bromley, 2000; Seligmann, 2001; Smith, 2005). Municipalities legitimise this negative view towards informal urban street trade through a number of rationales. First, they argue that informal traders only perform it for subsistence living (Dibben et al., 2015; Evers and Seale, 2015). Second, they perform unfair competition to formal vendors as their sell price is lower due to tax evasion (Duneier and Carter, 1999; Williams, 2014). Third, because consumers are worse served as there is no standardised quality assurance of products sold (Loukaitou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht, 2009; Williams, 2014). Fourth, because overall urban mobility is affected and it increases traffic accidents (Donovan 2008; Smith 1996). Aligning all these rationales together is a developmentalist idea based on modernist visions of 'security, orderliness and development' (Turner and Schoenberger, 2012) where informal urban street trade has no place to exist (Williams, 2014).

In light of this, while on a global scale we see developmentalist-based policies put in place to shape what is considered undeveloped socioeconomic countries towards a developed state, on the local level these policies are mirrored by municipalities' implementation of formalisation programmes aimed to control, shape and direct informal trade towards formalisation (Cross, 2000). These programmes advocate the need for greater public order and enforce this through implementing controlling mechanisms to enforce what is sold, where and by whom (Cross, 2000). Because these programmes are anchored within modernist understandings of 'development' and the 'economy', they restrain the understanding of informality in relation to definitions or causes or the characteristics that make it different from formal trade so that this distance can be reduced and a 'modern', 'civilised' and 'developed' 'formal' city be achieved (Turner and Schoenberger, 2012; Williams, 2014). Their objective is that through 'knowing' how informal trade is conducted, these policies can help on bounding them together in certain sites and slowly decrease their presence until informal urban street trade disappears from the sidewalks (Bromley, 1998). This will to regulate all traders and shape their trading practices towards formalisation however has shown few to none results as informal urban street trade is not only persisting but showing an increase with a recent report by the International Labour Organisation stating that around two thirds of the world population work in the informal sector thus making it more of the norm rather than the exception

(ILO, 2018). This is thus the main issue this research aims to investigate by focusing on the ways in which informal urban street trade manages to continuously reproduce itself despite the substantial efforts to make it vanish.

As shown throughout this brief historical review, although informality has been a widely discussed subject through academia and policy institutions, much of the debate has been centred within developmentalist-based rationales and capitalocentric lens which shape how formalisation programmes are set out. This is seen in two ways that I want to retain here. First, this historical review makes it clear that the understanding of informality shifted from it being considered as a bounded, closed, and restrained conceptual reality, supposed to exist independently of other (formal) ones and which was soon to disappear by force of the expansion of capitalism. This understanding shifted towards informality being understood relationally, as an emergence that takes place only through its relation with other (formal) socioeconomic structures. This was the shift from the dualist perspective of the modernists towards the post-dualist ones of both the structuralists and the legalists. However, and this brings me to the second point I want to retain, this shift from a bound object towards a relational one, although it has brought more agency to street traders, it has maintained its centrality in relation to 'capitalist development'. This is seen in the ways in which informality was framed by the dualist perspective as it being something residual from capitalist development and the legalists' understanding of it being something aligned with how capitalist development should be or, according to the dependentists, as it being something that mirrored the unfair ways in which capitalism was progressing globally. Centering informality within an intrinsic critique to capitalist development, and placing it as being the 'problem' or the 'solution' to how globalisation and capitalist progress occurs has restrained the possibilities of understanding informal urban street trade as a more-thaneconomic space like Hart has envisioned (Hart, 1973).

As I will detail further in the next section of this chapter, for post-structuralist scholars it is this ontological centering of informality within the absolute paradigms of 'development' and 'economics' that is behind not only the continuous failure to formalise trade but also, and more problematically, why these policies are damaging to informal workers and end up achieving a formalisation of existent structures of inequality. It is in this context that it is urgent to put into question the modernist-based normative authority that has been given to 'formality' and 'formalisation' as 'the' way to tackle informality in academia and policy and a growing number of voices are arguing for the need for more grounded focus on the practices of informal street trade so to truly understand how economic, social and urban development are currently being enacted in these contexts (Portes, Castells and Portes, 1989; Cook, 2008; Coletto, 2010; Bhowmik, 2012; Roy, 2004; 2005; 2016). What this literature suggests is that

although some studies have focused on the implications of formalisation and others on the possibilities of informal trading, few to none have looked at how both are practiced and how they are associated with the daily operation of informal street trade, its continuous reproduction, and what do they enact in relation to the cultural and socioeconomic development.

This is where this thesis is located. It adopts a post-structuralist approach to an ethnographic inquiry on the daily operation of informal urban street trade, as made of both the practices of street traders in their daily work, and those of governing officials in their daily formalisation tasks, and assess how these relate to the cultural and socioeconomic development of these communities (**RA**).

This concludes this first section. Next I will present the post-structuralist approach to informality and detail how it informs this thesis' research questions (**RQs**).

### 2.2. Post-development and informality

In this section I will delve into post-development literature and its applicability in relation to the post-structuralist approach to informality. I will offer a brief resume of the post-development thought and discuss how its ontological scope informs the post-structuralist approach through an emphasis on a dual lens of both *critique* to formalisation, and *possibility* within informality. In relation to the post-structuralist *critical lens*, I revisit the emergence of formalisation, but this time by focusing on the birth of the discipline of 'planning' and the invention of the 'modern economy' and discuss its effects. Following from this, and in relation to the post-structuralist *possibility lens*, I review how post-development and post-capitalist sensibilities can help on enabling a more holistic understanding of informality and how it enacts socioeconomic development through its daily achievings. I go on to present a review of ethnographic insights on formalisation and informality which follow this post-structuralist *critical* and *possibility* sensitivities and finish with small summary of the key points which inform this thesis' research questions.

#### The post-structuralist approach

The post-development school emerged in the late 1980s/1990s, when the critiques to the failure of the development project were becoming notorious, and it is usually associated to the works of Gustavo Esteva (1987), Wolfgang Sachs (1997), Arturo Escobar (2011) and Majid Rahnema (1997). These scholars argued that development was problematic as it imposed a western rationality and marginalised non-western knowledges. According to them, the question was not how to fix the development project to work better but rather to denounce it as an ideology, mostly Eurocentric, biased by a colonial mindset of superiority of the

North which reduced the vast majority of 'other' ways of living, practicing and knowing existent in different cultures throughout the South to these being backward, deficient and in need to follow the footsteps of the western industrialised capitalist countries.

Post-development sets itself apart from other critiques to developmentalism in the sense that it positions its critique in an ontological ground of a dualist versus a relational ontology. The dualist ontology of liberal modernity, Escobar argues, is linked to 'certain constructs and practices, such as the primacy of humans over non-humans (separation of nature and culture) and of some humans over others (the colonial divide between 'us' and 'them'); the idea of the autonomous individual separated from community; the belief in objective knowledge, reason, and science as the only valid modes of knowing; and the cultural construction of 'the economy' as an independent realm of social practice, with 'the market' as a self-regulating entity outside of social relations' (Escobar, 2010, p. 9). These constructs shape a perception of a stable and coherent universe, as opposed to a messy and multiple 'pluriverse' made of relationality and reciprocity which shapes differently the notions of personhood, community, economics and politics (Escobar, 2010, p. 13). Post-development denounces the regime of representation of 'development' and 'economics' as both being anchored within a dualist ontology of liberal modernity that makes it unable to accommodate the ontological difference existent in the diversity of indigenous knowledges and consequent 'alternative' constructs of development which these communities enact. Through this rationale, post-development stands for a decentering of the power-knowledge relations which give primacy to western modernity by focusing its critique on the damaging consequences of what its dualist-based knowledges leave behind while at the same time embraces a relational ontology that can help on bringing visibility to the multiplicity of indigenous and peasant knowledges by which other socioeconomic possibilities are daily enacted by the vast majority of the world (Escobar, 2010).

In arguably one of the most influential books on post-development, Escobar (2011) called for the urgent need to change 'development as a regime of representation' and 'the Western economy as system of production, power and signification' by 'different subjectivities' and 'hybrid, creative, autonomous alternatives to it' (Escobar, 2011, p. 216–217). This passage is important because it sums up the post-development dual lens of *critique* and *possibility*. On the one hand, the post-development school *critiques* the overarching structure of representation and signification which is 'development' and the 'western economy'. As such, it aims to denounce and take a critical stance towards the centrality given to this western-based knowledge regime (in the singular), in the sense of a social, cultural and economic design of a society which marginalises all *others*. On the other hand, in other to embrace all *other* possible structures left

behind by the overarching regime of representation, post-development embraces a *possibility* lens which defends and promotes the diversity of local knowledges (in the plural) being practiced, experienced and lived and which are responsible for the daily enactment of subjectivities and socioeconomic constructs which don't 'fit' into capitalocentric representations. This, Escobar argues, is what makes the 'post', in post-development, to be post-structuralist as it does not stand for an era where development ceases to exist, but rather to an opening up to all *other* possibilities which are already existent in the ways in which positive change is daily enacted by the vast majority of the world (Escobar, 2010).

In the context of informal urban street trade, the post-structuralist approach feeds from the post-development school and its dual emphasis on critique and possibility (Escobar, 2011; Gibson-Graham, 1996; Williams 2005; Roy, 2005; 2016; Evers and Seale, 2014). For post-structuralists, the shortcomings with the three approaches discussed so far - the dualist, legalist and structuralist - are that they all have centred their understanding of informality within an intrinsic critique or endorsement to capitalist development. By placing informality as the 'problem' or 'solution' to how globalisation and capitalist progress occurs, their argument adheres to a 'diagnose' and 'prescription' lens which is hostage of the same dualist ontology which has restrained the possibilities of understanding informal trade 'in its own right' (Marx, 2009, p. 348). Thus, post-structuralists claim that the analysis in these issues should never be guided by absolute paradigms such as 'economics' or 'development' which excludes and marginalises the practices which populations have developed for decades and which are essential for their livelihoods and intrinsic to the socioeconomic fabric of urban centres in the Global South (Escobar, 2011; Gibson-Graham, 1996; Williams, 2005; Roy, 2005; 2016; Evers and Seale, 2014). If something, they argue, informality should stand instead as a rich empirical place of inquiry where the primacy of these paradigms should be questioned. It is this emphasis in critically questioning the primacy of formalisation that stands for the poststructuralist critical lens. In relation to its possibility lens, the post-structuralist approach follows the insights from Hart (1973) and looks at street trade as an 'alternative economic space' (Leyshon et al ., 2003), by focusing on the ways in which its arrangements of social relations, economic practices, materials and technologies (Appadurai, 1988; Pinch and Swedberg 2008) are intertwined with these populations' daily experience of their own socioeconomic development.

Focusing on the critical lens of the post-structuralist approach to informality, I will next revisit the birth of formalisation but this time through a post-development take on the subject, by focusing on the micro-scale of the urban landscape in 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe.

### A critical lens on formalisation

Informality, as understood in informal urban street trade, but also in relation to other more-than-monetary urban practices such as parking, hawking, begging, advertising or even morphologies such as informal settlements, has historically been the pervasive form of experiencing life and trade in urban centres. However, it has also been historically targeted through formalisation policies aimed to bring about a vision of a 'formal city' (Bender et al., 2010). This 'formal city' is prescriptive – a desired object – which although it is empirically hardly proven. has conceptually been always desired. Post-structuralists link this desire to the modernist quest for homogeneity and stability within which society is more easily controlled and acted upon (Farias and Bender, 2012; Dovey 2012). It is this desire to achieve a 'formal city' that impels the continuous implementation of formalisation programmes which act as discursive and operational tactics used to control, manage and direct the necessary '(re)order' of the informal '(dis)'order' towards the desired stable, homogenous and finished state of an 'ordered' formal city. But how did this vision of a 'formal city', which finds no echo on empirical ground, came to be desired? What is more, given that formalisation programmes have evidently failed and informality is still today pervasive throughout the globe, how is it that these policies are hardly ever questioned? The historical emergence of the discipline of 'planning' and the invention of the 'modern economy' can give some insights.

Escobar (1995) points out how, as it happened in post WWII with the geopolitical ordering and ranking of countries in relation to their levels of socioeconomic development, so it did in relation to cities. While on the global scale we saw the rise of developmentalist policies, on the local level these were mirrored with emergence of 'urban and social planning' which, aligned with the invention of the 'modern economy', aimed to bring about a vision of an 'ordered', 'civilised', 'developed', 'formal' city (Escobar, 1995; Bender et al., 2010).

The emergence of 'planning' is associated with the increasing exodus of populations from the peripheral lands and villages towards the city centres in 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe. This exodus was due to industrialisation becoming the pervasive form of work and production which produced two dramatic changes in the urban socioeconomic context. First, there was a major societal shift in the way that populations which previously conceived their production/consumption work as self-dependent in relation to the means of production were now dependent on others, being it corporations responsible for their jobs or the welfare state. Second, this exodus produced vast mismatches between what towns offered in housing and work conditions and the increasing number of populations in need of these infrastructures. It was within this context that American sociology first coined the concept of 'informality' to the new social and urban morphologies

emerging from the appropriation of urban spaces by these populations. It was also in this context that 'urban and social planning' emerged as a disciplinary tactics needed to manage and control these new social patters. Thus, Escobar notes, 'planning' emerged as a modernist-based disciplinary tactic rooted on the shared belief in academia and policy at the time that a desired societal shift from informality/tradition to formality/modernity could be 'engineered and directed, produced at will' (Escobar, 1995, p. 134). At the same time, and similarly to how the modernist ideology turned the developmentalist project unquestioned, this shift was not only considered inevitable, but desired by all and this desire was deeply anchored in the invention of the 'modern economy' as the unquestioned socioeconomic order within which the developed world should prosper.

Polanyi (1944, 1957) has highlighted how the invention of the 'modern economy' came associated with the consolidation of capitalism and the increasingly generalised processes of commodification of land and labour. It was, he calls it, a process of 'disembeddedness' of the economy from society. Escobar (1995) highlights how this disembedding of the societal dimension of economic exchanges was associated with the rise of philosophical currents such as utilitarianism and individualism which gave rise to the classical political economy which institutionalised the 'market', and bounded 'the economy' as independent and separated from morality, politics and culture. This process had has consequence the marginalisation of any other existent forms of economic organisation such as those usually found in the domestic context, Global South subsistence societies or, as it is the focus of this thesis, in informal urban street trade where, as Hart (1973) had shown, values such as reciprocity, redistribution or collective economic organisation were prevalent but not represented or misrepresented by urban planning policies.

By looking at the emergence of 'planning' and the invention of the 'modern economy' we see how the desire to achieve an homogenous bounded 'formal city' enforced a binary dichotomy which set what was to be placed inside and outside its limits. The ways in which such limitations were set out derived from a modernist socioeconomic ideology which served as the 'glue' that bound the 'formal city' together and placed informality outside its scope by framing it as invisible, secondary, a underdeveloped leftover or an infiltration threat (Farias and Bender, 2012; Dovey, 2012). Post-structuralists argue it is this modernist-driven quest for the ultimate 'formal city' that still today guides formalisation policies which implement 'planning tactics' backed by modernist ideologies of structured governance (Scott, 1998).

This constitutes the *critical lens* which post-structuralists take in relation to formalisation policies and which in this thesis I adopt to engage with the formalising practices. It is based on the acknowledgement of formalisation as a

developmentality rational (Lie, 2015). This is a combination of development and mentality which is developmental. Its seductiveness relies on the same normative constructs within which developmentalism was born. It is a mentality of rule which exerts governance not necessarily by force but by pressuring the voluntary acceptance of a modernist based construct of society and culture (Lie, 2015; Ilcan and Phillips, 2010). It is in relation to the unquestioned normative view on the modernist-based socioeconomic organising that informal street traders are to be guided to and subject to accept it voluntarily.

And this brings me to the '*possibility lens*' which, as I will detail next, aims to engage and bring visibility to the multiplicity of ways by which informal urban street trade enacts *development* beyond the one dictated by the developmentality of modernist and capitalocentric formalisation policies.

### A possibility lens on informality

The post-capitalist research programme was built on the insights from the 'new economic geography' that emerged in the 1990s, from which the publication of Gibson-Graham's (1996) influential book 'The end of capitalism (as we knew it): a feminist critique of political economy' was key in grouping a diverse set of poststructuralist scholars interested in exploring economic alternatives. Picking up from Polanyi's (1944; 1957) concept of the 'embededness' of social relations in economic practices, Gibson-Graham argued that economic practice was comprised of both capitalist and non-capitalist activities and followed the postdevelopmental critique to 'capitalism' as being a 'hegemonic discourse' which has rendered non-capitalist practices 'invisible' or 'non-credible', 'because the concepts and discourses that could make them "visible" [had] themselves been marginalized and suppressed' (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. X-XI). As such, this research programme is interested in the development of theoretical insights which challenge dominant economic discourses (Gibson-Graham, 1996; 2006; 2008) through rich empirical analysis of alternative economic institutions and practices (Leyshon et al., 2003).

These scholars share the same post-structuralist understanding of 'post' in 'postcapitalism' as Escobar does in relation to 'post-development' in the sense that the post-capitalist research project does not stand for an era where capitalism has seized to exist but rather for a decentering of the primacy given to modernist and capitalist ideologies. In this sense, they urge for an actualization of radical democratic alternatives that practice a generative, ethical, post-capitalocentric economy (Zanoni et al., 2017). Their objective is that by opening up new spaces of inquiry into the ways in which market arrangements are setup beyond monetary exchanges and the will to profit, this research sensitivity is able to open up *possibilities* for an understanding of how 'social livelihoods' and 'economic development' are enacted *differently* (Fickey, 2011). This is what Gibson-Graham (2008) calls an 'ontology of economy difference' as it urges researchers to 'read for difference' rather than dominance. Also, this 'ontology of economic difference' shows similarities with post-development 'relational ontology' as its focus is not 'just' in relation to the empirical object but in relation to what it carries in 'its enunciations, knowledges, as potentiality of how politics and the world could be, and as a sphere of action in which people can dream of a better world and contribute to enact it' (Escobar, 2010, p. 13). In this way reading for difference stands for an active engagement with the empirical reality of *other* economic worlds which are not only possible, but richly present, exhibiting modes of work and exchange, practices and values contrary to the logic of capitalist accumulation and profit maximisation.

This constitutes the *possibility lens* which post-structuralists take in relation to informal trading and which in this thesis I adopt to engage with street traders' practices. In relation to informal urban street trade, by discarding the economistic framing of informal workers whose practices relate solely to profit accumulation, and instead positioning them as social actors whose work is intertwined with their livelihoods, a '*possibility lens*' is able to bring forward a re-read of informality as an 'alternative economic space' that is integral to how these populations daily experience and practices responsible for the continuous performance of informality, as opposed to representationalist concepts associated with the nature of informal work, enables a higher visibility of the possibilities that traders' practices have in relation to alternative forms of socioeconomic organising (Coletto, 2010).

Next, I will present some ethnographic findings on formalisation and informality which speak to the *critical* and *possibility* lens of the post-structuralist approach.

### Ethnographies of critique and possibility

In order to embrace the dual lens of *critique* and *possibility*, post-structuralist scholars tend to embrace the empirical reality of street trade and formalisation through thick ethnographic descriptions focused on practices rather than diagnose and prescription explanations associated with broader conceptual categorisations. Not doing so, Escobar (2007) notes, not only delimits the chances of understanding the possibilities which the empirical reality entails but also, he claims, have the danger of reinforcing the developmentalist-based regimes of representation (Escobar, 2011). Building on the work of Roy and Al Sayyad (2004) and Roy (2005; 2009), who argued to look at informality as a specific mode of organising and knowing, rather than an abstract category associated with legal, economic or geographic delimitations, post-structuralist

scholars have offered rich multifaceted ethnographic insights on the day-to-day practices of informal urban trading, the possibilities it entails, and the daily negotiation and friction resulting from clashes between informal practices and formalisation ones (Waibel, 2016). What these ethnographic studies offer is an expansion of the understanding of informal urban street trade from the usual themes of labour, production, commodities, capital, and consumption towards a broader understanding of how these markets benefit cities in relation to a wider set of economic but also social and cultural themes such as 'employment, skills training, transport, housing, health care, innovation, belonging, cultural exchange, wellbeing, community, urban regeneration, identity formation, placemaking, recycling, and economic growth' (Evers and Seale, 2015).

Ethnographic inquiries on the ways in which formalisation programmes are daily achieved often bring about the clashes between the discursive legitimacy of these programmes argued by municipalities and the daily practices of both traders and governing officials. For instance, formalisation programmes are often legitimised by rationales of urban revitalisation planning. However, different authors have pointed out that formalisation uses this argument as a 'technology of governance' (Hunt, 2009) aimed towards applying 'revanchist urbanism' policies (Smith, 2005; Brown, 2017) which favour the occupation of public space by high class populations and enterprise investments at the expanse of the local inhabitants. This association between formalisation policies and revanchism-urbanism is explored through the ethnographic work of Brown et all (2015) on the clearances of street traders from Dar es Salaam in 2006-2007 and Dakar in 2007 which details how these clearances had nothing to do with the specific issues faced by informal workers or the local inhabitants of these localities but were rather associated with short-term political imperatives of the municipalities to enforce the claiming of urban space by citizen-worthy elites and exclude the non-citizenworthy majority of the poor. This is even more problematic as a number of poststructuralist scholars have brought light to the ways in which informal street trade can often be associated with the regeneration of urban areas (Singerman, 1995; Nurudeen and Usman, 2010; Williams and Windebank, 2002; Middleton, 2003) and is central to the ongoing production of local community and culture (Mete et al., 2013).

Using 'citizenship' rationales to legitimise formalisation is a common strategy used by municipalities enforcing formalisation policies. In relation to this, Hunt (2009) offers an ethnographic look at formalisation of street trade in Bogotá, Columbia and shows the ways in which the Municipality enforces formalisation and the dismantle of street trade from public spaces in order to preserve these sites as 'privileged for citizenship'. It further shows how the implementation of this rationale translates into street traders being relocated to marginal, state-regulated, sites and having to dismiss their 'cultures of informality' and conform

with state-prescribe political and economic behaviour. This, municipalities argue, is for the betterment of the wellbeing of street traders. However, as Vargas (2016) ethnographic study of street traders in Bogota, Colombia shows, contrary to the municipalities' understanding of well-being being associated mostly to economic conditions, street traders experience it more holistically in relation to kinship relations, solidarity networks and conviviality which, together, act as social control mechanisms within which street traders operate, maintain and reproduce their trading activities. Moreover, some authors have pointed out how informal street traders tend to value more redistributive reasons than capital gains (Persson and Malmer 2006; Williams and Round 2008; Williams 2004; Snyder 2004).

An interest in the ways in which street trade performs a specific form of socioeconomic ordering is often missing from formalisation programmes which argue that street trade is unorganised and chaotic and thus, in need to be organised through formalisation. However, street traders and the common urban dwellers which inhabited these locations have often established deep social networks of exchange and conviviality which are engrained in the organisation and lived experience of these sites. In relation to this, Neethi et al. (2019) offers a rich description of the ways in which street trade in Gujarat, India, manages to continuously sustain itself through a 'social capital-bolstered place-making process' which fosters local community identity. The relation between community identity and public space is also explored by Falla and Valencia (2019) which offer an ethnographic account of the everyday governance of street traders in Bogotá, Colombia showing how traders organised themselves and their access to public spaces through effective non-hierarchical social control mechanisms. On this same issue, other studies have associated street traders' social capital with resilience (Lyons and Snoxell, 2005; Watson, 2009; Williams, 2005), facilitation of sharing of skills (Geertz, 1978) and enabling mobility and participation of both upper and lower classes (Singerman, 1995; Usman, 2010; Williams, 2002).

It is no surprise then that most often the relocations proposed by formalisation programmes into government-built facilities are not welcomed by street traders. Bass (2000) reveals a rich account of the tensions resulting from the Municipality of Dakar, Senegal, appropriation of sidewalk public spaces used by street traders, and how this affected not only the traders' livelihoods but also the majority of urban poor which relied on their distribution of low-cost goods. Omoegun et al. (2019) ethnography focuses on the aftermath of evictions and relocations of street traders in Lagos, Nigeria and describes how street traders, not happy with their removal from public space, made efforts to regain access to the public sites within which they were previously working.

In Brazil, the modernist drive behind urban planning efforts to achieve a 'formal city' are engrained in its capital – Brasilia. Holston (1989) gives an anthropological critical account on the design and organisation of Brasilia, as an 'ideal modernised formal city' showing the frictions resulting from its clash with informal urban morphologies which are so pervasive throughout Brazil. More specifically, in relation to street trade, Carrieri and Murta (2011) offer a rich account of the processes of relocation of street traders implemented by a formalisation policy in Belo Horizonte, Brazil detailing how these relocations increased the precariousness of the political and social conditions these vendors faced at work. They argue formalisation, through the disguise of urban revitalisation policy, served as pretext for the serious social problems underlying informal traders to go unaddressed. On the same vein, Kopper (2012) offers an account of the tensions resulting from the removal of street traders from downtown Porto Alegre, Brazil and their relocation to a specific government built facility - Camelodromo - built through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP). The three year-long ethnography details the move from positive expectations of group of traders in the beginning of the process, to the tensions which emerged from the race for the best places in the Camelodromo which needed to be negotiated with the help of a range of public institutions. Moreover, the ethnography details the ways in which street traders were targeted with pedagogic measures to change their vending profiles with new commercial sensitivities necessary for the success of the enterprise. What this shows is not only that the legitimacy for the need of formalisation programmes' becomes guestionable under the scrutiny of urban revitalisation policies, but also how these programmes try to subjectify street traders to dismiss their 'culture of informality' (Hunt, 2009) in exchange for a newly gained formal, modern and citizen-worthy profile.

Implicit to this governing technique is the claim that informality and formality are two worlds apart and their inherent impossibility of cohabitation. This distinction between a formal and informal profiles however lacks empirical evidence. Occupation of public space by traders, although discursively positioned as unwanted by local authorities, is often negotiated on the ground through formal/informal agreements between a wide range of actors. For instance, Barroso (2008), through a urban ethnography focused on the occupation of a street by street traders in Porto Alegre, Brazil, shows how this occupation is daily performed through social negotiations between formal and informal traders as well as governing officials and citizens. He shows that, although these daily negotiations make part of how these sites come to be experienced by the local community, these aspects are absent from Municipality's urban policy which insists in problematising street trade as enemy of urban economic development. The relational aspect of formal-informal divide is further explored by Pinheiro-Machado (2009) which offers a ethnographic description of the global circulation of low-cost goods from Guangdong Province, China to Ciudad del Este, Paraguay

and finally into the streets and squares of Brazil to question the ways in which formal/informal and legal/illegal are intertwined with one another throughout a global supply channel feeding a wide range of formal and informal actors along the way.

This association between different cultures and informal trade is also described by Silva (2014) which gives an account of the transformations taking place in traditional markets within Sao Paulo, Brazil and how these relate to migration movements from people from Bolivia, China, Paraguay, Peru, Lebanon and Angola among others who act as distributors of local produce, importers of products and buyers who aim at reselling the goods in their original countries. This socioeconomic organisation of informal commerce shapes urban public spaces as rich sites of conviviality between different cultures and favours intersections of goods from different origins. Vendana (2004) coins this as the 'vivid experience' of city life in her ethnographic account of a street market in Porto Alegre, Brazil, describing how the daily emergence of this market entails ways of living the city and public space that bring about specific aesthetic elements which make for distinctive urban ambiances, soundscapes, colours and smells of urban informal trade. This results in a vibrant atmosphere where trading on the streets comes aligned with a sort of 'organised chaos' which populations daily inhabit walking, talking, and experiencing street life (Vendana, 2005; 2010).

What these findings do is to radically challenge the dominant narratives of formalisation and visions of the 'formal city' by bringing visibility to all that is left behind by the 'gaze of formality' (Shatkin, 2004). After all, 'informal does not simply equal powerlessness' (Evers and Seale, 2014, p. 4) but *other* ways of living and experiencing sociality and economy where often formal provision is uncapable or unfitted to (Meagher, 2007; Nunan and Satterthwaite, 2001).

This concludes the presentation of the poststructuralist approach to informality. Next, I will briefly summarise the key points presented in this chapter by outlining how they inform this thesis' research questions.

### Summary of Chapter 2: Literature Review

The objective of this chapter was to present a literature review on informality, development and formalisation (section 2.1) and describe how this research is informed by a post-structuralist approach (section 2.2).

Thus far I have shown how the emergence of informality as a problem in need to be solved cannot be detached from wider debates, negotiations and frictions happening within the institutional and scholarship domains of 'development' and 'economics' in what concerns the historical changes brought by the expansion of global capitalism. This is more problematic as formalisation programmes are not only failing but informality is increasingly becoming widespread (ILO, 2018). Poststructuralists see this issue as mainly derived from modernist understandings of 'development' and 'economics' which are behind a developmentality which shapes formalisation programmes into marginalising traders and ends up restraining a grounded understanding of how 'development' comes to be enacted by both formalisation processes and informal trade ones (Escobar, 2011). It is in relation to these issues that more grounded ethnographic inquiries into the practices of formalisation and informality are needed. This thesis is aligned with these views and it aims to investigate the daily operation of informal urban street trade as made of both governing officials' practices of formalising trade and street traders' ones associated with their daily lives and, through this, assess how 'development' is enacted (RA). This should not only be able to critically account for the implications of signifying informality in certain ways, as it is practiced through formalisation policies aimed to 'order' it, but also be able to account for its actual operation, as traders daily assemble their trade activities on the streets, and make visible what these practices enact in relation to their lived, cultural and socioeconomic development. This is the dual lens of critique and possibility of the post-structuralist approach described earlier which informs the thesis' research guestions. First, informed by the *critical lens* perspective, the research aims to investigate and critically asses how power is manifested through the governing officials' daily practices associated with the formalising of street trade and how this shapes the cultural and socioeconomic development of street traders (RQ1). Then, informed by the *possibility lens* perspective, the research aims to investigate and critically asses how the street traders' daily practices of trading on the streets are associated with their lived and experienced cultural and socioeconomic development (RQ2).

### CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

# CHAPTER 3. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The objective of this chapter is to theoretically position this research in relation to the post-structuralist approach to informality and its dual lens of *critique*, to formalisation, and *possibility*, within informality, mentioned previously. Already in the 1970s, in his book 'The Uses of Disorder', Sennett (1970) criticised urban planning for its 'overdetermination' seen in the imposition of an 'order' necessary to achieve the 'modern city'. There is a friction between this imposition of a new order and the underlying impossibility of applying formalisation templates to the 'messy-labours' (Kimari, 2016) of informal urban workers which don't fit into the design of the aimed modernist urban, social and economic order (McFarlane, 2012; Sendra, 2015; Simone, 2016). This is the 'long-running drama' of master planning (Manji, 2015, p. 7). It is in relation to this issue that the post-structuralist approach followed in this research needs to both critically investigate the effects of essentialist power-knowledge regimes which guide formalist-based (re)ordering templates (section 3.1), while at the same time be able to account for the (dis)ordered ways in which informal socioeconomic constructs are daily achieved and the possibilities these entail (section 3.2).

In section 3.1. *Formalisation and (re)ordering regimes*, I describe the theoretical underpinnings used to embrace this research' *critical lens* and guide the analysis of the governing officials' formalisation practices (**RQ1**). I outline Foucault and Foucault-inspired literature on power-knowledge, classification, governmentality and developmentality (Foucault, 1977; 1980; 1982; Henman and Dean, 2010; Poster, 1990; Bowker and Star, 1999; Lie, 2015; Ilcan and Phillips, 2010) and demonstrate how this can be productive for critically engaging with formalising practices and its effects.

In section 3.2. *Informality and (dis)ordering possibilities*, I describe the theoretical underpinnings used to embrace this research' *possibility lens* and guide the analysis of the street traders' processes (**RQ2**). I outline the concept of assemblage thinking and assemblage-inspired literature on the urban context (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Farías and Bender, 2012; McFarlane, 2011) and demonstrate how informal street trade can be analysed through this and help make visible what possibilities are enacted through its modes of organising. I finish the chapter with a small summary of the key points of the chapter which together inform the analysis of this thesis' research questions.

## 3.1. Formalisation and (re)ordering regimes

Formalisation programmes aim to implement a (re)ordering of street trade. They do so by positioning the current ordering of street trade, or lack thereof, as something problematic, and asserting that a formalised (re)ordering of street trade is the solution to this problem. To achieve this formalised (re)ordering of street trade, these programmes put in place techniques and procedures to collect information about street traders and classify them according to the formalisation regulations so that compliance with the programme can be monitored and, ultimately, its success can be achieved. In the previous chapter, I have exposed how formalisation programmes have so far shown few to none results as informal urban street trade is not only persisting but showing an increase throughout the Global South. Despite this, local authorities have persisted in their efforts to implement these programmes. It is thus imperative to adopt a critical lens and investigate the manifestations of power as they take place within the governing officials' formalising processes (RQ1). To address this, I will describe next how Foucault's (1977; 1980) ideas pertaining to power, knowledge and subjectivity can productively be used to analyse the ways in which the (re)orderings of street trade put forward by formalisation programmes come to be legitimised, how they operate and what exactly do they do - what do they enact. To do so, I will first describe how Foucault (1977) concept of 'regimes of truth' can be used to analyse how formalisation programmes come to be legitimised. Next, to analyse how they operate, I focus on the aspect of classification of street trade and, drawing on Foucault-inspired literature on classification, I will describe how classification is a power-constituted process. Finally, picking up from Foucault (1982) concept of 'governmentality', I purpose that formalisation and classification are interlinked and operating within and reproducing specific governmentalities enhanced through specific developmentalities (Lie, 2015; Ilcan and Phillips, 2010).

### Legitimacy of formalisation as a regime of truth

In this sub-section, I will draw from Foucault's (1980; 1977) ideas of relational power and regimes of truth to investigate the ways in which the (re)ordering of street trade, as proposed by formalisation programmes, comes to be legitimised.

Foucault (1982) contrasts a sovereign view of power from a relational view. A sovereign view conceives of power as being located in laws, people, the hierarchy and their access to resources to monitor and enforce compliance. In contrast, the relational view conceives power as being enacted relationally. Power thus is never in the hands of a person or in laws as a commodity, it is enacted through relations. Relations of power enact the individual subject rather than the individual enacting power. From this view, the question of power lies not in its positive or

negative effects, but instead in its effectiveness to change or reproduce itself in the ways a community tends to accept it as a civilising force (Foucault, 1977).

Through this lens, the effectiveness of power comes from it being unquestioned. It becomes unquestioned through the ways in which it is inextricably interlinked with knowledge. As so, power can be understood by researching the processes by which certain knowledges come to be legitimised as truth within a certain community. Such truth claims recursively enable or constrain people's capacity for action by reproducing or changing the dominant knowledges and therefore maintaining or reconfiguring the existent power relations (Foucault, 1980). This is what Foucault refers to as 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1977). The concept of 'regimes of truth' serves to capture the idea that power and knowledge are not only mutually dependent but jointly constitutive, and their mutual emergence comes from power-constituted processes of negotiation, contestation and ultimately legitimation of certain 'truths' that support society's institutions (Foucault, 1977; 1980).

In modern society, the legitimacy of certain knowledges is built by attaching it with concepts which are largely understood in normative ways such as 'rational', 'scientific', 'ordered', 'modern' or 'developed', to name a few. In the case of formalisation programmes, as described in the previous chapter, the concept of 'formal' comes to be aligned with all the above. These conceptualisations act as power-infused plugins that facilitate how certain knowledge claims come to emerge and be widely perceived as unquestionable truths such as the 'need to formalise street trade'. Through the lens of a 'regime of truth', formalisation programmes can be investigated to assess the ways in which ongoing power relations are implicated in legitimising the specific formulations of the 'problem' of street trade and in relation to the solution of formalisation which is put forward.

### Classification as a power-constituted process

One important aspect of how a 'regime of truth' operates are the techniques and procedures put in place for the acquisition of knowledge and the establishment of 'truth'. In the case of formalisation, classification assumes this role. In this subsection, I will draw from Foucault's (1970) inspired literature on classification to describe the ways in which classification is a power-constituted process.

Drawing on Foucault (1970; 1982), Henman and Dean (2010, p. 79) argue that to understand the ways in which power operates, we need to consider 'the systems of classifications and norms and information and communication infrastructure of the everyday government of and by contemporary states'. In relation to formalisation programmes, these techniques and procedures are associated with the classification schemes and the practices of classification responsible for the registry of street traders into the licensing system and for the monitoring of their compliance with the formalisation rules.

In brief, a classification scheme is made of a group of categories and the rules by which categories can be associated. Paraphrasing Poster (1990), categories can be seen as the existent 'vocabulary', and the rules associated with the category relations can be seen as the existent 'grammar', which together, through a classification scheme, form the 'language' by which a specific reality comes to be signified in an information system. Classification practices relate to all practices associated with the assigning of data into specific categories, the choosing of relations between them and the analysis of information afforded through this process. Analysis can only be performed if data classification is consistent across a classification scheme. To achieve data consistency, Bowker and Star (1999) highlight three defining aspects of classification: uniqueness; exclusivity; and completeness. In relation to uniqueness, they highlight that classification schemes require clear and consistent principles for specifying the classification categories. In relation to exclusivity, classification requires that the categories defined are contained and mutually exclusive and thus non-overlapping with other categories. Difference and division is crucial. In relation to completeness, classification schemes require that all the dimensions that are under consideration are categorised (otherwise the data/reports will be partial and potentially inaccurate). By following these three principles, a classification scheme assures the consistency of data across time and space. However, this also means that changing a classification scheme to suit situated specificities is often difficult or even impossible (Leigh Star, 2010).

Much of the classification literature has tended to be technically and administratively oriented (Jacob, 2004). The focus of this literature has been in better defining and specifying classification schemes. This will to best define and specify assumes that things are unique, their modes of being are universal and thus can be understood in totality. This technical determinism translates into an assumption that classification schemes can perfectly mirror reality. This is problematic. Foucault (1970) has shown how the power of any structuring of reality, such as the one performed through classification schemes, is that the ordering of things, and more importantly, what constitutes things, both emerge more by its usefulness within a particular socio-political space rather than by any ambition of turning reality more visible. In other words, what constitutes the reality that is to be made visible through classification comes from the usefulness found in classifying it in the first place<sup>4</sup>. More in line with this critical line of thought, another strand of literature has been developed by social scientists that have

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> For an anecdotal example of this, see Foucault's (1970) preface notes on Borges' taxonomy of a fictitious Chinese encyclopaedia.

sought to understand classification as a process. This refuses a utilitarian perspective on classification and sees it as an ordering device which is key on the continuous disciplining of people (Henman and Dean, 2010). The key here is how ordering devices and practices of ordering such as classification schemes and practices of classification exert power onto the subjects of classification and the wider population of actors involved.

According to Poster (1990, p. 87) classification schemes have come to emerge as the main language by which power discursively constitutes subjects in the ways in which it acts as a grammar that 'manipulates symbols (segments of information) to form a picture of the individual' which acts upon himself. In line with this, Suchman (1994) has shown how, within a classification scheme, the choice of categories and of the relationships made possible between them, come embedded with personal values and ideologies which exert power onto the subjects of classification. Moreover, as classification practices become widespread and normalised, power is diffused beyond the subjects of classification and into the wider population. To this aspect of classification, Bowker and Star (1999) have shown how 'systems of classification form a juncture of social organisation, moral order, and layers of technical integration' (p. 33). As they note, this 'spatial, temporal or spatiotemporal segmentation of the world' impacts the real world 'epistemologically, politically, and ethically' (p. 10). This happens as the specific categories and rules of relationships between them get stabilised in a classification scheme and normalised, through classification practices, to become the appropriate 'vocabulary' and 'grammar' through which the knowledge about a given reality is made possible. This is not a secondary effect of classification but its main objective since only through stabilising a classification scheme, data consistency is assured and analysis can be performed. This is why legal bodies usually enforce classification standards to ensure that data is consistent over time and records can be tracked and compared across communities within and between institutions (Henman and Dean, 2010). Thus, classification is far from neutral but in fact, it acts as a central form of discipline, control and resistance (Clegg et al., 2006). It shapes the norms by which things are compared and grouped and the understandings of what is valued and what is expected within a population (Henman and Dean, 2010, p. 82; Barratt, 2008).

What I have attempted so far is to demonstrate how power-knowledge relations are implicated on any ambition of ordering of reality. Connecting this back to the concept of 'regimes of truth', I can now summarise classification as a power-constituted process in which power is diffused in two interlinked ways. First, in relation to a classification scheme, I have shown how it is intrinsically aligned with the operation of a regime of truth in the ways in which the specific ordering which it aims to produce comes aligned with the 'knowledges' in which it is based and

the 'truths' which it aims to establish. This makes for the subject of classification to be known, only in relation to the utility found by the regime in classifying it in the first place. Second, in relation to classification practices, I have shown how they play a decisive role in the establishing of a regime of truth through the ways in which, as classification gets stabilised, normalised and widespread, it shapes the identities and subjectivities of those which govern and of those which are governed by the regime.

This is particularly relevant when investigating governments and the ways in which specific regulations become normalised through classification. For example, Mosse and Whitley (2009) draw on critical theory and highlight how the classification in government benchmarking techniques have epistemic implications, namely that they shape what people consider to be truth. In their case, they highlighted how, as the benchmark's categories for classification became routine, they blurred the boundaries between the state and the private sector. The classifications were key to establishing and routinizing new public management ideals. In relation to formalisation programmes, and given their widespread failure on formalising street trade, it is important to investigate what gets established and routinized through the classification of street trade. In relation to this, I will next introduce Foucault's (1982) concept of governmentality.

### Formalisation, classification and governmentality

In this last sub-section, I will draw from Foucault's (1982) concept of governmentality to propose formalisation and classification are interlinked and operating within and reproducing specific governmentalities.

Foucault (1982) argues that power is diffused through the state's pastoral concern for the overall welfare of its population. This is evident in the state's concern for education, wealth, health, security and sanitation for example. The state develops regulations, departments and roles and allocates funding on behalf of the population. To achieve this, Foucault (1982) further notices, the state operationalises power by putting in place systems to collect and develop analytical knowledge of the population and of the individual. In relation to trade, in his lectures about security, territory and population between 1977 and 1978, he observed how for a long time the circulation of people and goods has been the target of diverse regulatory schemes aligned with the states' will to control (Foucault, 2007). He noticed that through the industrial revolution, the state shifted its regulatory emphasis from territory to managing people. Managing in this context, consisted of implementing a bureaucratic apparatus that divided people into different groups and classified territory in accordance to its uses. The objective was that through such classification schemes, any deviances to the state's planned allocation of people, goods and territory could be detected guicker

and appropriate disciplinary corrections applied (Foucault, 2007). What was not (yet) classified, was not (yet) known, and thus could not be managed and acted upon by the state (Foucault, 1977).

Formalisation acts as a regime of truth operating through this rationale. It is aligned with the state's pastoral concerns for responsible trade, clean streets, safe products and fair taxation. To achieve this, it collects and develops knowledge about the population of street traders and of individual street traders and monitors their compliance with the formalisation regulations. In line with this, the importance of classification, as operated within formalisation programmes, is that it allows Municipalities to know about the current ordering of street trade so that it can be acted upon to achieve the intended formalised (re)ordering of trade. Broadly, the modes of inquiry performed through classification objectify the individual and provide for individuals to become the subject of power. In the context of the State's pastoral concerns, and of formalisation programmes, what I want to bring forward is that power is exercised over specific individuals by making them a subject of knowledge. This pastoral power relates to what Foucault (1982) as referred to as governmentality.

Foucault (1982) explains governmentality as being '(...) a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions' (p. 789). In other words, governmentality relates to the ways in which freely acting and responsible subjects come to regulate their own actions within a wider system of meaning, and within defined categories and conventions (Henman and Dean, 2010; Miller, 2001). Governmentality then is understood as the conduct of conduct (Miller, 2008; 2001; Rose and Miller, 1992). Having said this, I will next describe how formalisation and classification can be conceived through the lens of governmentality to help address what these programmes do, what they enact.

Formalisation, understood through the governmentality lens, suggests that while all actors are acting freely, they act in terms of how they understand what the problem of informal street trade is and what it will become through formalisation. However, the problem of informal street trade is tightly framed by contrasting it to its 'formal counterpart' in what Cross (2000) defines as 'formalomorphism'. It frames informality not in relation to what it is, but in relation to what it is not (nonlicensed, non-regulated, not clean, not human, etc.). By doing this, it becomes difficult to conceive of a solution to informal street trade outside of formal trade. As such, formalisation acts as governing mentality which shapes the conduct of all actors by diffusing and aligning itself with the norms of modernisation, development, cleanliness and equal trading conditions. These are the values considered as unquestionable 'truths' that formalisation aligns with and by which all actors consider their own activities and the activities of others against. The relationship between formalisation and classification comes from the fact that formalisation, understood through governmentality, directs the solutions as being the regulation and specification of street trade through the classification scheme.

Classification, viewed through the lens of governmentality, provides for the development of knowledge of the population as well as of specific individuals (Henman and Dean, 2010). Townley (1993, p. 533) highlights that classification schemes are used so that 'individuals may become objects of enquiry through being made the subjects of scientific study'. She goes on to explain that through rendering the individual visible, as an object of knowledge, individuals can 'become compartmentalised, measured, and reported, for the purpose of administrative decision making' (Townley, 1993, p. 534). This knowledge, she claims, is developed through partitioning taxonomies which impose 'an order by constructing a rational classification of living beings' (Townley, 1993, p. 527). She highlights that partitioning is typically enforceable, in her case through employment markets, while in the case of formalisation, through regulations. What this does is to simultaneously individualise and standardise (Townley, 1993). In the case of classification, as it is performed within formalisation programmes, partitioning is enforced through regulations which mark out individual street traders from one another as being either 'formal' or 'informal' and subject to a licence or fine respectively. This is extremely important as classification becomes routine when operationalised through ICTs such as spreadsheets (Henman and Dean, 2010). As has been highlighted in the accounting literature (Miller, 2001), Ilcan and Phillips (2010, p. 849) argue that 'far from neutral objective tools, the mundane accounting procedures associated with audit and economic assessment are powerful mechanisms for shaping social and economic life'. In the case of formalisation, classification establishes the problem of informal street trade as self-evident, and the solution of formalisation hard to question.

What this Foucauldian inspired literature highlights is that mundane technologies, such as spreadsheets, act on people. By this they mean they come to create roles and identities and govern what people consider to be important and appropriate (Henman and Dean, 2010). What I will argue is that classification and the formalisation of informal street trade in the Global South are inextricably interlinked (Ilcan and Phillips, 2010). Classification, and the ability to analyse and connect different types of individuals within a population, operates within and reproduce specific governmentalities (Henman and Dean, 2010). In relation to formalisation programmes, this form of governmentality is akin to a developmentality (Lie, 2015; Ilcan and Phillips, 2010) which, through information

profiling, expert knowledge auditing, and calculative practices aims to shape the problematisation of informality in relation to its utility towards the solution of formalisation and make this not only unquestionable but voluntarily desired by populations. It is thus important to investigate what governing rationales are being enacted on all actors through the classification scheme and the daily practices of classification and how these relate to the daily achievings of formalisation.

This concludes the presentation of the theoretical underpinnings used to investigate the manifestations of power as they take place within the governing officials' formalising practices (**RQ1**). In the next section, I will describe the theoretical underpinnings used to investigate the developmental possibilities inherent to the informal traders' practices of working on the streets (**RQ2**).

# 3.2. Informality and (dis)ordering possibilities

In the previous section, I have suggested how formalisation can be seen as a governing regime put forward to establish a (re)ordering of trade associated with normative conceptualisations of modernity, development and economic life. This is problematic as, on the one hand, it is based on a modernist utopia of order and control, and on the other hand, it doesn't take into account the ways in which the existent '(dis)orders' in the urban place can have positive effects. It is thus imperative that in conjunction with the *critical lens* described previously in relation to the effects of formalisation, the investigation embraces also a *possibility lens* and assesses the possibilities of cultural and socioeconomic development as they are enacted through the informal workers' daily practices of trade (RQ2). To investigate how informal urban street trade can be analysed as a 'terrain of possibility' (DeLanda, 2006, p. 29), I will first briefly introduce the work of Sennett (1970) on '(dis)order' and relate this to post-development and post-structuralist thought. I follow this by presenting Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of assemblage thinking and its usage within the urban assemblages literature in relation to informality (Farías and Bender, 2012; McFarlane, 2011). I finish the chapter with a small summary of the key points that make for the rationale informing the analysis of this thesis' research questions.

### Urban (dis)order as 'terrain of possibility'

In this first sub-section, I will draw from the work of Sennett (1970) on '(dis)order' and relate this to post-development thought and post-structuralist takes on 'possibilities' to purpose urban informality to be considered a 'terrain of possibility' (DeLanda, 2006, p. 29).

#### (RE)ORDERING AND (DIS)ORDERING OF STREET TRADE

In the well-cited book 'The uses of disorder: personal identity & city life', Sennett (1970) shown how urban (dis)order, as experienced in different types of informal morphologies, can be associated with positive outcomes. This can be in relation to the design of a public realm which fosters diversity and interactions among different communities, facilitates improvisation and innovation to rapidly adapt to changing demands and inspires tolerance towards difference. However, Sennett (2008) notes, there has always been a difficulty in attending to these positive possibilities. This difficulty is ontologically anchored in most disciplinary fields and policy agendas that tend to dismiss 'indeterminacy' in favour of 'functionality, objectivity and control'.

This ontological critique to urban planning resonates with Escobar's (2010) critique to the dualist ontology of liberal modernity which lies at the heart of the two most damaging features of modernity: 'pervasive binarisms, and the reduction of complexity' (Escobar, 2010, p. 40), which are both strikingly prevalent in formalisation policies and mainstream understandings of informal urban street trade. On the one hand, they force a separation, and had normative value to formality in opposition to informality. On the other hand, and following their normative intent, they deny the complex ways in which 'informal' organisations operate and posit formality as the guiding light through which informality is to be captured, understood and acted upon.

Going back to post-development thought, it is in relation to this forced 'reduction of complexity' through 'pervasive binarisms' that activist Gustavo Esteva urges researchers to say one 'no' to development and many 'yeses' to the many paths people follow beyond development (Esteva and Escobar, 2017). These many 'yeses' resonate with Sennett's emphasis on the many ways in which urban, social, infrastructural or economical organisation is achieved that go beyond the organisation aimed at by urban planning. This is thus an argument of potentiality which implies looking not 'just' to the empirical object but in relation to what it carries in its enunciations, knowledges, as 'potentiality of how politics and the world could be, and as a sphere of action in which people can dream of a better world and contribute to enact it' (Escobar, 2010, p. 13). In the case of informal urban street trade, this implies looking at its actual organisations (in the plural) and what these enact through its daily achievings rather than looking at informality from the point of view of what it should be if formalised.

This is a project which embraces multiplicity without dismissing the existent power of singularity and essentialism which is, in the first case, responsible for the necessity to look within the multiple existent 'alternative/different' performances of any given empirical reality. This focus on 'alternatives' and 'difference' is performative and post-structuralist scholars embrace this as a project of 'ontology-building'. This goes beyond the mere identification and critique of the existent structures (of development, capitalism, formalisation, etc.) in the ways they bring forward, work with, and perform how 'difference' is achieved in specific contexts, such as informal urban street trade, from the vantage point of a 'terrain of possibilities'.

'The function of any diagnosis concerning the nature of the present ... does not consist in a simple characterization of what we are but, instead - by following lines of fragility in the present - in managing to grasp why and how that-which-is might no longer be that-which-is. In this sense, any description must always be made in accordance with these kinds of virtual fracture which open up the space of freedom understood as a space of concrete freedom, I.e., of possible transformation.'

(Foucault, cited in Kelly et al., 1994, pp. 126-127)

In social theory, this way of thinking echoes with the 'relational' (Jacobs, 2012), 'material' (Rydin, 2014) and 'non-representational' (Anderson, 2016) turn. This is seen in a wide variety of theoretical domains which look at the empirical reality through a focus on emergence, materiality, relations, practices, networks, assemblages and attachments between human and non-human agents. Specifically, in the case of urban morphologies, this way of thinking is able to break modernist-based divides between nature/culture, social/material, subject/object or, as in the case of street trade, formal/informal which tend to analyse empirical reality in a skewed way and instead perform a fluid, open and more grounded dialogue and engagement with the empirics which can open up a space of possibilities (Dovey et al., 2017). In line with this, in this thesis I use the concept of assemblage thinking (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) which diverse authors have applied through 'urban assemblages' (Farias, 2011; Farias and Bender, 2012; Block and Farias, 2016; McFarland, 2011; Kamalipour, H., and Peimani, N., 2015; Simone, 2016; Sendra, 2015). This offers a diverse set of conceptual tools to engage with indeterminacy within the urban space that can help opening up a greater visibility of informality as a 'terrain of possibilities' and counter the overdetermination of functions seen in formalisation policies.

### Assemblage thinking

In this sub-section, I will briefly describe the main idea behind the concept of assemblage thinking (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) and introduce some conceptual tools, such as entanglement, fluidity and contingency, which can help in gathering an understanding of complex empirical realities such as is the case of informal urban street trade.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) have proposed the concept of assemblage as a framework to think about the social which can help us avoid the problems of structuralist and modernist imposed limits. The main idea here is that through the application of assemblage thinking to the social phenomena the analysis does not rely on a fixed ontology from which materials, ideas, things come to emerge.

This is to say that, through this lens there is no fixed reality precedent to the reality at hand, as opposed to a structuralist lens which make use of pre-determined explanatory categories or hierarchies in order to help some-how 'explain' the social phenomena that is seen as an objective fixed bounded whole, made of an inner coherence, which can be totally unpacked and revealed.

In an interview, Deleuze as defined assemblages as follows:

'It is a multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them across ages, sexes and reigns – different natures. Thus, the assemblage's only unity is that of co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a 'sympathy'. It is never filiations which are important but alliances, alloys; these are not successions, lines of descent, but contagions, epidemics, the wind.'

(Deleuze and Parnet, 2007 p. 69)

This quote is particularly rich in its description of assemblages and in the next sub-points I will delve deeper into it and briefly explain some concepts associated with assemblage thinking.

The word assemblage has its origins in the French word 'agencement' which implies an emphasis on both the fluidity of the processes of assembling different 'elements' and the agency of these 'elements' in their 'processes of arranging, organizing, fitting together' (Stival, 2014, p. 77). The objective of assemblages is not to interpret phenomena but to describe how a multitude of 'heterogenous terms'<sup>5</sup> come to work together, i.e., to 'co-function' for a certain time. This means assemblage is both an action, i.e., it refers to the assembling process, while at the same time it emphasizes how this process is made collaboratively as it produces a 'functioning' derived from the 'togetherness' of its 'elements'. These 'elements' can be human, non-human, material or even non-tangible concepts like ideas, qualities, behaviours or emotions. Through this, assemblages give primacy to change over stability and this is a privileged means to tackle complex empirical dimensions of 'indeterminacy, emergence, becoming, processuality, turbulence and the sociomateriality of phenomena' (McFarlane, 2011, p. 206).

It is this focus on complex chains of causations, where both human and nonhuman 'elements' assume an active role in its making that obstructs the essentialist imperative of using explanatory pre-sets of structural wholes, whether they might be the city, the society, the formal, the informal, etc. By assuming assemblages as a lens of analysis, these social categories and concepts do not exist *per se* but rather are continuously being made and unmade out of the accumulations and continuous negotiations between heterogeneous assemblages. Its objective is to subvert the term 'structure', so intrinsic to traditional social theories, with 'machine'. While both 'structure' and 'machine'

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Various authors refer to these as 'terms', 'things', 'components', 'parts', etc. For a better reading experience, I will refer to these as 'elements' for the remainder of the thesis.

may integrate human and non-human 'elements', these 'elements' are static and fixed in a 'structure' while in a 'machine' they are dynamic and fluid (Dosse, 2012). Assemblages are machines, that function, not structures, that stay (Deleuze, 1983). This is the means by which assemblage thinking distances itself from essentialist interpretations by emphasising rich empirical knowledge focusing on explorative inquiry rather than theoretical analysis of relatively fixed concepts (Farias, 2011).

This points out the processual and relational ontological grounds within which assemblage thinking is based. From a processual perspective, the question of 'what is' is contrary to assemblage thinking since nothing truly 'is' but rather everything is continuously 'becoming'. From a relational perspective, the inquiry into the 'becomings' of assemblages focuses on its 'heterogeneous elements' not by inquiring on 'what they are' but rather on 'what they do' and 'how they do it together'. Focusing on informal urban street trade, the focus of this thesis, this means that, through assemblage-thinking, informal urban street trade is not a stand-still object, a whole to be studied. Thus, the inquiry is not directed towards 'what informal street trade is' or 'how it is organised' but rather, 'how informal urban street trade occurs', 'how its organising takes place', i.e. the focus is directed towards the 'becoming' of informal urban street trade by analysing how it is continuously made and unmade through the assemblages do, what they enact and perform through their actual achievings in specific sites of practice.

Some important concepts associated with the relational emphasis of assemblages are those of exteriority of relations, embeddedness, entanglement and territorialisation as I will now discuss. The dynamism of assemblages expands to its 'elements' and their relations which are always emergent, in the making, and never static nor finished. As stated in the previous quote, these relations are 'never filiations which are important, but alliances, alloys'. They should be seen from the point of view of 'force, expression of force' (Deleuze and Parnet, 2007, p. 69). They are always 'partial' since 'functioning' changes according to their continuous attachment/detachment from any given assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, pp. 1-8, 42-50). Thus, relations between 'elements' of an assemblage are relations of exteriority. Relations of exteriority relate to the fact that as 'elements' fit together into an assemblage, this can also make up for an 'element' of other complex assemblages at different scales and latitudes, each having their own, but also constituent, roles and identities. This is to say that assemblages can be at the same time elements which can be embedded and/or entangled with other elements or assemblages. As so, an assemblage is dynamic, whose properties can't be determined a priori since its boundaries are not fixed but always in negotiation as new elements are attached and old ones detached. These negotiations happen through opposing

forces aimed towards what Deleuze calls territories (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, pp. 310-12). Territories are the never achieved but always intended stable, consistent, fixed wholes or identities. Assemblages operate through the continuous negotiations happening between its elements in their efforts to reterritorialise, i.e., gain some sort of stability and consistency, and deterritorialise, trying to break out of any sort of consistency and form new alliances which can result in new assemblages and /or shape differently the existent ones. This because depending on the types of associations between elements, the properties of each element, and of the assemblages in which it operates, may differ. Thus, assemblages are always emergent entities which operate at multiple scales, can be embedded and/or entangled with others in their efforts to territorialise and deterritorialise, they are 'never unifications, never totalizations, but rather consistencies or consolidations' (Deleuze and Guatari, 1987, p. 507). In relation to informal urban street trade what this means is that the 'informal' dimension of the empirical reality to be studied is only to be acknowledged as a product of signification enacted by formalisation. The objective is to engage empirically with the reality at hand and inquiry into how it becomes enacted in its multiple forms, through the various heterogenous relations made by its numerous elements, human and non-human.

This brings me to the concepts of fluidity and multiplicity. As mentioned before, assemblages are enacted differently, in multiple ways, through arrangements of elements, which themselves can be multiple. It is this richness of assemblages that makes it suitable to tackle complex empirical phenomena. This is aligned with a more or less recent shift in social sciences from an emphasis on singularity and stability of 'regions' to heterogeneity of 'networks' and later then move to multiplicity of 'fluids' (Mol and Law, 1994; Urry, 1998, Moser and Law, 2006). For instance, through an assemblage lens, an organization is not seen as a single and fixed whole nor as solely an heterogeneous network of elements but rather as a complex set of relations with a diverse range of modes of ordering which are both at the same time, local, contingent and always variable, i.e., fluid. Fluidity and multiplicity are two rich conceptual tools which can help to handle these complex orderings by focusing on the processes of becoming that go beyond the ideas of unity, coherence and solids (Mol and Law, 1994; Law 2004; Urry, 2003; Thrift, 2005).

Bauman Zygmunt (2000) criticised the 'modernity of solids' in the ways in which it tried to control reality through constant categorisation so to remove insecurities, unknowns, uncertainties and render the human and the social well-ordered and familiar. This control, he says, is a sort 'solidification' intended to stabilise and predict and it is applied over nature, through science, and over society, through hierarchical bureaucracy, rules and regulations. In the specific case of informal urban street trade, this control is performed through formalisation. However, this 'solidification' intent is never completely achieved and increasingly hard to pursue due to technological, economical and societal shifts which have rendered the 'fluid' state of modern times more flagrant (Zygmunt, 2000). This fluidity is associated with the multiplicity of ways in which a specific empirical reality is enacted differently (Mol, 2002). For instance, in relation to how a street is both at the same time an assemblage of a transport infrastructure, tourist area, playground for skateboarders or, specific to our case, an informal urban street trade site.

The move towards fluidity and multiplicity fits with assemblage thinking as Deleuze strongly rejects the fixed and immutable orders of modernity and claims all entities to be multiplicities, made of many elements, both actual and virtual. Indeed, the ways in which fluidity and multiplicity hold together in assemblages can be seen through the concepts of contingent actualisation and virtual possibilities.

'Philosophy is the theory of multiplicities, each of which is composed of actual and virtual elements. Purely actual objects do not exist. Every actual surrounds itself with a cloud of virtual images.'

(Deleuze and Parnet, 2007, p. 148)

Assemblages extend the notion of reality to encompass both the 'actual' and the 'virtual'. What this means is that any given 'reality' is only one contingent actualisation among many 'virtual' possibilities to be otherwise. This is what gives assemblages an ontological space to focus on the 'always emergent conditions of the present' (Marcus and Ska, 2006 pp. 101-102).

'The determination of every actual being by the virtual past in its entirety remains contingent for Deleuze: it only has determinacy when read retroactively; it could always have happen otherwise. That's why a process like evolution can only be studied retroactively, and why repeating evolution one hundred times could produce up to one hundred different results.' (DeLanda, 2006, p. 19)

Through its focus on 'thick descriptions' of the relations between elements of any actual assemblage, it gives space to explore the multiplicity of virtual possibilities existent associated with the latent capacities for any assemblage to be otherwise. This is what DeLanda calls 'real virtuality' referring to a 'reality' which has not been 'actualised' yet since any actual state of affairs in an assemblage is merely one contingent actualisation 'among many possible others' (DeLanda, 2006, p. 12). As I will detail in the next sub-section, In relation to the urban space, this characteristic of assemblages as made it an effective means for understanding generativity and emergence while at the same time offering a conceptual space for exploring the existent possibilities for incrementalism and adaptation for urban planning (Kamalipour and Peimani, 2015).

### Urban assemblages and street trade possibilities

In this last sub-section of the chapter, I will briefly present the concept of 'urban assemblages' (Farías and Bender, 2012; McFarlane, 2011) and show examples of how it has been used to shed light on different 'possibilities' inherent to urban informality and street trade.

In the context of the urban space, DeLanda (2006) explicitly argued for assemblage to be seen as a powerful philosophical position to theorise about society, and he specifically proposed that cities should be looked at as assemblages 'of people, networks, organisations, as well as, a variety of infrastructural components, from buildings and streets to conduits for matter and energy flows' (DeLanda, 2006, p. 5). This has been caught up specifically in the field of critical urban studies from which the concept of urban assemblages has emerged offering a rich set of conceptual tools to facilitate an engagement with different kinds of urban (dis)order invoked by Sennett (Anderson and McFarlane, 2011; Farias, 2011; Farias and Bender, 2012; McFarlane, 2011; Sendra, 2015).

Urban assemblages, in the plural, means 'sociomaterial and sociotechnical ensembles' and 'provides a concrete and graspable image of how the city is brought into being and made present in assemblages of heterogenous actors, material and social aspects' (Farías and Bender, 2012, p. 14). For these authors, the advantage of using assemblage thinking is that it offers a set of heuristic metaphors which can be used to engage with the empirical through notions of fluidity, contingency and embeddedness/entanglement (among others) that can help in making sense of the multiple enactments of complex urban phenomena such as, for instance, street markets (Evers, 2014; Evers and Seale, 2015), informal settlements (Dovey, 2012) or homeless populations (Lancione, 2016). Through this lens, formal and informal 'cannot be seen as separate nor as dialectic relations but rather as overlapping and resonating together in assemblages' (Dovey, 2012, p. 354).

The richness of using assemblages in relation to the urban context in general, and in relation to informal urban street trade, in particular, is that it acts as a 'concept, orientation and imaginary terrain' which gives visibility to the 'lines of flight' that break existent combinations between elements [actual] and possible combinations between elements [virtual] and thus, have the potential to engage with Sennett (1970) and offer new insights on the possibilities inherent in urban morphologies which are often left unnoticed or marginalized such as informal urban street trade.

For example, the edited book 'Deleuze and the city' gathers some usages of assemblage thinking in urban studies (Frichot, 2016). For instance, looking into urban informality through a lens on the multiplicity of elements which continuously

enact it, Koster and Nuijten (2016) found that these informal morphologies and practices act as co-producers of urban space and argue that the right to 'coproduce' the city is an inherent right of the city. In the same vein, Darling and Wilson (2016) proposed looking at informality as emergent, enacted through the 'intersection of economic, cultural and social concerns' where a multitude of 'agentic forces' (see McFarlane 2012) come together through 'urban encounters outside of familiar contexts, protocols and conventions'. Contrary to the dichotomous understanding of formal/informal, Mbaye and Dinardi (2019) found that formalisation programmes and informal processes are often entangled with one another and showed how 'informal' grassroots interventions are extended and caught up with mainstream circuits.

The Evers and Seale (2015) edited book 'Informal urban street markets' examines how these markets facilitate formal and informal economies specifically in regard to cultural, material and spatial contingencies. In it, one chapter is dedicated to studies which make use of networks, assemblages and territoriality as conceptual tools to bring about the potentiality of street trade. For instance, Evers (2014) offers a rich empirical ethnography of the Pengu market, in Shanghai, China and sheds light on the various human and non-human elements which daily assemble the becoming of the market. He makes use of assemblages to bring forth the specific role of material components such as the tricycles used by traders and how these mobile devices attach and detach from specific sites and continuously produce informal urban ambiances. The focus on the mobile materiality of the tricycles also sheds light on its capacity to continuously play the 'game of cat and mouse' with fiscal authorities. Seale (2015) looks at the beach of Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and shows how the elements of informality, market, consumption and place-making construct, shape and disrupt discursive touristic representations of Rio de Janeiro. Keswani and Bhagavatula (2014) look at the intersection of informal trade and public space in relation to an annual peanut fair in Bangalore, India to show how vendors appropriate and defend their territories on public space. The study reveals that an important element in maintaining traders' territorialisation of public space is the collective memory associated with situated social capital ties which these communities have developed for decades. Cholez and Trompette (2013) shed light on the fluidity of (micro) economic circuits of informal economy in East Coast of Madagascar. Focusing on the everyday circuit flows of second-hand car batteries (sale, reparation, recharge) and the fish (game and sea fish) markets they describe the important role that elements such as kinship networks, key intermediaries and material artefacts (notebooks and baskets) play in the establishment of these markets reliability within populations.

What these studies show is that by looking at the informal practices, knowledges, materials and technologies through an assemblage approach one is able to shed

light on specific ways in which different elements and agencies, human and nonhuman, act in relation to the continuous assembling and reassembling of informal street trade. And this is the urban assemblages main strength as it offers a rich set of conceptual tools that help to describe how informality continuously becomes, rather than explain what informality is.

This concludes the presentation of the theoretical underpinnings used to investigate the developmental possibilities inherent to informal street trade. Next, I will briefly summarise the key points presented in this chapter by outlining how they can be used to guide the analysis of this thesis' research questions.

### Summary of Chapter 3: Theoretical Underpinnings

The objective of this chapter was to present the theoretical underpinnings used to embrace the dual lens of *critique* (section 3.1) and *possibility* (section 3.2) that guide the analysis of this thesis' research questions.

I have described how Foucault and Foucault-inspired literature (1977, 1982, 1980) can help to guide the analysis of this thesis' first research question through an engagement with a critical lens on the practices responsible for the formalising of street trade (RQ1). Specifically, I described how the concept of 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1977) can be used to investigate how the 'truth claims' associated with the problem of (dis)ordered informal street trade and its proposed solution of (re)ordered formalisation are legitimised on top of specific knowledges associated to notions of modernity and development. Then, focusing on the aspect of classification of street trade, I described two important ways in which it stands as a power-constituted process. First, focusing on classification schemes, I suggested how these make for the subject of classification to be rendered a subject of power in the ways in which it is made visible only in relation to the utility found in classifying it in the first place. Second, focusing on the classification practices, I have shown how these are intrinsically associated to the establishment of a formalisation regime in the ways in which, as they become standardised and widespread, they normalise and shape the identities and subjectivities of those which govern and of those which are governed by the formalisation regime (Foucault, 1982; Lie, 2015; Ilcan and Phillips, 2010).

From here I went on to describe how assemblage thinking and urban assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Farías and Bender, 2012; McFarlane, 2011) can help to guide the analysis of this thesis' second research question through an engagement with a *possibility lens* on the practises responsible for the daily assembling of informal street trade on the streets (**RQ2**). Specifically, I

briefly introduced Sennett's (1970) take on the possibilities inherent in urban (dis)orders and aligned this with post-development and post-structuralist thought (Escobar, 2010). I then introduced assemblage thinking and a set of conceptual tools such as, territorialisation, fluidity, entanglement, multiplicity, contingency among others, which can help in engaging with complex empirical phenomena in a non-essentialist way. Finally, I presented some findings which show the potential of urban assemblages to shed light on the possibilities of urban (dis)orders such as informal trade.

# CHAPTER 4. CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of this chapter is to describe the empirical context of Recife (section 4.1) and the methodological approach followed in this research (section 4.2).

In section 4.1. *Informality and formalisation in Recife*, I briefly review literature pertaining to the historical emergence of informal urban street trade in Recife and the ways in which formalisation policies have been applied to deal with this issue. I describe the main objectives of the formalisation programme being implemented by the Municipality of Recife and its main processes associated with the implementation of the programme.

In section 4.2. *Thick ethnography: a personal account,* I describe the methodological approach followed in this thesis. I start by positioning 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) in relation to the ontological scope of this inquiry. I describe how I got access to both the Municipalities' formalisation programme and informal street traders, the research plan and the ethics involved in managing trust with participants. I then go on to describe in detail the methods employed for the collection of data (observations, field notes, audio recordings, pictures, interviews) and reflect on the strengths and limitations of this methods' assemblage. I follow to describe the processes employed in analysing the data and the specific role of the fieldwork diary had in this respect. I finish the chapter with a description of the performative storytelling techniques used to aid on the presentation of findings used in this thesis.

### 4.1. Informality and formalisation in Recife

This research was conducted in Recife, Northeast capital of Pernambuco state, Brazil. Informal street trade has historically been a pervasive form of socioeconomic interaction between Recife's citizens. Hence, the Municipality has attempted to implement strategies to regulate and formalise street trade. This makes Recife a particularly rich site to pursue an investigation on the operation of informal trade and the tensions resulting from formalisation programmes.

### Recife's informal urban street trade

Recife was formed around its seaport and thus trade has been endemic since its inception. It is the fourth highest urban agglomerate in Brazil, after São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte. Its population was of 1.54 million in 2010 and the most recent estimate was its number increased to 1.63 million in 2016 (IBGE, 2017). Data available from 2010 indicates that Recife's Human Development

Index (HDI), which is a composite statistic of life expectancy, education, and per capita income indicator, was of 0.734, positioning it as the highest among the Northeast cities of the country<sup>6</sup>. It is the most important commercial hub of the North/Northeast region with more than 80 thousand business enterprises<sup>7</sup>. This prosperity resulted in large from a number of noticeable investments promoted after the 1960s by a national agency responsible for the development of the Northeast<sup>8</sup>. However, although its retail and wholesale trade has grown in response to the increased population and wealth, informal trade is still pervasive. While 64.8% of the population is economically active, 12.1% were registered as unemployed (UNDP, 2013). Further, among those considered as economically active, around half were associated with informal work, meaning, without a signed-contract (17.74%) or self-employed (19%) (Gomes, 2016).

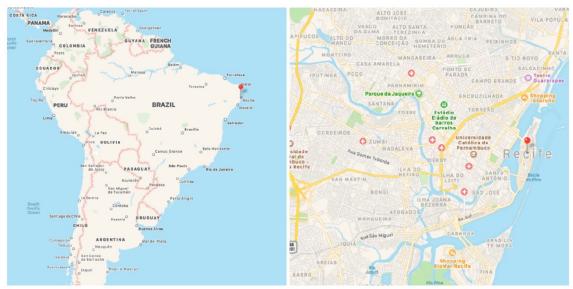


Figure 1: Map of Recife

Street trade in Recife makes for a huge part of its urban life and it has been historically associated to the culture and imaginations of important central neighbourhoods and markets (Campos, 2002; Vendana, 2004). The presence of street trade here can be traced back to the colonial era when Portuguese sellers, known as 'mascates', settled in Recife (Moura et al., 1992). By then, 'mascate' was not used as a demining term. However, this changed as, through the XVIII century, street trading came to include the now-free slaves and the rural poor that moved into the city. The expansion of these populations into the urban centres sparked increasing tensions between the wealthy citizens, the formal sellers and the informal street traders which the wealthier classes perceived as a threat to the social order they were accustomed to (Carrieri and Murta, 2011). These conflicts have not slow down and only increased as the population of informal

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> http://www.atlasbrasil.org.br/2013/pt/perfil\_m/recife\_pe

<sup>7</sup> http://www.condepefidem.pe.gov.br/web/condepe-fidem

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> https://web.archive.org/web/20120112234733/http://www.history.com/topics/recife

workers grew due to the rapid changes brought by industrialisation and increased technological machinery (Noronha, 2003) In Recife, a major contributing factor to this was the lowering of significance of its seaport which, in conjunction with the financial crisis of the 1980s made for a large number unqualified poor classes to turn into informal work as a means of subsistence (Claudia Alexandre da Silva, 2008). It is around the 1990s that the State assumes a more significant role in these issues and local Municipalities start implementing formalisation programmes (Neto and Machado, 2003).

These programmes align with 'urban revitalisation' policies and, by associating street trade to illegal occupation of public space, rubbish and low visibility of formal vendors, they enforce the regulation of these activities and relocation of traders out of the streets and into specially built facilities (Zambeli, 2006). Urban policies targeting the poor and low-class populations are not new. Indeed, Brasilia, the capital of Brazil, was built on land that was confiscated from indigenous people (Holston, 1989). Moreover, critics point out how in Brazil, Municipalities have a long history of implementing urban policies which divide communities through tactics of 'human herding' of 'unwanted' and 'unwelcomed' segments of populations (Carrieri and Murta, 2011). For instance, in the 1990s the wealthier classes of Rio de Janeiro pressured the Municipality to implement policies targeting all indigents, poor-class and informal workers, which the elite perceived as 'lacking civilisation'. The consequence of this was the relocation of these populations into the peripheral localities which gave rise to what is now known as the Rio's slums (Sevcenko, 1985). Specifically to formalisation programmes, these programmes can mask an attempt of freeing the State from its responsibility for the public social problems these communities face by transforming them in economic ones and consequently undermining the traders' rights and independence (Carrieri et al., 2008). This is aided by disciplinary tactics aimed to remove the traders 'cultures of informality' (Hunt, 2009) and make them 'citizen-worthy' by complying with the prescribed formal socioeconomic order (Carrieri and Murta, 2011; Kopper, 2012).

### Recife's formalisation programme

In Recife, various strategies have been adopted to formalise informal commerce. I report on Recife's City Council's formalisation programme introduced by its Department of Mobility and Urban Control<sup>9</sup> (CSURB) in 2014. This programme seeks to regulate informal traders by issuing licenses which provide them 'permission' to sell specified items, from specified sites. These sites are called 'disciplined streets' where only licensed traders can perform trading activities.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Presently, this department has been renamed to 'Urban Services Department'.

This is transitory as the overall objective is to relocate the licensed workers into specially built malls, known as Camelodromos, which are still to be built.

For a trading license to be issued a trader must comply with a number of regulations such as: perform their activities solely in the specified site allocated to them; respect specific space limits in relation to their stalls positioning on the public space; sell only the specified categories of products/services which the formalisation programme accepts; and only one family member is permitted to have a trading license. The aim of the formalisation programme is that by enforcing traders to comply with these regulations they get gradually familiarised with the norms pertaining to the usage of the envisioned Camelodromos which will allow for a smooth transition upon their implementation.

To help on the recording of information regarding traders, licensing and enforcement of the formalisation of street trade, the City Council developed digital spreadsheets and paper forms which support the formalisation programme in the following processes:

- 1) Register in paper forms the data associated with informal street traders. This is operationalised by street fiscals which patrol the streets and register on paper forms the traders' name, products sold and their trading location.
- 2) Transcribe the data in paper forms' into a digital spreadsheet. The transcription from paper forms into spreadsheets is performed by supervisors which are also responsible for detecting mistakes written on the paper forms and inform the fiscals if there's any need to re-collect data from a specific site or trader/s.
- 3) Survey deviations and apply licensing/correcting measures. Through the spreadsheet technology, supervisors are able to easily filter and retrieve information such as: who is selling what and where, as well as what is to be sold, by whom and where. This aids in marking out traders ready for licensing, detecting traders not complying with the regulations, traders with more than one family member applying for licensing, etc. Through this filtering, supervisors make decisions concerning licencing and any disciplinary corrective measures. At the same time, fiscals patrolling the streets are also responsible for detecting any licensed workers that are not following the regulations, traders without a license operating in disciplined streets, and/or other illegal trading activities. This is registered and traders may be instructed to modify their trading practices, pay a fee, have their products confiscated and/or have their licenses revoked.

This briefly resumes the overview of the context of informal urban street trade in Recife and its Municipality's formalisation programme. In the next section, I will describe the methodological approach followed in this research inquiry.

## 4.2. Thick ethnography: a personal account

So far, my presentation of the discussion pertaining to informality and formalisation has shown that the ontological dimension upon which these abstract concepts are formed is of key importance. Through the literature review in chapter 2, I positioned this research aligned with a post-development sensibility which dismisses the dualist ontology of liberal modernity upon which a single, coherent and fixed universe exists out-there waiting to be discovered through objective knowledge, reason and science and embrace instead a relational ontology upon which a pluriverse is continuously being enacted through a multiplicity of relations (Escobar, 2010). Through my presentation of the theoretical underpinnings in chapter 3, I aligned this research with the 'relational' (Jacobs, 2012), 'material' (Rydin, 2014) and 'non-representational' (Anderson, 2016) turns in social theory. Plus, a post-structuralist focus of inquiry dismisses essentialist views of a world out-there waiting to be discovered by mobilising metaphors such as 'regimes', 'assemblages', 'fluidity', 'contingency', 'multiplicity' or 'entanglement' to bring forth a sense of the always incomplete state which any form of knowing entails as well as the importance of looking into the 'knowledges', 'practices', 'materials' and 'technologies' as processes which are temporarily assembled within the ongoing fluxes which make up reality. This makes up for the process-oriented, practiced-based and relational ontologies behind assemblage thinking which I have discussed through chapter 3 and will not rehearse here again. The question I will address in this section is how does this ontological scope informs the focus and shapes the presentation of my ethnographic inquiry into these issues.

Assemblage thinking implies that the object of inquiry is in a flux, it is an assemblage and a component of an assemblage at the same time, it is multiple and enacted through these relations and associations. Law (2004) argues that 'ethnography needs to work differently if it is to understand a networked or fluid world' (p. 3) and posits the concept of 'method assemblage' as a means of 'work[ing] in and know[ing] multiplicity, indefiniteness, and flux' (ibid p. 117). In this research, I have assembled a 'thick' ethnographic inquiry as the methodological approach to address these issues

'Thick description' is a term made famous by anthropologist Clifford Geertz in the 1970s and it has gradually taken hold in the social sciences, today being considered as the way of writing qualitatively. In his first chapter of the book *The Interpretation of Cultures*, he describes it as follows:

'In anthropology, or anyway social anthropology, what the practioners do is ethnography. And it is in understanding what ethnography is, or more exactly what doing ethnography is, that a start can be made toward grasping what anthropological analysis amounts to as a form of knowledge. This, it must immediately be said, is not a matter of methods. From one point of view, that of the textbook, doing ethnography is establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary, and so on. But it is not these things, techniques and received procedures, that define the enterprise. What defines it is the kind of intellectual effort it is: an elaborate venture in, to borrow a notion from Gilbert Ryle, "thick description".'

(Geertz, 1973, p.6)

'Thick description' is a way of writing which focuses not only in observing and describing phenomena but also in the context in which it occurs. Describing this context means applying a particular sensibility in observing and interpreting signs to gain their meaning within the phenomena itself. This means adopting a 'proximal view' on the phenomena at hand.

Contrary to a 'distal view' which assumes an existent order out-there in a finished state of being, a 'proximal view' takes interest in the relations between different entities and recognises these relations as ongoing processes of ordering, assembling, becoming (Law, 1992; Cooper and Law, 1995). Any perceived stability or finished state of being, if something, from a 'proximal view', is to be critically investigated as outcomes of processes. This distinction between a proximal and a distal thinking translates into the distinction between adopting a thick or thin description in the ethnographic inquiry.

'The notion of thick description is often misunderstood. It must be theoretical and analytical in that researchers concern themselves with the abstract and general patterns and traits of social life in a culture. This type of description aims to give readers a sense of the emotions, thoughts and perceptions that research participant's experience. It deals not only with the meaning and interpretations of people in a culture but also with their intentions. Thick description builds up a clear picture of the individuals and groups in the context of their culture and the setting in which they live ... Thick description can be contrasted with **thin description** (bold in original), which is a superficial account and does not explore the underlying meanings of cultural members.'

(Holloway, 1997, p. 154)

Hence, 'thick description' goes beyond the surface of phenomena to include a detail to knowledges, practices, materials, technologies, voices, social relations, feelings, actions, meanings which give significance to an observation, event, behaviour or discourse (Ponterotto, 2006). 'Thickness' in this context aligns with the 'let the data speak for themselves' approach (Walford, 2007) and is consequently viewed with some suspicion regarding its theoretical relevance (Wilson and Chaddha, 2009). This relates to the problematic of getting too close or too far from data. Getting too close to the empirical phenomena presents the risk of not connecting observations and interpretations with broader systems of thinking while getting too far may force such observations (Wacquant, 2002). These questionings are based on an understanding of a strong separation between empirical descriptions and theoretical explanations. However, descriptions *are* explanations and as Latour (2005) puts it 'if your description needs an explanation, it is not a good description' (p. 67).

The previous chapters have made clear that all regimes of representation interfere in their subjects. This is the performative effect of power/knowledge (Foucault, 1980). Moreover, performativity is central to a process-oriented ontology which looks at the becoming nature of assemblages as made of relational practices (Introna, 2013). Becoming performs and is performed by 'enabling constraints' (Buttler 1997, p. 16). Enabling constraints are the regimes of representation which make it possible, 'enable', certain acts, practices, discourses to occur while at the same time constrain others. Hence, any regime of representation, be it regulations, classification schemes or theoretical assumptions, is not neutral. It is always political in the sense that it performs on what/whom it represents and a 'thick ethnographic description' is no different. Hence, the question of it being too close or too far to data is readdressed in relation to how the inquiry is performed and what it performs, what it enables and what it constrains.

'(...) investigations interfere with the world...things change as a result. The issue, then, is not to seek disengagement but rather with how to engage.'

(Law, 2004, p. 14)

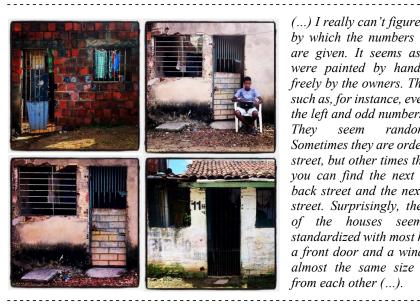
The methodological relevance of thick ethnographies has been praised by critical and post-development scholars which attend to processes by which centre and periphery continuously make and remake one another (Lawson, 2014; Escobar, 2011; Ferguson, 1994). Specifically, thick descriptions can help on challenging modernity-based of dichotomies constructs (under/developed, modern/traditional, formal/informal) upon which development is centered (Gupta, 1998). This project is undertaken through richly detailing the processes by which 'periphery subjectivities' are enacted by experts and professionals responsible for development interventions (Marcussen and Gould, 2004; Mosse, 2005; Pollard et al., 2009). At the same time, assemblage thinking plays a particular role in accentuating thick descriptions of everyday urban life and, through this, it challenges the paralyzing understandings of unity and coherence that shape policy interventions (Rankin, 2011).

The ontological scope of 'assemblage thinking', through its application of 'messy approaches' (Law, 2004) has the potential of offering thick descriptions of how development occurs, its effects and the possibilities that lay in the 'periphery' of modernity (Ferguson, 1999). Paraphrasing McFarlane (2011b), through an 'ethos of engagement in the world', the thick ethnographer is able to immerse in urban life and attend to a 'lively world of differences' and possibility (p. 386). My thick ethnographic approach speaks to these ideas and in the remainder of this chapter, I describe how this relates to my access to the field and my processes associated with the collection, analysis and presentation of data.

#### Accessing: emergence, planning and trust

In this sub-section, I describe my access to the field by first reflecting on the emergent dialogue between me and the issues of informality and formalisation, then presenting my research plan and describing its continuous alterations and finally describing issues associated with managing trust with participants.

My choice to investigate informal urban street trade and formalisation was not planned but rather highly contingent. When I arrived Recife in the summer of 2014, the objective was to get involved with an NGO working in a deprived area named Coque. There is no need to go into detail about this project but only state that after a month of arrival this project was cancelled. At the same time, while observing the urban socio-infrastructure of Recife, I was increasingly passionate for the ways in which formal/informal, legal/illegal, ordered/disordered morphologies pervaded the urban landscape. By then, I was reading Dourish and Bell (2011) book Divining a digital future and I remember how the ethnographies in the book were entertaining the idea of *alternative* sociotechnical infrastructures. Although the main topic of the book was about ubiquitous computing, these ethnographies richly detailed the urban landscape of deprived areas such as Indian slums, and shed light on how these social, economic, technical and material infrastructures shaped differently the imaginaries of what a 'smart city' could be. This book highly influenced my observations about informal morphologies. I was passionate about the aesthetic of a (dis)ordered order and focused on how these infrastructures were assembled and the possibilities they entailed, as it can be seen in a transcript from my fieldnotes reflecting on the urban infrastructure of the houses existent in the vicinity of the NGO in Coque.



(...) I really can't figure out the order by which the numbers of the houses are given. It seems as though they were painted by hand and chosen freely by the owners. There is no rule such as, for instance, even numbers on the left and odd numbers on the right. Thev seem randomly added. Sometimes they are ordered through a street, but other times they're not and you can find the next number on a back street and the next on the front street. Surprisingly, the architecture of the houses seems extremely standardized with most having always a front door and a window next to it almost the same size and distance from each other (...).

[ Field notes: 'personal reflections on #tropicalinfrastructures' @ Coque (01/06/2014 14:30) ]

I was extremely passionate about such matters and seeing entanglements and 'wills to disentangle' everywhere. An example of this can be seen below on a transcript of my reflection on the design of a food plate entitled 'structuralist food'.

It is noticeable in this food tray design how different types of food become structured into different spaces notwithstanding how all these will be morphed into each other when eaten. Presenting food in this manner gives the sensation of organisation which, although temporary, its looked forth as it simplifies standardised dosage and the processes of cleaning. However, and here come into place the particularities of Brazilian culture, three typically Brazilian ingredients don't fit into the structuralist intent of the tray. These are the rice and beans, in the middle bottom, and the farofa (toasted cassava), in the bottom left. Rice and beans have a long tradition in Brazilian food and are eaten together in the typical feijoada (bean stew) dish. For this reason, in the tray, they earn a common cubicle for easier mixture.



The structuralist will of the tray can't fight against the entangled nature of rice and beans! In the other hand, farofa has historically been used, primarily by the poor classes, as add-on to give more consistency to food and help 'calm' down the potential 'revolt' of the working classes' empty stomach. Because farofa is not to be eaten solo, but spread through the other ingredients, it needs to be measured and weighted into a plastic bag which then, and only then, is placed in its respective cubicle. Maybe it would be easier to adopt a structuralist, Fordist approach and add farofa in the same quantity to each of the other cubicles. However, its usage by whom is eating is

quite, if I may, post-structuralist. Farofa can't be placed in a cubicle as its function is to be spread on top of all the other ingredients on the plate. The will to structure, to formalise, how we are to consume food has its effects. It does give the perception of an organisation of equal food amounts among clients. It also simplifies the serving and cleaning tasks. However, the rice and beans need to be mixed and farofa acts as the glue to be added to all the ingredients so to reach the emotional, comfort-food taste which people love and resist to let go.

[ Field notes: 'personal reflections on #structuralistfood @ Boa Viagem (04/06/2014 12:30) ]

My personal reflections on the urban socio-infrastructure of Recife point out the emergent and contingent nature of my access to the field. The concepts, ideas and reflections surrounding formality/informality, entanglement, disentanglement, structuring forces and their negotiations and frictions with other forces that resist being structured, were *emergent* from my involvement with the urban infrastructure and cultural habits which shaped my observations and focus of the urban life in Recife. Thus, choosing to research informal urban street trade and formalisation emerged naturally not only from my engagement with such topics, in a broader sense but also, and more specifically, through my daily encounters, conversations and exchanges with street traders which often shared issues concerning their jobs, livelihoods and struggles. The translation of these conversations into a research plan happen gradually as I will detail next.

Although the ethnographic inquiry had the duration of one year (2014-2015), this was far from straightforward. Not only my attention to informal urban street trade and formalisation was contingent to the cancellation of a prior research project and emergent from my observations of the field, but also my focus was continuously tightened and loosened in relation to what the findings revealed. Hence, the ethnographic inquiry was composed of three main phases.

'(...) we cannot know today what we might need to ask tomorrow, and to pretend we did would deny one of the most basic values of ethnography ... that it can deal with complex, fluid contexts and their emergent and unanticipated issues.'

(Lewis and Russell , 2011, p. 409)  $% \left( \left( {{{\rm{Lewis}}} \right)^2} \right)$ 

The broad objective was to gather data on the practices, knowledges, materials and technologies associated with the processes of formalising street trade, by governing officials, and those associated with the daily work of informal street traders. The inquiry was conducted throughout the squares and streets where informal trade was prevalent and where governing officials were present, as well as within the City Council department of Mobility and Urban Control (CSURB). The first phase of ethnographic inquiry relates to my initial focus on governing officials and it corresponds to most of the findings I present in this thesis' chapter 5. *Formalising street trade*. The second and third phases of ethnographic inquiry were more focused on the street traders' practices and correspond to the findings presented in chapter 6. *Informal street trading*. Next, I discuss the focus of each of these phases of inquiry in more detail.

The first phase of my ethnographic inquiry had a duration of six months, from May to October of 2014. At this point, my objective of inquiry was to focus on the formalisation processes undergone by the CSURB department and the practices of governing officials in their daily formalising tasks and assess how these affected the work and livelihoods of street traders. The inquiry had two aims: First, to uncover the perceptions of CSURB officials and traders in relation to informal trade and the formalisation programme. Second, to examine how the formalisation programme was implemented. Specifically, I focused on how CSURB made use of paper forms and a spreadsheet to record, monitor, licence and enforce the formalisation programme. Primary participants interviewed at this phase were of two kinds. The first were the CSURB officials, mainly street fiscals responsible for the registering of information concerning the street traders' activities into paper forms, supervisors responsible for managing the fiscal's processes and transcribing the data from paper forms into the spreadsheets and a senior official responsible for the overall management of the programme. The second kind of participants were licensed and unlicensed street traders as well as common *citizens* interacting with traders.

As my ethnographic inquiry evolved, I got more in contact with street traders and familiar with informants which were able to share and grant access to more

information regarding their work practices and livelihoods which previously was hard to get. Thus, around November I decided to expand my ethnographic inquiry to focus deeper on the daily practices of street traders.

The second phase of my ethnographic inquiry had a duration of three months, from November of 2014 to January of 2015. At this point, I had gotten already in contact with various traders and was particularly fond of the traders of music CDs and decided to investigate the practices associated with the informal trade of digital media products. The objective was to collect stories related to the traders which sold copied music CDs and their surrounding social, material and cultural infrastructure. This was composed of thick descriptions of their stalls and components, their routes through the urban centre and their supply networks. Participants at this phase of inquiry were the traders of digital media, other informal traders, store owners which interacted with digital media traders in some way, local producers of content such as music CDs and citizens interacting with street traders. Moreover, and connecting back to the overall scope of the research, I maintained the broader focus on these actors' ideas and assumptions in relation to informal urban street trade and the formalisation programme.

While conducting this enquiry I got proximate to traders which sold inside and in the surroundings of an old mall facility which was built more than two decades ago by the City Council in an attempt to formalise trade. This constituted a rich site for inquiring into the formal and informal negotiations, frictions and mismatches and thus I initiated the third phase of the ethnographic inquiry.

The third phase of my ethnographic inquiry had the duration of three months, from February to April of 2015. The focus of the third round of fieldwork was to investigate how street traders practiced their work inside and in the vicinity of this mall and investigate their networks of supply and distribution. At this time I was already at ease with informants and known traders and thus had granted access to follow traders on their daily work routines, practices and routes through the urban centre as they shared with me the reasons for their doings. This permitted me to uncover various modes of organising associated with their business models which had been left invisible before. Participants in this phase of inquiry were informal street traders working both inside the facility and on its surroundings, formal retail stores connected to informal traders, suppliers of informal traders and citizens interacting with these markets.

Through the whole of the three phases of the ethnographic inquiry, ethical decisions had to be made to manage trust among participants which were highly suspicious of one another. This was particularly important in the first interactions with CSURB, as I will detail next.

It was through informal conversations with street traders and street fiscals that I got to know that CSURB was the department responsible for the implementation of the formalisation programme. Below is a transcript of my first impressions when visiting the building.

(...) CSURB is just next to a central bus stop full of street traders selling with their stalls parked all around (...) next to the building of CSURB is a Military facility (...) the street has numerous men in uniforms, being it military or the street fiscals working for CSURB (...).

Upon entry there is a guard, he is tall and strong (...) with a strong intimidating voice asks me what I want from there (...) I respond purposefully in my **Portuguese accent** that I am doing a research for a **British University** and would like to talk with someone in this respect. I lets me in promptly. There's a sign on the door stating it is forbidden to enter the building



dressed in shorts or flip-flops (...) this I imagine is the common clothes of street traders which need to work at the sun (...). Inside I can see this is a precarious building. There is a big room with a desk somewhere in the middle and two women are sat. One looking at the phone and the other looking at the window (...) there's no computer on the desk and only a fixed telephone that they use to check on the appointments of people coming in (...) there's pictures on the walls

with old paintings of Recife city centre and surprisingly, some show street sellers on the sidewalks (...). While waiting for the ladies to point me to someone, I sit and drink a coffee from a coffee machine (...) While serving coffee I hear the voice of the guard talking loud. I look and see he was with his hand stopping a young kid from getting inside the building and asking, quite aggressively, what was his purpose there. This seemed to me quite rude but I didn't see any surprise from the kid being treated this way or the ladies which continued doing what they're doing. In the end the kid could get inside and even, very humbly, thanked the guard. The military presence on the surroundings, people dressed in uniforms, the intimidating voice of the guard and his hand stopping the kid from moving inside, this **overall aesthetic of authority** fits perfectly with the name 'Dpt. Of Mobility and Urban Control' (...).

[ Field notes: 'morning at CSURB @ city centre (10/06/2014 09:00) ]

In this transcript, I reveal my first impression of the environment and culture of CSURB and some strategies used to facilitate the governing officials' acceptance of my access to information regarding the formalisation programme. These strategies were associated with the use of language, dress code and presentation of research scope and focus, as I will detail next.

Although the official language of Brazil is Portuguese, this is a Brazilian version of the language with a very distinct accent and numerous words which are used differently. Because of my previous stay in Brazil during an exchange program in 2008, I got accustomed to the Brazilian accent and usually, it would take some time for a Brazilian person to detect that I was Portuguese and not Brazilian.

Through time I've come to realise (and experience) that a cultural prejudice concerning the poor and low-income classes was mirrored by an admiration for

any signs of belonging to a higher class. On such sign was to be a foreigner. Especially if from a country from the Global North. This was felt by me in how I was treated differently in Banks, public institutions or restaurants as people perceived me as a local Brazilian or a Portuguese foreigner. It was in relation to this cultural aspect that, when interacting with the bureaucratic institutions, such as the CSURB department, I made sure to use my Portuguese accent in order to facilitate their openness to my research requests.

This same modernist rationale was behind the mandatory request for a formal dress code when entering governing bodies' facilities. Given the hot weather in Recife, these sort of clothes were far from ideal for me given that conducting fieldwork meant that I would be walking through the streets most of the day. Nevertheless, it was important to keep this image as sign of respectfulness and formality which facilitated the perception of me being 'one of them'.

When presenting my research to CSURB, I rapidly got the impression that governing officials were suspicious of sociological accounts of their work as they associated these to projects aligned with defending the 'un-respectful' and 'uncitizen-like' behaviours of traders. On the contrary, by stating my research was associated with England, a 'developed country', and its disciplinary focus being linked to the 'management discipline', this made governing officials more at ease to freely share information regarding their managerial skills.

Concerning my access to information from street traders, this evolved through time as I gained their trust. For instance, accessing hard-to-find information regarding street traders' piracy networks or supply routes was facilitated by informants. These were a restrained group of street traders who got accustomed to my presence and were willing to help me out on gathering more information from their socioeconomic infrastructure. In relation to information from local musicians which used traders to sell their musical products, I realised that, contrary to most street traders, if I addressed them in a familiar Brazilian Portuguese accent, they would look at my ignorance towards their music as offensive. However, when opening up about being foreigner, and speaking with my Portuguese accent, they would happily cooperate with me and share information about their interactions with traders.

As I got more and more familiar with street traders, street fiscals became suspicious of my involvement. As a consequence, as I got more access to the information from street traders, I gradually lost access to inside information on the formalisation programme.

#### Collecting: methods assembled

Primary data collection was gathered through ethnographic observations. This was aided by field notes, audio recordings, pictures and enhanced by interviews and informal conversations and supplemented by secondary sources (Creswell, 2009).

- My observations consisted of roughly 6 hours a day, mostly weekdays but often weekends as well.
- In total, I conducted 98 interviews. In Phase I, 25 interviews were conducted. 8 with street fiscals, 2 with supervisors, 1 with a senior official, 4 with licensed traders, 5 with unlicensed traders and 5 with citizens). In phase II, 29 unstructured interviews and/or conversations were conducted correspondent to 11 with traders of digital media, 6 with other informal traders, 4 with formal traders or store owners, 5 with citizens interacting with traders and 3 with local producers of content sold by informal traders. In phase III, I conducted 44 unstructured interviews and/or conversations correspondent to 26 with informal street traders, 4 with retail stores, 4 with suppliers and 10 with citizens interacting with traders.
- In relation to audio recordings, a total, 276 audios were recorded corresponded to 98 recordings of interviews and/or conversations (25 in phase I, 29 in phase II and 44 in phase III), 38 recordings of soundscapes (10 in phase I, 15 in phase II and 13 in phase III) and 140 recordings of personal notes/memos/observations (43 in phase I, 35 in phase II and 62 in phase III).
- More than 13 A5-sized paper notebooks were written with field notes and more than 500 pictures were taken during fieldwork.
- All this data was daily arranged into three fieldwork diaries with 55 pages, in phase I, 80 pages in phase II and 69 pages in phase III.

Next, I describe in detail how these methods were performed during fieldwork.

Ethnographic observations focused on different aspects throughout the one yearlong inquiry period. They evolved from being semi-participant (Musante and DeWalt, 2010), in relation to following governing officials in their daily tasks, to non-participant *flaneur* (Jenks and Neves, 2000), in relation to embedded ethnographic descriptions of city life and informality (Lewis and Russell, 2011).

In the first phase of the inquiry, my observations were focused on the processes associated with formalisation as these took place within the CSURB office and on the streets of Recife's city centre. In the CSURB office, the observations focused on the usage of the spreadsheets, specifically observing how information was transcribed from paper forms into the spreadsheets, the mismatches it produced, and how these were analysed. Observations on the streets focused on a) following the street fiscals' as they registered information associated with street traders into paper forms; b) how street fiscals monitored the traders' compliance with the formalisation rules; and c) how street traders interacted with clients and street fiscals. The observations where CSURB officials were present had to be carefully planned-out and scheduled. Seven visits to the CSURB office occurred. Four were associated with following fiscals' activities on the streets. On the other hand, the observations of traders' activities on the streets were more emergent and casual and conducted throughout the overall months of fieldwork as events unfolded.

In the second and third phases of inquiry, my observations were more focused on the practices of street traders and the urban life and experience of informality. Observations at this stage got gradually more attentive to the sensorial, material and aesthetic dimension of informal urban street markets. I focused on the materiality of the traders' stalls. I was attentive to the materials and technologies they used and their purpose such as their stalls' components, the information technology apps used on cellphones for communicating with one another, accounting notebooks to register sales, etc. I was also focused on their marketing strategies and mobility through the urban landscape, this being associated to supply circuits or interactions with retail stores.

Field notes were an essential tool used in my ethnographic inquiries. Indeed, I purposefully bought shorts with big side pockets to facilitate the carrying of small-sized paper notebooks to make notes while conducting fieldwork through the streets. In these notebooks, I took rich descriptions of the daily experience of street traders, the overall street trading life and trading interactions as these took place. I also used them to take notes of interviews and random conversations with traders, citizens, street fiscals and between them. These notes were often taken in real-time, as events unfolded. However, sometimes this was not possible and I had to write soon-afterwards.

'The descriptive and interpretive thick description records interpretations that occur within the experience as it is lived.... These types of statements are difficult to produce and obtain. They require a person who is able to reflect on experience as it occurs.'

(Liebow, 2003, p.98)

The decision to take notes in real-time or not was made by me as I realised through time that some participants felt more or less comfortable about it. For instance, CSURB officials were open and enthusiastic about sharing information about their managerial skills. Informal street traders, on the other hand, showed some suspicion to what they perceived could be yet another form of surveillance. This happened more often at the beginning of my ethnographic inquiry while they

were still unfamiliar with me and I will detail this further in this sub-section. For now though, what I want to retain is that in such cases, a mobile phone audio recording was mostly used to enable non-intrusiveness.

Audio recordings were crucial. Besides using them for recording interviews and conversations, I also recorded communication between traders, citizens and fiscals as well as soundscapes of the streets composed of traders playing music CDs from their stalls' speakers, or their marketing slogans. Another important role of audio recordings was associated with memos which I usually made of observations. As it happen with field notes, these were recorded in real-time or soon afterwards, when was impossible to record in real-time.

Pictures were also essential for the daily registering of my observations. All pictures were taken by cell phone camera so to not draw much attention. Not only I took pictures of the traders, street markets, products sold, and their interactions, but also of the stalls' arrangement on the sidewalks, its components, the governing officials' forms and spreadsheets, materials and technologies used by traders and the overall visual aesthetic of informality and formalisation.

All data was supplemented by secondary sources such as official documentation from the CSURB department associated with the formalisation programme, paper forms used to register information of street traders and print screens of the spreadsheets used by CSURB. In addition, I also gathered data from official governing body's internet sites, social media platforms where street traders had public profiles and other internet sites associated with the marketing and selling of local music artists connected to informal street traders.

I will now dedicate more time to the role of interviews as this method evolved and changed throughout the fieldwork. In a practice-based inquiry, observations can be more productive than interviews. Especially when observations of doings do not relate to sayings (Myers and Newman, 2007). Hence, the main importance of unstructured interviews often lies on interview templates which give 'flexibility, improvisation and openness' for data to emerge (Myers and Newman, 2007, p. 14). In my fieldwork, interview templates facilitated my ongoing vigilance in relation to the focus of information to be gathered from participants. I always brought with me the interview templates stuck within the elastic closure of my paper notebooks. These 'templates' offered me a guideline of topics to be covered, depending on the type of participants I was interviewing.

The templates started from being semi-structured and rapidly changed towards being unstructured as my experience evolved and I realised that often the richest data would emerge naturally from conversations rather than it being forced through scripts. Reducing the imposition of structure translated into freeing the stories to naturally emerge and unfold and make changes to the relevance of topics accordingly. For instance, while in the beginning these interviews were focused on the governing officials' opinions about the formalisation programme and informal urban street trade, by letting the actors' own narrative to emerge, the interviews evolved towards unfolding their rationales for giving legitimacy to the formalisation programme or gathering their opinions in relation to their usage of spreadsheets and paper forms and make questions regarding my observations of their practices with these technologies as they took place. Thus, templates were guidelines of topics to be covered whether through a formal appointment with a participant, an informal conversation or a question regarding a real-time observation of an event. As the inquiry evolved and I got familiar with the participants' habits, culture and practices and was trusted by them, the exchange of information happen more naturally in a conversational manner. However, this trust was not static and had to be continuously managed, and the changes to my processes of conducting interviews exemplify this perfectly, as I will detail next.

Contrary to the language and dress code used when dealing with the workers at CSURB facilities, when dealing with traders I usually spoke with my Brazilian accent and dressed casually with a t-shirt, snickers and shorts with big sized pockets on the side where I packed my notebooks, pens, interview templates, and consent forms detailing my research and the usage of data which needed to be signed by participants. As my interactions increased with traders I came to realise that any sign of 'formality' would bring difficulties to their openness. For instance, in my first interactions with them, I always made sure to first and foremost present myself and my research and make sure this was understood clearly. Then I would ask them to sign the consent form and explain clearly to them that whatever information they were to share with me was only to be used for academic purposes (and not by any governing institutions) and this information was to be kept anonymous. Agreeing on this, I would ask if they would mind me recording our conversation. Only after all this was done, I would take out my interview template with the points I wanted to address and start the interview/conversation while taking notes on my paper notebook. This was my interview process in the first interactions with traders and I soon realised this was making it hard to gain their trust. They often would interrupt me or their train of thought and ask me not to write something they said, or stop recording. After a while, I came to realise that because I was using paper forms, asking questions, making notes, they associated me with street fiscals and were suspicious of my intent and what consequences it could bring to them.

Soon I realised that it was more productive to start any interaction with traders as I usually did before I was engaged in the research inquiry. Hence, my process of gathering data evolved towards me first engaging in some sort of small talk, sometimes while buying or consuming some product. These conversations could slowly emerge or not to topics interesting for the research, but that was a cost I was willing to take. Only after I felt they were comfortable with my presence and topics of conversation, I would open up and state my research purpose. There was a risk involved in this strategy as they could say no to any further conversation and thus, no data could be used. However, this never happen and all agreed happily to share information with me through this means.

Thus, the transition from semi-structured to unstructured interview templates and the informal conversational interaction with participants permitted me to gain a high level of insight into topics and themes which could hardly be covered through structured or formal approaches. Moreover, given the context of suspicion between participants, familiarity and trust were not optional but rather mandatory if I was to be getting any chance of collecting truthful and insightful data. However, this didn't came without a cost. Like I mentioned at the beginning of this section, any 'proximal approach' to inquiry has the strength and the challenge of lacking 'distal account' (Wilson and Chaddha, 2009; Wacquant, 2002). By getting increasingly proximate to the context of inquiry, and 'letting the data speak for themselves' (Walford, 2007), massive amounts of data were collected which were challenging to analyze properly in due time, as I will describe next.

### Analysing: processes employed

The analysis of all data was undertaken by comparing the themes that emerged (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Field notes were grouped daily into a themed research diary which was populated with the main happenings of the day listed through the interviews, informal conversations, observation notes, audio recordings, and pictures taken. This proved useful for the day-to-day analysis and continuous tightening and focusing of the inquiry in relation to emergent themes which were later compared with the interview transcripts. QSR software NVivo was used to aid this process (Beekhuyzen et al., 2010). As the inquiry evolved, the role of the fieldwork diary also grown as my primary on-the-fly analysis tool. In this sub-section, I will detail how the analysis was undertaken through the ongoing crafting of my fieldwork diary.

The analysis of data needed to facilitate the continuous accommodation of themes emerging from the numerous sources. I soon figured out that translating to English and transcribing the whole audio recordings of interviews and conversations, some lasting more than two hours, was not reasonable. Not only this type of analysis would leave me no time for ethnographic inquiry, but also its level of granularity was too deep and I felt as if I was losing the 'forest from the trees' while doing it. This was counter-productive for finding relevant themes and changing my focus and targets of inquiry accordingly. As such, not long after the beginning of my ethnographic inquiry, I embraced my fieldwork diary as the main

tool of analysis which proven to be more effective for the day-to-day analysis but also for the overall ethnographic thick description, as I will detail next.

I followed a strict process of analysis by writing the fieldwork diary on a daily basis. This could take from one to three hours. This consisted of first, grouping the pictures taken that day and sorting them by time into the document. This was an important step as I often took pictures on the streets which were associated with some theme of my research while other ones were associated with my encounters or interviews with traders. Through having a visual map of the day I was able to recall instantly the happenings and the ideas that crossed my mind associated with my observations and write these down prior to anything else.

After this, I would grab my paper notebook and go through my notes of the day. These could be additions to the visual observations already documented, other observations or notes taken in real-time of the most important points I retained from interviews or conversations with participants.

The third step was to go through all the audio recordings of the day. In my recordings, I always started with a voice mark stating the time, place, and the objective of the audio. When reviewing the audios I would first listen to the start of the recording and arrange these files in relation to a taxonomy for easy retrieval, as it can be seen in Figure 2.

🗟 Day04 2015.03.20 13.52 Observations - 3MA Casa do Suco Tropical Popular Jingle indoors @ kamelodromo right.mp4	۲	20 Mar 2015 at 16:52
📓 Day04 2015.03.20 13.55 Notes - My notes about the jingle - childish, popular capitalism @ kamelodromo right.mp4	0	20 Mar 2015 at 16:54
🗟 Day04 2015.03.20 14.42 Interviews - Beto 44 Clothes Seller Galpao 10, ex hawker @ Manel Street.mp4	۲	20 Mar 2015 at 18:28
🗟 Day04 2015.03.20 15.37 Interviews - Luciano 37 Cloths seller - investment on cameras tec @ Manel Street.mp4	۲	20 Mar 2015 at 18:56
🗟 Day04 2015.03.20 16.10 Interviews - Beto agains unions - thei are arachists @ Manel Street.mp4	۲	20 Mar 2015 at 19:15
🝙 Day04 2015.03.20 16.15 Interviews - Beto Dilma = God, PT = Judas, 15M Women as president, religion etc @ Manel Street.mp4 🚽	۲	20 Mar 2015 at 19:21
Day04 2015.03.20 16.26 Interviews - Ivo Authorization for Audio @ Manel Street.mp4	۲	20 Mar 2015 at 19:27
a Day04 2015.03.20 16.27 Interviews - Ivo, 57 Deposit owner, ex piracy place @ Manel Street.mp4	۲	20 Mar 2015 at 19:41
🗟 Day04 2015.03.20 16.49 Interviews - V - Luis 52 deposit owner Açai overall @ Manel Street .mp4	۲	20 Mar 2015 at 20:15
🗟 Day04 2015.03.20 17.19 Interviews - Luis Açai benefits @ Manel Street.mp4	۲	20 Mar 2015 at 20:25
🗟 Day04 2015.03.20 17.30 Interviews - V - Luis Whatsup uses - competition, supply-chain day-to-day @ Manel Street.mp4	0	20 Mar 2015 at 20:36
a Day04 2015.03.20 17.36 Notes - on the Luis interview @ Manel Street.mp4	۲	20 Mar 2015 at 20:37
🗟 Day05 2015.03.24 12.30 Observations - Sound Hawkwer. selling music pen drive @ kamelodromo left.mp4	۲	24 Mar 2015 at 15:32
🗟 Day05 2015.03.24 12.52 Observations - Indigenous Herbs Seller @ Kamelodromo back.mp4	۲	24 Mar 2015 at 15:58
🗟 Day05 2015.03.24 14.21 Interviews - Luciano showing his store and information management @ kamelodromo left.mp4	۲	24 Mar 2015 at 17:22
🗟 Day05 2015.03.24 14.30 Notes - Luciano market rent to other shopers & business model @ kamelodromo left.mp4	۲	24 Mar 2015 at 17:32
🗟 Day05 2015.03.24 14.41 Interviews - Luciano information management codes for accountability @ kamelodromo left.mp4	۲	24 Mar 2015 at 17:46
🗟 Day05 2015.03.24 14.54 Interviews - Marta Food seller fixed stand delivery to hawkers @ Mael Street.mp4	۲	24 Mar 2015 at 18:45
📓 Day05 2015.03.24 16.01 Observations - Luis talking about easy credit and crisis @ Manel Street.mp4	۲	24 Mar 2015 at 19:07
📓 Day05 2015.03.24 16.10 Interviews - V - Natasha 23 Acai street seller and urban politics @ Metro.mp4	٢	24 Mar 2015 at 19:27
🗟 Day05 2015.03.24 16.28 Interviews - V - Natasha 23 continuation @ Metro.mp4	۲	24 Mar 2015 at 20:01
🗟 Day05 2015.03.24 17.42 Observations - Manel store conversation about chinese @ Manel Street.mp4	۲	24 Mar 2015 at 20:59
🗟 Day06 2015.03.25 12.53 Interviews - Jose @ lunch cds, rent space for cds, Ivo, politics of street @ Manel Street.mp4	۲	25 Mar 2015 at 15:59
Day06 2015.03.25 13.00 Interviews - Jose continuation @ Manel street.mp4	0	25 Mar 2015 at 16:51

Figure 2: Audio recordings taxonomy in action (laptop folder screenshot)

#### Taxonomy used: Day# YYY.MM.DD HH.MM TYPE - NAME (THEME) @ SITE.

Day# was associated with a numerical order of days associated with each phase of inquiry; YYY.MM.DD was associated with the year, month and day; HH.MM was associated with the hour and minute the recording started; TYPE was associated with the type of recording. This could be interviews, notes or observations; NAME was associated with the person or persons on the recording. It could be empty as well; THEME was associated with the main themes of the recording; SITE was associated with the locality where the audio was recorded.

When this was labelled and ordered by date and time, I followed to position the name of the files into the fieldwork diary and align them with the content I had already written previously associated to the pictures and field notes. This is when I started listening to the whole audios and transcribing the most important parts into the document. Usually, at the end of listening to each audio record, I would also change or edit the name given to the file to reflect its themes.

Transcripts used the following taxonomy:

```
Participant, role @ site
[ Type (field note, interview, observation): 'theme title' @ site
(phase (I, II or II) - YY/MM/DD HH:MM
```

Below are three examples of taxonomy used in transcripts.

Example of taxonomy used associated with a transcript of an observation note where there's no voice of participants but solely of researcher:

```
[ Field notes: 'Fiscals registering patrols' @ Água Fria
(phase I - 10/06/2014 15:30) ]
```

Example of taxonomy used associated with a transcript of an interview:

Example of taxonomy used associated with a transcript of an observation where there are the voices of participants:

```
JJ, sunglasses stand owner & sponsor of local music scene @ Camelodromo
Everton, workshop supplies stand owner @ Camelodromo
Luciano, informal clothes shop owner @ nearby street
Jose, cell phone repairs shop owner @ Camelodromo
[ Field notes: 'DJ Zeca sponsorship routes' @ Camelodromo
(phase III - 30/03/2015 15:00) ]
```

What these examples also reveal is my increasingly 'proximal take' on the field as the voices of participants evolved from being associated to their roles in phase I ('fiscals' or 'traders' for example) towards them having a name (which were changed to maintain participants' confidentiality), a voice and a personal story, in phases II and III, thus gaining more agency in the unfolding of inquiry. As I mentioned before, the unstructured interviews and informal conversations grew to be the primary collection method of the voices of participants and thus, their voices were registered increasingly through transcripts of field notes or audio recordings rather than 'scripts and added into 'observation notes'.

I followed to group the writings of the day into themes and give this day a name in the document which reflected these themes, as it can be seen in Figure 3.

Informal Sound Hawker João, the "Piracy Hierarchy" and the "Informal Franchise	
Infrastructure"	15
Informal Sound Hawker Anderson Time-lapse and the Local Artists	16
Conceição Religious Festivities	18
Day03 2014.12.07 - Schedule JM and DJ Junior and NGO ITEA	18
Day04 2014.12.08 - Formality, Elias, Arnaldo, Xavier and Morro Festivities	18
Formal Store - Elias	19
Formal Store Arnaldo	20
Formal Sore Xavier	20
Other Observations – Illegality and legality helping one another	21
Morro Festivities - Religion, Party, Alcohol, Poverty, Prostitution, all in one place	21
Day05 2014.12.09 - Mario - Sound Jingle, Tarcisio Formal CD Store, Dj Mão Branca, Ori	ni
and Roberta Sound Hawkers	22
Informal Food Hawker Mario and his Sound Jingle	22
Formal Tarcisio and the Formal Side of City Sound	24

Figure 3: Fieldwork diary themes arrangement by day (Phase II contents)

This daily process of arranging, labelling and re-rearranging data was summarised weekly which facilitated on getting bigger picture and make changes accordingly. This process of engagement with the continuous crafting of the fieldwork diary proved to be the most productive tool for the analysis of the rich amount of data and the main vehicle for the presentation of findings in this thesis. Plus, after fieldwork, my back-and-forth between fieldwork diaries, audios and fieldnotes continued and often involved the use of whiteboards with coloured post-its and markers to aid in the analysis, as seen in Figure 4.

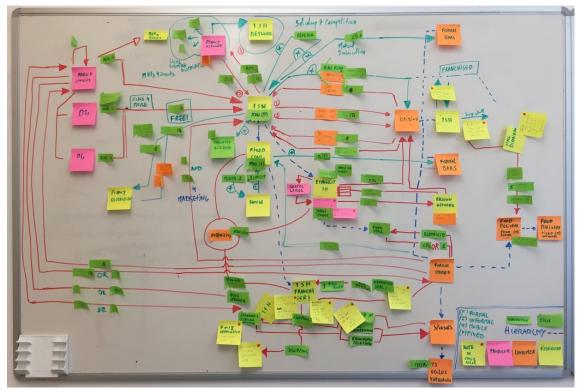


Figure 4: After-fieldwork analysis

In conjunction with presenting my findings at academic conferences, all these processes helped on the ongoing analysis and reaching thematic consistency.

### Presenting: performative storytelling techniques

While writing the empirical presentation of this thesis I tested various strategies. Besides the objective of making a narrative clear, I wanted somehow be able to shed light on the frictions and forces that I was trying to document and present these through more than words. I wanted to somehow perform on the reader an aesthetic feel for the field rather than representing the field. Through the content, but also through the form in which the content was presented, I wanted to shed light on the richness of the streets, the negotiations, frictions, mismatches and entanglements between informality and formalisation, which somehow mirrored my perceptions and continuous dialogue with the field. In my attempt to bring forth this aesthetic dimension of formality/informality, I applied a performative storytelling strategy (Langellier and Peterson, 2004) to the presentation of the empirical findings. This is composed of four main storytelling techniques: Parts, Vignettes, Moments and Figures, used in chapters 5 and 6 which I discuss next.

To shed light on the processual ways in which formalisation and informal trade are performed, I divided the findings into five parts associated with five broad processes: legitimising, classifying, working, valuing and supplying. The first two correspond to processes associated with the practices of formalising street trade and the next three correspond to the ones of informal trading. Grouping the data in relation to broad process renders the becoming nature of formalisation and informality that I want to bring forth. These processes are composed of vignettes.

Vignettes contain my thick descriptions of the happenings and doings that constitute these processes. They go into deeper detail on the subprocesses which compose the parts. Thus, their names also start with a verb. With the exception of the first part of findings - legitimising - which has three vignettes, all the remaining parts have two vignettes. As the empirical story evolves from the practices associated with formalisation, in chapter 5, into the ones associated with informality, in chapter 6, these pairs of vignettes correspond to two underlying forces. The first one aims to somehow formalise in the sense of a territorialisation intent to constitute some coherence, organise, delimit. The second one brings forth a process which is associated to an informalisation in the sense of a deterritorialisation intent which aims to make use of lines of flight, innovate, and expand new alternative meanings or solutions. By assembling the findings in this manner I atempt to perform a sense of the underlying ways in which each informal process (Parts III, IV, and V of Chapter 5) emerge through the interplay between territorialising forces (first vignette of each Part) as well as deterritorialising ones (second vignette of each Part). Plus, the stories in each vignette are often cross-referential through time, space or participant. Often, vignettes emerge through others, intertwine with others, are enacted through the

assemblagings of others or contingent to others. This emergent and entangled nature of the findings comes to life through 'moments' (Antal et al., 2015).

These 'moments' correspond to situated snapshots of specific happenings which took place. 'Moments' bring to life the themes presented through the vignettes by richly describing the situated assembling of knowledges, practices, materials and technologies that took place in relation to a particular happening. Hence 'moments' reflect as much a specific time as a specific happening spread through time that I was able to describe by grouping data from different sources afterwards (participants thoughts in relation to what happened prior, conversation transcripts from social media platforms, etc).

Lastly, the role of figures is also important. Rather than presenting pictures through the empirical findings, I group these into 'figures' which can be composed of anywhere from one to five pictures and represent a visual assemblage of a specific theme. These can be associated with components of a stall, elements of informal infrastructure, flows of people on the streets, etc.

These storytelling techniques try to aesthetically enhance the reader's perception of the contradictory forces at play within the empirical field of inquiry. The assemblages and their territorialising and deteriorating forces existent in the stories but also on the sensorial identity of the streets. Closure does not fit within this scope. That would constrain what it aims to enable. This is only one of a multiplicity of stories that reflect the continuous becomings of the field. Through bringing forth this story, and the stories which enable it, my 'thick description' aims to open up new paths for other stories to emerge and shed light on the possibilities existent in the always evolving and never finished nature of the field.

This concludes the presentation of the methodological approach followed in this thesis' 'thick ethnographic inquiry'. Next, I will finish this chapter with a small summary of the main points and go on to the presentation of the findings.

### Summary of Chapter 4: Context and Methodology

In this chapter, I presented the empirical context of Recife (section 4.1) and described the methodological approach followed in this research (section 4.2).

The historical presence of informal urban street trade in Recife reflects an intrinsic relation with the urban life, culture and costumes. It is pervasive and both shapes and is shaped by its historic neighbourhoods. On the same note, its Municipality has made continuous attempts to formalise street trade and regulate these

#### (RE)ORDERING AND (DIS)ORDERING OF STREET TRADE

workers' practices. This provides the rich context on the issues of informality, formalisation and development which this thesis aims to investigate. These issues were addressed through the methodological approach of a 'thick ethnographic inquiry' (Geertz, 1973) which I described thoroughly in the second part of this chapter.

I started by positioning the 'thick ethnographic approach' within the ontological scope presented previously in chapter 3. I went on to describe how 'thick inquiry' is suited for this research' focus into *critique* and *possibility* by showing how this method has been praised in both post-development literature, for its ability to challenge modernity-based constructs (Escobar, 2011) as well as by urban assemblages scholars, in attending to the possibilities that lay in the 'periphery' of modernity (McFarlane, 2011b). Following this presentation, I described in detail the processes by which access to the field was conducted, data was collected, analysis performed and findings presented in this thesis.

Concerning access, I described the contingent and emergent nature by which the focus of this research was chosen, the ongoing re-planning and re-focusing of the research scope and offer reflections on the ongoing managing of trust with participants. In relation to the data collection, I richly described my methods assemblage for collecting data (observations, field notes, audio recordings, pictures and interviews). By describing the focus of each method and its collecting processes I shown the evolving unstructured form of interaction with participants and reflect on its strength (rich data on hard-to-get themes) and limitations (harder to analyse in due time). In the analysis sub-section, I described my daily process of crafting the fieldwork diary and discussed the ways in which this tool evolved towards being the primary form of analysis used. Lastly, I described the performative techniques applied to the findings presented in the next chapter.

#### CHAPTER 4. CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

## CHAPTER 5. FORMALISING STREET TRADE

This is the first of the two chapters dedicated to the presentation of the ethnographic findings of this research. In this chapter, I will present the ethnographic data primarily focused on the governing officials' practices associated with the formalisation programme put in place in Recife. I address this through the first two parts of ethnographic data by detailing the practices associated with the *legitimisation* of the formalising programme (section 5.1) and the *classification* of street traders into the licensing system (section 5.2).

In section 5.1. *Part I: Legitimising,* I present three vignettes with rich descriptions of three key rationales which the formalisation programme put forward to enforce its legitimacy among Recife's population. These arguments spoke to the concerns of the broad population of Recife, formal traders and informal street traders and their imaginations and expectations in relation to the outcome of the formalisation programme in terms of social, economic and urban development. The section ends with a small summary of the three vignettes bringing forward the ways in which these key arguments were complex and often contrasted with the practices of all actors.

In section 5.2. *Part II: Classifying,* I move the focus to the specific processes of classifying traders into the formalisation processes. This is presented through two vignettes which describe how the registering of traders into the programme's spreadsheet left behind key activities of traders and how the monitoring of traders' compliance with the programme made use of diverse informal tactics. The section ends with a small summary bringing forward how the spreadsheet's classification scheme, and its associated classifying practices shaped how formalisation was performed in practice.

### 5.1. Part I: Legitimising

Informal street trade is a prevalent across Recife's popular squares and streets where informal street traders are found selling food, drinks, cell phone accessories, pirated CDs, etc. All of these products come at low prices and thus reach a wider population that includes the poor. Such trade provides income not only for the informal street traders, but also for the local producers of food, crafts and music, who use informal street trade as their main distribution platform. Given this, it is important to question how informal street trade came to be framed as a problem by the City Council and how CSURB's formalisation programme came to be legitimised as its solution. This will be the focus of this first empirical section. Through three vignettes I will lay out three key rationales associated with how the formalisation programme spoke to the concerns and imaginations of different sectors of the population of Recife and in this way sought to build the legitimacy of the programme among these populations.

In *Vignette 1: Urban development and infrastructural deficits,* I describe how the formalisation programme spoke to the broad community of Recife's citizens by associating street trade to their concerns with the deficient urban infrastructure and discursively aligned formalisation with their imaginations of what a modern economic centre should be.

In *Vignette 2: Economic development and illegitimate trade*, I present the point of view of formal vendors and their imaginations pertaining to how illegitimate trade could be resolved and fair competition achieved through the formalisation of informal street trade.

In *Vignette 3: Social development and relocating traders,* I focus on the informal street traders and the ways in which the formalisation programme and its aimed relocation of licensed traders to purposefully-built malls spoke to their imaginations of achieving a better life.

To conclude, I will briefly summarise the three main characteristics of the daily governing of informal urban street trade brought forward by these three vignettes, discuss how these relate to the two main modes by which the formalisation programme was legitimised and show how the key rationales used were more complex and contradictory with the practices of all actors.

# Vignette 1: Urban development and infrastructural deficits

The formalisation programme put forward by CSURB spoke to the broad population of Recife's citizens through its problematization of street trade in relation to urban infrastructure, mobility and modernist understandings of economically progressive urban centres. In this vignette, I will show how this took place and how street trade was more complex than this discursive construct.

In Recife, the urban experience was extremely lively. Given the tropical climate, most coffee shops had improvised terraces on the sidewalks. People were found walking through the streets on their daily errands and were often socialising with one another on public spaces while consuming random products sold by street traders, as seen below in Figure 5. Thus, one had to be careful while walking on the streets not to bump into one another. This however was not something as stressing as it may sound for an European foreigner accustomed to a more 'peaceful' urban experience. After all, this has always been the way Recife's citizens have experienced urban life.



Figure 5: Street trade in Recife's city centre

In Recife, the expression "look where you're walking" couldn't be more accurate. This happen not only because of the amount of people walking, riding bikes or trading on the sidewalks, but also because of the deficient urban infrastructure which most citizens complained about. Indeed, I learned this the hard way through painfully stumbling on loose stones while walking on my flip flops or having close encounters with holes left open by municipal infrastructure services without any security fences, like seen in Figure 6. Given the dry weather, once it rained, floods were common and streets turned into rivers and squares into small islands. On top of this, electricity cables in Recife were often hanging around and extremely unfortunate accidents seem to happen every so often. These were the main issues associated with the urban infrastructure that citizens struggled with and which, during my fieldwork, I have most heard about and experienced myself.



Figure 6: Recife's deficient infrastructure (left to right: holes on sidewalks, electric cables hanging, City Council fixing electric cables hung)

For CSURB though, one of the main contributors to the deficient urban infrastructure and mobility in Recife was the existence of a 'disordered' informal urban street trade. Indeed, from official reports of CSURB, the aim of the formalisation programme was to:

(...) build a public space capable of incorporating orderly the commerce, which by now is informal and executed in the vicinity of public markets compromising the fluidity and mobility of Recife's citizens.

(CSURB, 2014, p. 2)

Although street trading felt like it was part of the ways in which citizens have come to be accustomed to experiencing city life, this was never mentioned by fiscals which more commonly would point out to the mobility issues associated with the informal arrangements of street trade.

Fiscal: They [informal street traders] complain but we need to ensure mobility. [ Field notes: 'Fiscals registering patrols' @ Água Fria (phase I - 10/06/2014 15:30) ]

On the other hand, street traders rarely referenced these mobility issues. However, in the presence of fiscals, when a dialogue would move towards this topic, they would sometimes agree with them and show to share CSURB's concerns, as an informal street trader said:

Street trader: I know I speak against myself but it's true. I mean, look at that [overcrowded sidewalk with stalls], it's chaos. [ Field notes: 'Trader interview: notes on infrastructure' @ Água Fria (phase I - 10/06/2014 18:00) ]

Although traders, with their stalls positioned on the sidewalks, certainly added to this 'chaos', they also assisted mobility and were often responsible for improvising

solutions to what the City Council failed to. Indeed, I witnessed how different groups of traders organised themselves for cleaning the floods on the streets by sweeping the water away, clear the drains or provide shelter from the sun and the rain to the citizens on the sidewalks, like shown in Figure 7.



Figure 7: Traders role in Recife's urban infrastructure (top: sidewalks 'equipped' with traders' umbrellas and plastic chairs; bottom: street traders trying to fix a water drain)

In hospitals, banks and public offices they sold low cost food for the people waiting (for hours) in queues and even provided chairs for elderly citizens. This was observed, for instance, in relation to a street trader who had a stall in the pavement in front a national bank:

The elderly [clients of the bank] use his plastic chairs as the queue expands [to the pavement outside]. Bellow his sun umbrella, they're drinking water and eating his chicken snacks. [Field notes: 'traders' infrastructure add-ons' @ Boa Viagem (phase I - 05/06/2014 13:00) ]

CSURB however has not shown to be much interested in relation to this role of street traders. Moreover, beyond blaming them for the mobility issues, they saw them as responsible for much of the dirt and rubbish that littered the streets, even though that was, in a large part, also due to the poor infrastructure which the City Council was responsible for. A supervisor said:

Supervisor: We will remove them to leave the sidewalks clean. [ Field notes: 'Supervisor interview: views on street trade' @ CSURB (phase I - 10/06/2014 11:30) ]

CSURB officials associated 'dirtiness' with traders and the verb 'cleaning' was often used by fiscals interchangeably with 'formalising'. This was counter the fact that in most sites where street trading was performed, the traders were organised collectively for the cleaning and infrastructural maintenance of their sites. Thus, it seemed that the rationale put forward by CSURB for eliminating street trade seemed more associated to an aesthetic understanding of modernity and progress which positioned street vending as backward and dirty (Cross, 2000; Bromley, 2000), rather than with the literal meaning of hygiene associated to the urban space. Indeed, some of the population, especially those that did not live in the urban centre, saw informal street trade as one of the more aesthetically unpleasant aspects of Recife. In a sarcastic way, a middle-class citizen said:

Citizen: Look! [pointing at the stalls]. This is our 'order and progress' ['order and progress' is written on the Brazilian flag]. [ Field notes: 'Citizens views on street trade' @ Água Fria (phase I - 10/06/2014 16:00)]

This not only positioned informal street trade as an obstacle hindering commercial progress but also, and more strikingly, as inhuman, as a fiscal mentioned:

Fiscal: Our plan is to humanise the streets. [ Field notes: 'Fiscals registering patrols'@ Água Fria (phase I - 10/06/2014 15:30) ]

By positioning the need to formalise in-line with a need to 'clean' and 'humanise' the streets, the formalisation programme discursively positioned street trade as something dirty, in-human and un-citizen like. Not surprisingly, informal street traders were not happy with this as one said:

Street trader: A person worthy of his work need not be mistreated. But the City Council doesn't want to know that. [ Field notes: 'Street traders' views on formalisation' @ Água Fria (phase I - 10/06/2014 17:00) ]

What this shows is that CSURB spoke to the citizens' concerns around the deficient urban infrastructure of the city, positioned street trade as responsible for it and formalisation as the means by which these issues could be solved and a modernised economic centre be achieved. However, this problematisation was contradictory with the fact that the traders' practices were not only intrinsic to the lived experience of Recife's population, but also responsible for the solving of infrastructural problems which the City Council failed to resolve. Next, I will detail the second key rational used to legitimise the formalisation programme which aligned with the argument for economic development of the city and spoke to the formal vendors' concerns and imaginations.

# Vignette 2: Economic development and illegitimate trade

The formalisation programme was also relevant to formal vendors. In relation to this population, the programme positioned informal trade as an unfair competitor to the local formal commerce and promised to solve this through formalisation. In this vignette, I will show how this took place and the existent incongruences between this discourse and the practices I witness on the streets.

In Recife, sidewalks were crowded with traders selling products to people which could be entering or leaving from formal shops, as shown in Figure 8.



Figure 8: Street traders selling in front of formal shops

In relation to this proximity between the formal and informal trade, there were those which considered street trade unfair and damaging to their business. This happened because formal shop owners, unlike the informal traders, had to pay taxes on products sold, for their building and permits as well as for purchasing products through official supply channels. On the other hand, street trade was commonly associated with counterfeit products, and thus, formal vendors assumed most traders were not interested in taxation, as a CD shop owner said.

Store owner: They don't want to [be formalised]. They prefer the streets. They just don't want to pay taxes.

[ Field notes: 'CD store interview: 'views on street trade' @ Casa Amarela (phase II - 08/12/2014 11:30) ]

Nevertheless, formal shop owners were also accustomed and appreciated the presence of street traders on the streets, like a clothes shop owner said:

Store owner: (...) if we let them, they abuse, but if we don't let them, we miss them. [ Field notes: 'Clothes store interview: 'views on street trade' @ Casa

Amarela (phase II - 08/12/2014 13:30) ] At the same time, the formal and informal business models often seemed more united than apart. For instance, a formal CD's store owner mentioned that, although street traders were competing with them by selling cheaper copies of CDs, they were also helping them make profits by marketing music material on the streets which would attract customers wanting to buy the original copies.

Store owner: Sometimes clients come here asking for a song they heard on the streets [through pirated CDs traders]. They prefer the original copy, you know? [ Field notes: 'CD store interview: 'views on street trade' @ Casa Amarela (phase II - 08/12/2014 11:30) ]

I also observed how formal CD stores adapted to changes brought by the cheap CD copies offered by street traders and diversified their business scope by offering items such as blank CDs and CD boxes, as shown below in Figure 9, which, in this context, were mostly sold to the traders of pirated CDs.



Figure 9: Formal CD shop selling music CDs, blank CDs and DVDs and CD boxes

Big public corporations also shown to be appreciative of the services that street traders provided. This was the case of a national bank which had a hotdog food seller in the pavement in front of the establishment. Being proximate to my house, I witnessed daily how the coworkers of the bank and regular customers would buy this trader's food and sit outside and socialise in the vicinity of his stall. At the same time, he had permission to use the bank's private parking space to park his stall overnight. In the appearance of CSURB officials to register him, the bank coworkers would come and argue that he was working on their private space outside and not on a public pavement, and thus, there was no need to register him or confiscate his products. What this says is that the formal stores were not just accustomed to the presence of street traders but their business model was intrinsically associated with them.

This intricate relation between formal and informal trade was particularly noticeable through the ways in which informal street traders produced urban

ambiances and soundscapes<sup>10</sup> which attracted clients to the stores, as a coffee shop owner mentioned in relation to the presence of piracy stalls nearby and how this entertained his clients, as I try to bring forward in Figure 10.

Store owner: If they're less, less clients get inside [the coffee shop]. If they're there, they attract clients which can come in.

[ Field notes: 'Coffee shop interview: 'views on street trade' @ Casa Amarela (phase II - 08/12/2014 12:30) ]



Figure 10: Piracy stall entertaining the street where formal stores operate

To conclude, what this shows is that although formal vendors were worried with the competition that street traders could bring to them, they were also accustomed and appreciative of the urban life experience they brought and had their own business models aligned with this reality as they profited from the traders' presence in the vicinity of their establishments. Thus, common to most formal vendors was the idea that, although street trade could benefit from a better organisation, such organisation shouldn't necessarily be associated with their removal from the streets. For the formalisation programme though, this aspect didn't seem to be relevant as I will detail next in relation to the third key rational used to legitimise the formalisation programme associated with the betterment of the life of street traders through their relocation to purposefully-built facilities.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> The relationship between piracy CDs trade, urban ambiances and soundscapes is described further in chapter 6, section 6.2. Part IV: Valuing, Vignette 9 and section 6.3. Part V: Supplying, Vignette 11.

# Vignette 3: Social development and relocating traders

According to the formalisation programme, being licensed meant that a street trader had the approval from the council to trade. This approval had associated a specific site where regulated trade could be performed. As shown below in Figure 11, the planned sites for regulated trade were specially-built shopping malls, known as Camelódromos, where traders could trade from allocated stands. While these were yet to be built, licenses were temporary and issued in relation to 'disciplined sites', i.e., streets where only licensed traders could work. However, more often than not, these sites were not the ones in which traders had for long established their businesses and had gained the loyalty of their customers.

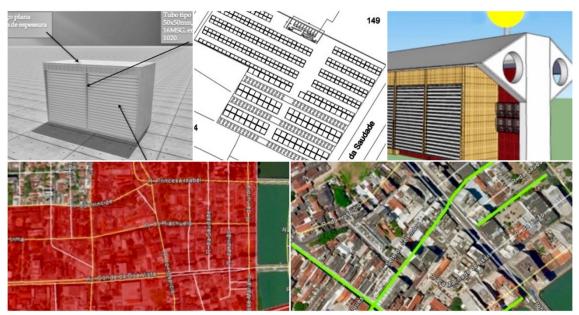


Figure 11: Formalisation plan (CSURB, 2014) (top left to right: planned stands, envisioned Camelodromo design, envisioned stall; bottom left to right: red – urban centre to be formalised; right: green – streets where 'disciplined' trade was being ensured by CSURB)

Some traders were keen of moving into a modern shopping space and having allocated stands to sell their products. They saw it as an advancement and progression on their businesses while gaining a better workspace infrastructure which, for instance, was equipped with toilet facilities and where it wouldn't rain inside. Mostly, they were happy for the opportunity for not being continuously harassed by authorities, as an informal street trader said:

Street trader: (...) a toilet, a cleaned space, organised, instead of this... never knowing when they'll come [fiscals] and put us away. [Field notes: 'Trader's views on street trade' @ Casa Amarela (phase II - 08/12/2014 12:30) ] However, given the continuous delays on the implementation of these new infrastructures, some believed the new Camelodromos would never be built. Adding to this, they were also unhappy with the planned locations of the malls. These were unattractive from a business point of view as referenced by a street trader which compared the planned infrastructures with the failure of a previously built Camelodromo a few decades ago<sup>11</sup>:

Street trader: Who would go there [to a Camelódromo] to buy this [grabbing a coconut]? No one goes to a mall for this (...) Look at the old Camelódromo. Everyone sells outside, not inside.
[ Field notes: 'Traders' views on formalisation' @ City Centre (phase II - 05/12/2014 12:30) ]

On top of this, they were also suspicious towards CSURB's true purposes, as an informal street trader mentioned:

Street trader: They say: "You're out today!"; "Tomorrow we're gonna take it away!"; "After tomorrow you'll get a notification!". You see? It's this psychological pressure. [ Field notes: 'Traders' views on formalisation' @ City Centre (phase II - 07/12/2014 14:30) ]

Indeed, the formalisation objective of bettering the life of street traders was rarely referenced by fiscals. At the same time, their presence on the streets could feel quite intimidating as often they would be gathered in a high disproportionate number, as I try to show in Figure 12. Moreover, what I've heard the most from CSURB officials regarding any 'betterment' brought by the formalisation programme and the planned allocations was in relation to how it would greatly help the fiscals themselves on their daily tasks of monitoring and controlling the street traders' activities:

Supervisor: (...) they're very scattered. This [relocating them] makes it easier to monitor. [Easier] To do everything.

[ Field notes: 'Supervisor interview: formalisation objective' @ CSURB (phase I - 10/06/2014 11:30) ]

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> I offer a rich description of the traders' work within this Camelodromo facilities in Chapter 6, section 6.1. Part III: Working, Vignette 6.



Figure 12: Fiscals' presence on the streets

Thus, and confirming the street traders' suspicion towards CSURB, these relocations seemed as a means to progressively ensure the complete eradication of this form of commerce from Recife rather than brining a betterment of the life conditions of traders. Plus, this eradication was to be achieved by progressively limiting the number of licenses which were available for traders in these specific sites, as noted by a supervisor:

Supervisor: It's a palliative measure. Once in the Camelódromos, no new licenses will be issued. [ Field notes: 'Supervisor interview: formalisation objective' @ CSURB (phase I - 10/06/2014 11:30) ]

To conclude, what this shows is that although street traders were happy to have their working conditions benefited by formalisation, they were also not convinced by the proposed relocations and were suspicious of the true aims of the formalisation programme. Indeed, the relocations could be read as an interim strategy to remove all signs of street trade from Recife. The formalisation programme was to facilitate this and a spreadsheet was developed to record and capture the licencing of informal street trade. This will be the focus of the next section, but first I will briefly summarise the key findings presented through the previous three vignettes in relation to section 5.1. *Part I: Legitimising*.

#### Summary of Part I: Legitimising

Here I will briefly summarise the three main characteristics of the daily governing of informal urban street trade brought forward by the three previous vignettes – improved urban mobility and infrastructure, reinforced fair competition and legitimate trade and finally, improved life conditions of traders – and discuss how these relate to the two main modes of legitimising performed by the local authorities responsible for the implementation of the formalisation programme – problematising (concerns) and solving (imaginations).

The previous vignettes have shown that the ways in which the formalisation programme built its legitimacy were associated with how it framed informal street trade as a problem with whom Recife's citizens, formal traders and informal street traders could relate to. Formalisation was to be seen as the solution to this problem and it did this by aligning itself with these actors' imaginations in relation to the benefits which would be achieved through its implementation.

The first characteristic of formalisation was associated to how its legitimacy was purposefully aligned with the concerns and imaginations of the broad population in relation to urban development. It did this by positioning street trade aligned with the population's concerns around the deficient urban infrastructure and positioning it against the citizens' imaginations of what a modernised economic centre should be. The second characteristic of formalisation was associated to how its legitimacy was purposefully aligned with the concerns and imaginations of formal traders in relation to economic development. It did this by speaking to these actors' concerns around unfair competition brought by street trade and their imaginations pertaining to how this illegitimate trade could be resolved. The third characteristic of formalisation was associated to how its legitimacy was purposefully aligned with the concerns and imaginations of in relation to social development. It did this by speaking to achieving a better life through formalisation.

However, despite the tentative alignment of the formalisation programme to fit into each of these actors' concerns and imaginations, these actors' practices often contrasted with the three main rationales which the formalisation programme put forward. First, in relation to the broad populations' concerns and imaginations around urban development, because the deficient urban mobility of Recife was less derived by street trade and more from the Municipality's lack of infrastructure maintenance. Moreover, street traders often helped solving these infrastructural problems by collectively organising themselves for the cleaning, maintenance, and repair of the urban infrastructure. They offered public services on the pavements in front of public institutions which Recife's citizens, and specifically the elderly made use of. Second, in relation to formal traders' concerns and imaginations around economic development, because although store owners could be affected by the traders' competition, they also gained from their presence on the streets which often brought more clients to their stores. Third, in relation to informal street traders and their concerns and imaginations around social development, because although traders would be happy with the new infrastructure and security offered by the planned malls, they were also not convinced of how these relocations to different sites would affect their business and they were suspicious of the true motives behind the relocations.

As so, what comes clear from the data so far presented is that the legitimacy of the formalisation programme was discursively built on top of modernistic and developmental rationales which in practice were more complex and often in opposition to the argument of both the problem of informal street trade and its intended solution which was to be achieved through the formalisation programme.

This concludes section 5.1. *Part I: Legitimising*. Next, in section 5.2. *Part II: Classifying*, I will present how the formalisation programme operated on the ground by focusing on the ways in which a spreadsheet was used to capture information regarding street traders and daily monitor their compliance with the programme.

## 5.2. Part II: Classifying

In this section I will focus on the spreadsheet which provided the central record of all traders. Further, licensing decisions were based on its classification scheme. The scheme mirrored the formalisation rules, which specified that a trader could only be licenced for one specific commercial activity, one location, one stall and, if licensed, no other family member could be registered under the formalisation programme. The spreadsheet was central in two main processes of the formalisation programme. First, it facilitated the necessary capture of the reality of the streets. For this, paper forms were used to register information regarding informal street traders such as their names, what were they selling and where, which later would be transcribed into a digital spreadsheet. Second, through this digital record, the monitoring of compliance was facilitated and licenses could be issued or new patrols performed in order to issue fines, confiscate products or revoke licenses. Through the presentation of two vignettes, I will describe how these two main processes were daily performed.

In *Vignette 3: Capturing street trade through othering informality,* I describe how the reality of the streets was partially captured by the formalisation programme and show its effects. I first show how the printed forms, when used by fiscals on their daily patrols on the streets, acted as visible reminder of the formalisation programme, that there was no alternative to it and facilitated the traders' own self reporting. I then present the multiple ways in which the reality of the streets didn't fit into the forms' structure and how these mismatches made the traders' activities to be registered on the spreadsheet as 'deviances' to the formalisation rules which needed to be addressed.

In Vignette 4: Monitoring compliance through informal means, I show how the relationship between fiscals and traders was complex and the implementation of formalisation was in fact quite informal. For instance, I show how, in sites registered with a high number of 'deviances', formalisation was slow or even not enforced while in 'disciplined sites' it was facilitated by the help of licensed traders which surveyed and reported any suspicious activities. On the other hand, I also show how the spreadsheet was sometimes used by fiscals to help friendly street traders which were targeted by disciplinary measures.

To conclude this section I will briefly summarise the three main characteristics of the daily governing of informal urban street trade brought forward by these two vignettes and discuss how this shaped how formalisation was performed in practice. Vignette 4: Capturing street trade through othering informality

Every morning fiscals printed off the forms and spreadsheet relevant to the area that they were to patrol. They would walk and approach street traders to collect data, as shown below in Figure 13.



Figure 13: CSURB fiscal collecting data from a street trader

When walking with these documents in their hands they would often become the centre of attention. As I observed while accompanying their registering patrols, as soon as fiscals parked their cars and got out with the forms on their hands, street traders would approach them and, pointing at the 'formal' documents with their structured lines and checkboxes, they would ask:

Street trader: Is my name there?'; 'What about my brother?'; 'When are you issuing the licenses?'; 'When is the Camelódromo gonna be built? [ Field notes: 'Fiscals registering patrols' @ Água Fria (phase I - 10/06/2014 14:30) ]

This happened regularly and while not all street traders shared the same enthusiasm when in the presence of fiscals, there were those which would actively follow them trying to gather the most information they could regarding the licensing process. These traders didn't question the accuracy of the records or the authority of the fiscals. Driven by fear and/or expectations of a better life, they would run after them when noticing they were collecting data for the licensing process. An informal street trader said:

Street trader: It's their job. I'm nice to them and I never had any problem. I would just like if they could be faster in giving me the authorisation, you know?! My license. [ Field notes: 'Trader interview: views on formalisation' @ Água Fria (phase I - 12/06/2014 14:30) ]

Traders too believed some change was needed, but whether the change offered by the formalisation programme was appropriate seemed to be rarely questioned.

For instance, they were either unaware, or didn't believe, that the one family member per stall rule would be enforced and would often provide the names of their family members to fiscals in an attempt to get them formalised. An informal street trader said:

Street trader: I don't know and I don't believe it. Everyone is doing it [trying to register as many family members]. You must be one for the other, right?! [ Field notes: 'Trader interview: views on formalisation' @ Água Fria (phase I - 12/06/2014 16:00) ]

These traders believed that the formalisation programme could bring positive outcomes for them and their families and trusted the forms as containing objective information in this regard. This was a great 'bonus' for fiscals which could gather important information from traders without much effort. Indeed, aware of the perceived power of the forms, fiscals would purposefully make them visible while performing their registering patrols and, through this, reinforce the traders' awareness of the formalisation programme, that there was no alternative to it and encourage their own self-reporting. A fiscal said:

Fiscal: First they did not believe it but when they realised they had no alternative they began running after us to register. [ Field notes: 'Fiscals registering patrols' @ Água Fria (phase I - 10/06/2014 13:00) ]

Fiscals were also accountable for how many licenses and fines were issued to the sites they patrolled and thus, they were under pressure to complete their paper forms in detail. For this, they were expected to explain the licensing and regulations to traders so that they would comply. This would lead to more licenses issued and ensure the programmes' success. But the forms were based on the spreadsheets' classification scheme and thus were too structured to capture the reality of informal street trade. Simple questions regarding selling location, products sold and who was the owner of the stall could bring a complex set of answers as seen bellow in relation to a street trader responding to a fiscal:

Street trader: We sell everywhere around here. All types of stuff. But now he's sick [his father], so I'm here with my brother. The license would really help the family.

[ Field notes: 'Fiscals registering patrols'@ Água Fria (phase I - 15/06/2014 11:00) ] This information didn't 'fit' the forms' structure since there was more than one stall owner, location and products sold. All information that didn't fit the forms, was written as 'observation notes' on the blank spaces left on the margins of the forms, as shown below in Figure 14.

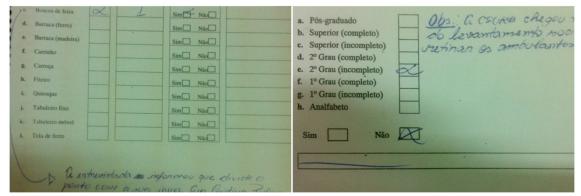


Figure 14: Observation notes written on the margins of formalisation forms

For instance, in the above figure, on the left an observation note is written stating that the trader shares his stall with his cousin. On the image on the right, the observation note states that other officials from the City Council had removed him from this site. These two examples illustrate how the reality of the streets was hardly captured by the structure of the forms. More problematically, this also referred to the cases when the traders' activities such as infrastructure cleaning and maintenance, so important in dealing with the deficient infrastructure left by the council, also didn't 'fit' into the activities specified by the formalisation programme and thus, could not be registered in the forms. For instance, I observed that a small group of traders built a small ramp on a sidewalk for people with disabilities, but when I questioned a fiscal about these activities he said:

Fiscal: They have no authorisation for that [from City Council] and sooner or later it [the ramp] will be removed. [ Field notes: 'Fiscal interview: views on street trade' @ CSURB (phase I - 20/08/2014 15:30) ]

All the information which was registered as 'observation notes' in the forms was later transcribed by the supervisors into the spreadsheets and registered on the 'other column'. This was a column designed to group together all information which couldn't fit into any of the other standard columns. Not surprisingly, the 'other column' was often full of registries meaning that 'deviances' were high as most of the traders' activities usually didn't 'fit' the specified categories associated with the formalisation rules, as it can be seen below in red in Figure 15.

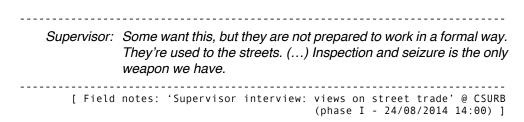
CHAPTER 5. FORMALISING STREET TRADE

Quiosque	Frutas e Verduras	30 anos	Não	Praça Dom Vital, em torno do Mercado São José - É proprietário de um e os outros pertencem a <del>Ciesca</del> <del>Maria da Silva CPF, 020,037,244-557</del> RG 7,220,502 SDS/PE - Deniel André dor Santos CPF 012,632,574-40 / RG 6,040,024 SSP/PE
Barraca de Ferro	Tubérculos	30 anos	Sim	Ao lado do Banco do Sr José existem mais 6 bancos que são de sua responsabilidade, os proprietário alugam para ele. Praça Dom Vital, em torno do Mercado São José
Barraca de Ferro	Descartáveis, amendoim	3 anos	Não	Praça Dom Vital, em torno do Mercado São José - <del>Prop José Antônic</del> <del>Sena</del> -
Tabulaira Méual / Parraca				Proco Dom Vital om torno do

Figure 15: Screen capture of the spreadsheet and the 'other column'

For instance, in the above figure are three examples of 'deviances' registered in the 'other column'. The first case refers to a trader which shares his trading space and stalls with two other traders which are identified by name and identity numbers<sup>12</sup>. The second case refers to a trader which uses a total of seven chairs surrounding his stall but only one pertains to him and the remaining seven he pays a rent to the owner (which is not identified). Lastly, there's the case of a trader which is not the owner of the stall and the owner is identified by name.

For CSURB, these 'deviances' registered in the 'other column' happen because the traders did not want to, or were unable to comprehend the formalisation rules. As such, CSURB believed that this could only be changed through surveillance and punishment as one supervisor said:



In this context, the spreadsheet was perceived as the central mechanism for surveillance and this happened specifically through its 'other column' as it turned most traders' activities visible as 'deviances'. Through this, it made most traders candidates for elimination when disciplinary measures had to be taken so to ensure the formalisation programme's success. As one supervisor said:

Supervisor: Why change the "other column"? That's where we find out everything. [ Field notes: 'Supervisor interview: views on street trade' @ CSURB (phase I - 24/08/2014 14:00) ]

To conclude, what this vignette has shown is that the traders too had expectations of a better life and saw on the formalisation programme a possible means towards

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Names and identification numbers are purposefully left scratched.

### (RE)ORDERING AND (DIS)ORDERING OF STREET TRADE

this. Aware of this, fiscals would purposefully make the forms visible while patrolling the streets and through this facilitate the self-reporting of traders which perceived the forms as containing objective information about the formalisation process. However, this was far from reality. Indeed, for fiscals to capture the reality of the streets was not an easy task since the spreadsheet used for the formalisation programme, and from which the paper forms were structured, had no allocated space, categories or checkboxes to register most of the key activities of traders. These activities were, for instance, the traders' collective ownership of stalls which was guite common. Another example was in relation to how traders grouped different products together in relation to their own knowledge and experience of sales in different localities or even in relation to their mobility patterns throughout the days. Even the activities of traders which were associated with urban infrastructure cleaning, maintenance and upgrade, which were a key concern of citizens and a key rationale for the formalisation programme, had no place to be registered through the programme's spreadsheets and forms. Because the formalisation programme's classification scheme was not structured to accommodate these activities, these were translated into 'deviances' to the rules of formalisation and materialised in the 'other column' of the spreadsheet. This not only made the spreadsheet's 'other column' to be perceived as a key instrument of surveillance, but also, and consequently, made traders a primary target of disciplinary measures. Given these activities were guite common on the streets, the spreadsheets shown a high number of 'deviances' that had to be corrected to ensure the programme's success. Nevertheless, applying disciplinary measures was also not a straightforward process. This will be the focus of the next vignette, where I will describe more in detail how the spreadsheet also shaped how surveillance was performed, disciplinary measures were enforced, and overall formalisation implemented.

# Vignette 5: Monitoring compliance through informal means

While 'deviances' persisted on the spreadsheets, supervisors pressured fiscals to ensure the traders' compliance with the formalisation rules. Contrary to the licencing patrols, where fiscals needed to gather the most attention from traders and influence their self-reporting, in this case the fiscal's principal objective was to be left unnoticed so to be able to survey the streets for known 'deviances' and apply disciplinary measures accordingly. In these cases, fiscals would purposefully not use the official forms and the printed spreadsheets but instead, hand-write the information regarding the locations and the names of the traders they were to check, as shown below Figure 16<sup>13</sup>.

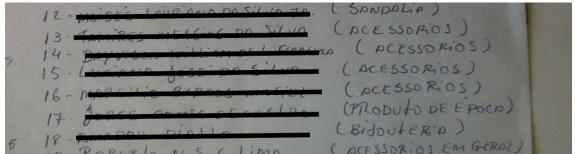
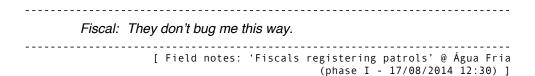
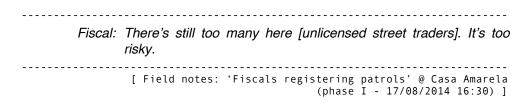


Figure 16: Hand-written names of traders and product sold used by fiscals to survey deviances to the formalisation rules in a certain location

This would draw less attention from traders wishing to register or ask questions about the formalisation programme, as a fiscal said:



This '*informal*' tactic of using hand-written notes instead of the forms was also applied by fiscals in locations which had a high concentration of unlicensed traders or a high number of 'deviances' registered as fiscals considered it unsafe to make overt the official forms or enforce the regulations in such places, as one fiscal noted:



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Names were left purposefully left scratched.

Street traders were aware of this and where there were many of them, they seemed less worried of fiscal authorities and would sell openly. One informal street trader said:

Street trader: They'll [fiscals] never risk coming here. This is ours!. [ Field notes: 'Trader interview: views on formalisation' @ Casa Amarela (phase I - 19/08/2014 15:00) ]

On the other hand, in the 'disciplined sites', where there were mostly licensed traders or licenses soon-to-be issued, fiscals could count with the help of these traders who believed they were responsible for their sites' compliance with the programme and thus would survey and pressure unlicensed traders to move away or even report them to the fiscals. As a licensed street trader said:

Formal Trader: If anyone out there puts a stall here, I'll report it. I've worked too hard for this [for the license] No one is gonna take that away from me. [ Field notes: 'Licensed trader views on formalisation' @ Água Fria (phase I - 17/08/2014 18:30) ]

These '*informal*' partnerships were also common the other way around and I have witnessed the friendly relation between fiscals and traders various times.



Figure 17: Fiscals purchasing<sup>14</sup> (left) and sitting next (right) to street traders

Indeed, as fiscals were often local residents not only did they know the traders, but also frequently interacted with them and purchased products from them, as shown in Figure 17 and Figure 18. It was as both street traders and fiscals were aware of each one's job and were aware they were not going away anytime soon

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> In this case, this food trader was a popular one known as Pink, which is described further in Chapter 6, section 6.2. Part IV: Valuing, Vignette 9.

and thus, they were accustomed to living with each other, as it is well illustrated below in Figure 18.



Figure 18: Fiscals and traders standing side by side on the sidewalk

In line with this, it was common for traders to query fiscals about issues associated with the formalisation programme. They would often ask for information on potential issues registered against their names or of their friends and family in the forms. During such instances, fiscals showed sympathy for the informal traders. For instance, I observed one fiscal saying this to an informal trader who was worried about another informal trader:

Fiscal: Seu Leo? Who told you that? There is nothing here on him [checking the spreadsheet for the trade's name]. (...) I'll ask around, but don't worry, nothing will happen to him. [Field notes: 'kinship between traders and fiscals' @ City Centre (phase I - 02/07/2014 11:00) ]

By checking the spreadsheets for relevant information, at the request of those street traders with whom they had developed kinship relations, fiscals could implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) alert them to issues and give them an opportunity to take care of them.

To conclude, what this vignette has shown is that the ways in which formalisation was implemented were themselves strongly informal in nature. This was seen for instance in relation to how the materiality of the forms was purposefully left behind and hand-written notes were used instead which, in a way, served to 'camouflage' the surveying activities of fiscals. This 'informal' nature of formalisation was also seen in its loose application of the disciplinary measures. For instance, because officials had access through the spreadsheet to information regarding the sites where a high number of deviances were found, disciplinary measures had to be carefully thought through as traders could revolt against it. On the other hand, in 'disciplined sites', where licensed traders were in a higher number, fiscals would tacitly make partnerships with traders which would ensure that no unlicensed traders were found in these localities so not to risk having their licenses revoked. Thus, it can be said that the spreadsheet facilitated formalisation to be planned

at a distance. This also shows how the relationship between fiscals and traders was complex and difficult to be generalised. To this aspect it was also clear how the spreadsheet was key in the communal lives of fiscals and traders and used to strengthen kinship links between both and help traders avoid disciplinary measures. Thus, what this shows is that along with enforcing formalisation, in keeping with the relational cultural fabric, fiscals also showed support for informal traders and saw them as an integral part of the daily life of Recife and of its social and economic infrastructure.

Next, I will briefly summarise the key findings presented through the previous two vignettes in relation to section 5.2. *Part II: Classifying* and finish this chapter.

### Summary of Part II: Classifying

Here I will briefly summarise the three main characteristics of the daily governing of informal urban street trade brought forward by the two previous vignettes – traders' self-reporting and self-surveillance, othering of key informal practices and monitoring of compliance through informal tactics – and discuss how these relate to the two main modes of classifying performed by the local authorities – registering (street trade information) and monitoring (compliance with the formalisation programme).

The first characteristic of formalisation relates to the fact that in some cases it could count with the help of traders. Traders wanting to be formalised as well as those afraid of disciplinary measures would help local authorities on their daily tasks. They did this by self-registering themselves on the formalisation programme and self-surveying their sites to ensure no unlicensed traders were present. This happened in part because traders believed that formalisation could in some ways bring better life conditions to them and their friends and family or because they assumed there was no alternative to formalisation and thus, were afraid of having their products confiscated or their licenses revoked.

The second characteristic of formalisation relates to the fact that the classification scheme used on the spreadsheets, and from which the structure of the paper forms was derived, was not neutral as it made extremely hard to capture the reality of the streets. This happened mainly because the classification scheme relied more on what the formalisation aimed to achieve (one-to-one relations between stall owners, product categories and sites), rather than in how it was actually performed on the streets (many-to-many relations between family owners of mobile stalls that sold a diverse set of products in different sites throughout the days). This affected formalisation in two specific ways. First, it reinforced the view among local authorities that any type of practice without a formal category to be registered should be seen as 'deviances' that needed to be addressed. This was problematic as the relational many-to-many nature of informal street trade was not only the norm but also intrinsically associated to these communities' socioeconomic development<sup>15</sup>. Second, by grouping most of the traders' practices into the 'other column' made this 'category' the most important one on the spreadsheets. However, its importance was not associated with a careful analysis of what these practices could entail in relation to the socioeconomic development of these populations nor how it could be associated with the urban infrastructure of the city. Instead, its importance was it acted as the main repository of information used to control and survey street traders and plan formalisation at a distance so to ensure the programme's success.

The third characteristic of formalisation relates to the fact that formalisation was often implemented through informal means. For instance, this was seen when street fiscals choose to use the printed forms on the registering patrols to facilitate the self-reporting of traders or used hand-written notes instead in order to 'camouflage' their monitoring patrols in sites seen as dangerous. This informality was also pertinent when local authorities applied loose disciplinary tactics based on the perceived probability of acceptance of formalisation or possible revolt of traders. Finally, this was also seen on the communal lives of traders and local authorities and their kinship relations which were reinforced through the ways in which one helped the other.

As so, and to conclude this chapter, what the data shows is that formalisation and classification were interlinked together as both were grounded in, and worked to, reinforce the legitimacy of a necessary (re)ordering of street trade to fit within a modernist vision of economic life in urban centres. Putting it simply, what this (re)ordering aimed to achieve was to enforce trade to be performed through one-to-one relations between traders, products and locations and dismiss the hard to control and messy many-to-many relations through which it had been performed for decades in urban centres. It is in relation to this that informal tactics were put in place to continuously negotiate the frictions which emerged from the clash between informality and formalisation. It is in relation to this 'messy' informal organising of trade that in the next chapter I will present the empirical data associated with the daily lives of informal street traders and describe the daily assembling of street trade by focusing on the multiple elements and practices which were left invisible by the formalisation programme.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> As it will became more evident in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 6. INFORMAL STREET TRADING

This is the second chapter dedicated to the presentation of the ethnographic findings of this research. In this chapter, I will present the ethnographic data relative to the street traders' practices as they go on with their daily work on the streets of Recife. I address this through the last three parts of ethnographic data by detailing the ways in which *work* was conducted on the streets (section 6.1), how *value* came to be attached to products, services and urban sites (section 6.2) and lastly, how the *supply* of informal street traders occurred (section 6.3).

In section 6.1. *Part III: Working,* I describe how street traders collectively preformed their daily work. Two vignettes are presented detailing the ways in which traders collaborated and cooperated to cope with the fluidity of people and changing demands, to solve infrastructural problems and to expand their decentralised trading activities. The section ends with a small summary bringing forward how street traders' collective work was in plain opposition to the formalisation aim of fixating traders within centralised facilities where they were to work individually.

In section 6.2. *Part IV: Valuing*, I describe how value, on the streets, was a morethan-monetary process, contingent to the fluid sidewalk assemblages of people, products, stalls' location and timeframes. Two vignettes are presented detailing how traders' calculative practices were used to rapidly detect the emergence of these sidewalk assemblages, and how, in conjunction with other actors, they were all active co-creators of these sites. The section ends with a small summary bringing forward how valuation on the streets was intrinsic to the urban lived experience and could not be captured within the proposed categories and regulations of formalisation.

In section 6.3. *Part V: Supplying*, I describe the broader supply process which made it possible for products to be daily available on the streets. Two vignettes are presented which show how the distribution of products from retail stores to the streets were intermeshed in-between both formal and informal supply circuits and how the interactions between these networks and street traders helped to increase the sales and popularity of local media products. The section ends with a small summary bringing forward how the supply circuits of street trade were against the formalisation programme's argument of a clear distinction between formal and informal trade and how their entangled business processes were in fact key for the fostering and strengthening of local economy and culture.

### 6.1. Part III: Working

This makes for the third part of ethnographic material and marks the shift towards the ethnographic data primarily focused on the practices of street traders, as opposed to the ones of governing officials described in the previous chapter.

I have shown how the formalisation programme aimed to centralise trading within specific 'disciplined sites' or Camelodromos and the diversity of strategies used to make traders accountable for following the formalisation regulations. However, despite these aims, street trading continued to be daily achieved on the streets. In this section, my objective is to bring forward the ways in which street traders daily assembled their work practices and describe the main characteristics associated with working in these conditions. I will address this through the presentation of two vignettes, each comprised of an identified situated moment when a specific organising process of work took place.

In *Vignette 6: Collaborating to organise street trade flows*, I describe how traders organised their work activities within an old informal mall in Recife's city centre. Although this infrastructure aimed to centralise trade within its facilities, trading maintained its fluid characteristics both within this infrastructure and, surprisingly, throughout its surrounding streets. In this context, the traders' work was deeply associated with the continuous organising and taking advantage of this fluidity and this was done collectively. The vignette is enriched with a detailed description of a specific moment when informal workers needed to collaboratively coordinate processes to rapidly restock products from the mall to the surrounding streets.

In Vignette 7: Cooperating as the fluid organising of street trade, I shed light on the less visible work of traders which happened behind the scenes. This backstage organisation of work is presented as both a specific location – a back street close to the mall referenced before – but also as a metaphor in relation to how this organisation of work was more organic and fluid. These were the cooperative arrangements continuously made and unmade between the wider community of traders which were key for the ongoing calibration and maintenance of the street trade performances. The vignette is enriched with a detailed description of a specific situated moment when traders cooperated with one another in order to surpass different issues common to trading on the streets.

To conclude this section I will briefly summarise the three main characteristics of the daily assembling of informal urban street trade brought forward by these two vignettes and discuss how these relate to the two main modes of working performed by informal urban street traders.

# Vignette 6: Collaborating to organise street trade flows

In the previous chapter I've shown how the formalising efforts put in place to modernise informal street trade in Recife were aimed to centralise and bound the workers' practices to fit within disciplined sites or/and informal malls. Working 'formally' in this context meant that trading was to be performed individually from pre-allocated stands, within stipulated timeframes and according to regulations which specified what products to be sold and which services to be offered. In Recife's city centre there was already one such infrastructure. This was known as the Camelodromo which was inaugurated more than two decades ago with the purpose of formalising street trade and taking the informal street traders off the streets. However, by observing the daily lives of traders in this space, what I witnessed was that the ways in which they performed their work activities were far from the formalisation intent that this infrastructure aimed to establish and their 'informal' ways of work were still prevalent both within the Camelodromo and around its surrounding streets as I will describe next.



Figure 19: Camelodromo (left to right: outside view from Dantas Barreto avenue; inside corridor; technological gadgets stand)

The Camelodromo's infrastructure design seemed to follow that of the usual shopping malls although this one was less spacious and more resembling of a street bazar, as shown in Figure 19. It was composed of around one thousand stands and these were spread through two main corridors. It also had three small food courts and six toilet facilities. Walking through the Camelodromo was an overwhelming experience where the sense of a modernist design, purposefully built to 'order' trade within straight corridors and standardised stands, was in striking contrast to its actual usage by traders which was more organic and messy. As shown below in Figure 20, while the stands were all the same standard size, traders made use of these spaces in different ways. Most expanded the space available on their stands and placed their products through the corridors' floor and ceilings. Others had their products mixed with neighbouring stands. It felt like the formalising efforts which the infrastructure design aimed to establish were actively resisted by the long established modes of work of traders. Another

visible reminder of this were the marks on the floor that separated walking space from stands, and stands from each other, and which were transgressed with sellers spread through the corridors, sitting on plastic chairs socialising together.



Figure 20: Camelodromo inside corridors and usage of allocated stands' space

This was contrary to the aimed 'stillness' of traders and products within the fixed boundaries of predefined spaces, timeframes, categories and hierarchies. Moreover, what I observed inside the Camelodromo was in many ways similar to what I observed on the streets where the relation between traders, products, locations and timeframes was vastly decentred, fluid and often contingent, as I try to bring forward in Figure 21. For instance, on the streets, traders were spread, fixating to certain sites and moving to others throughout the day, being fluid and extremely adaptive to market demand. Accordingly, products were not bound together in relation to some overarching categories but rather they were attached to different sites and timeframes as contingent outcomes of the fluidity of the streets, as seen below.



Figure 21: Recife's continuous flows of people, traders and products.

These characteristics will all become clearer through the remaining vignettes of this chapter, but for now what I want to bring forward is that the characteristics associated with the formalisation of traders' work, such as trading individually form allocated stands and reaming fixed within pre-defined spatial, temporal and category boundaries, was in striking opposition to the practices of traders which were still vastly informal, fluid and collective.

As it happen on the streets, inside the Camelodromo fluxes were also prevalent. In this case, these fluxes were associated with moving products from one stand to another as well as from the Camelodromo to its surrounding streets and these actions were coordinated loudly by traders, as the transcript below shows.

Loud communication between JJ's stall and far away Everton's stall. JJ: HEY EVERTON! NEED A SCREWDRIVER – A SMALL ONE FOR THE GLASSES. GOT ONE? Everton: YUP! COME GET IT.

Continuing communication in front of JJ's stall.

Luciano: (...) Lissen, I have a gal checking some dresses for her niece's birthday. She's 16. Gimme some cool sunglasses to show her. JJ: Sure. Here - Take these.

Luciano: Cool!

Continuing communication in front of JJ's stall with Jose's stall next to it.

Luciano: Hey Miguel, can you fix this? (pointing to his phone's broken glass) Jose: Think so. Need to look at it. Luciano: OK cool! I'll pass by later. I need it now.

JJ, sunglasses stand owner & sponsor of local music scene @ Camelodromo Everton, workshop supplies stand owner @ Camelodromo Luciano, informal clothes shop owner @ nearby street Jose, cell phone repairs shop owner @ Camelodromo [ Field notes: 'DJ Zeca sponsorship routes' @ Camelodromo (phase III - 30/03/2015 15:00) ]

Like seen in this transcript, inside the Camelodromo, traders were often communicating with one another and coordinating different flows of products. Interestingly, this happened despite the fact that each trader was working with an entirely different category of products as Figure 22 shows.

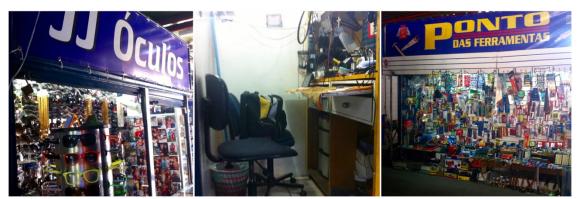


Figure 22: Camelodromo stands (left to right: JJ - sunglasses; Jose - phone repairs; Everton - workshop supplies)

For instance, there was the case of traders needing products from other traders so to fulfil their own consumption needs. In the transcript above, this was the case when JJ asked Everton for a small screwdriver or when Luciano asked Jose if he could fix the broken glass from his phone. There was also the case of sellers that would borrow products from friendly traders so to fulfil a client's need. In the quotes above this was the case when Luciano asked JJ for sunglasses to show to a client which was looking for birthday gifts for her niece. Thus, these two examples show that the traders' work was vastly collective, performed by different stand owners which helped one another as opposed to working individually from each owns' allocated stand and competing with each other's as the formalisation programme seemed to aim.

Another type of collective work performance I observed here was associated with the flows of products and workers from the Camelodromo to the neighbouring streets. While the existent fluxes inside the Camelodromo were mainly associated with cooperative arrangements between traders from different stands, in the case of the fluxes between the Camelodromo and the neighbouring streets, these were the product of collaborative arrangements made between traders working for the same stand. i.e., coworkers. This was the case of Everton, the workshop supplies' stand owner also referenced in the previous transcript.

Everton expanded his business reach beyond the Camelodromo facilities with the help of his coworkers which sold his products throughout the surrounding streets. He did this by making use of his Camelodromo's stand as an always-available and close-by 'deposit' form which his coworkers could easily reach and grab any products needed on their street selling positions. Indeed, as detailed in the transcript bellow, informal street trade on the surrounding streets was not only prevalent but seen as more profitable by the Camelodromo traders.

(...) Whenever I saw him dealing with others it was often with the same group of kids. No money was exchanged. They would come, ask for something, he would get it, and they would leave running... only to come back after a while and repeat the process all over again.

Everton: (...) No mate, we mostly sell around here [pointing to the outside]. There's not much movement here, you know? It's mostly out there, on the streets, with the boys [his coworkers]. (...) I use this space to guard the stuff and the boys can come and pick it up when needed.

Everton, workshop supplies stand owner @ Camelodromo [ Field notes: Everton Interview: 'supply-chain management' @ Camelodromo (phase III - 01/04/2015 15:30) ]

Rather surprisingly, what this shows is that instead of centralising trade within this facility, this infrastructure was appropriated by traders to effectively decentralise their business reach throughout the neighbouring streets.

Focusing on this aspect of traders' work, I now present a specific moment from my notes describing when William, one of the Everton's coworkers, needed to rapidly restock his street stall with a product from William's Camelodromo stand.

#### moment #1

### checking product availability, coordinating restock, mobilising product and registering sales

#### -----

(...) He is usually seated on a plastic chair just next to his stall [in Dantas Barreto Avenue just opposite to the Camelodromo]. Often looking to his phone. Sometimes pausing to respond to friends and other sellers passing by, and rapidly standing up if a person stops and looks at his products.



Figure 23: William's street stall: products disposition

(...) what he's selling on the street could easily be seen with 'suspicion', [specifically by fiscals, I mean, if they wanted to]. Spread around all kinds of tools for carpentry repairs and appliances there's some small digital scales which could easily be an interesting gadget for cocaine dealers or robbers wishing to know the weight of gold or silver jewelry. Also, just next to the kitchenware, there's a bunch of hand-knives.

Client: Look at this, mate! Can you do this? [while playing with a knife] I'm like Bruce Lee now ahahah. Hey friend – how much for this one?

- William: I can make 25 for you.
  - Client: Wait. Hey you have a red one? I'm from 'Sport'<sup>16</sup>?

William: I think so. Let me check.

*He picks up the knife. Grabs his phone. Takes a picture of the knife in his hands. Writes a message. Waits. And the phone blimps.* 

William: Can you wait here a minute? I'm gona grab a red one for you.
Client: Great!
William: HEY [he yells loud and signs to Seu Manel<sup>17</sup>] – KEEP AN EYE HERE JUST A SEC OK?!

Seu Manel: SURE!

He grabs a yellow plastic bag from the stall and runs to the other side of the street disappearing through the narrow corridors of the Camelodromo only to quickly turn back again, running through the street, with his bag full of stuff.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> The client is referring to the red uniform of the popular football club of Sport Club of Recife.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Seu Manel was an informal bar owner working close to William. His role will be further detailed in the next vignette.

William: Here mate, the 'Sport' one for you eheh.Client: Ahah now that's more like it! Here you go – 20 Reais for me right?!William: Oh well... suure! Here you go.

He grabs the money, sits down and writes the sale on his notebook.



Figure 24: William's re-stock & sale process (left to right: WhatsApp message to check stock availability; pick up product from Everton's Camelodromo's stall on the other side of the street, register sale)

William, workshop supplies street seller & coworker with Everton @ Dantas Barreto Avenue [ Field notes: 'supply-chain management' @ Camelodromo surroundings (phase III - 26/03/2015 16:00) ]

What this moment clearly shows is that the appropriation of the Camelodromo stands as strategic deposits greatly facilitated the traders' ability to respond to the flows of demands arising from the nearby streets. It also shows that the collaborative work behind the fluxes of products from Camelodromo to the streets was strategically planned and operationalised through an alignment of different elements that were essential for the success of sales, as I detail next.

First, there was the capability of coworkers to coordinate in real-time. This was afforded by the mobile communication platform WhatsApp. If William needed a product, he would pick up his phone and send a message via WhatsApp to his coworkers. This could come with a digital picture to help communicate what was needed. This usage of WhatsApp was topical for the coordination necessary to continuously adapt the stocks to changing street demands and thus, acted as an 'informal ERP' (Enterprise Resource Planning) for these traders.

Second, there was the proximity between the coworkers' selling positions and a central deposit which allowed for the rapid mobilisation of products to where these were needed. In this case, the deposit was Everton's stand located inside the Camelodromo. Even in the case when a product was not found in the Camelodromo's stand, but with another coworker in another site, it would too find its way to the Camelodromo stand so that William could pick it up from this central location. Thus, this Camelodromo stand acted as a central check-point from which all coworkers could come to deposit and collect products as needed.

Third, there was the usage of the structured sales sheets. In the end of the sale, William and his coworkers would register in a small notebook the product, the sale price and the stand from where the product was originated from. This allowed to manage and consolidate the sales daily throughout all selling locations.

Lastly, there was the existent cooperation between the traders. This 'cooperative ethos' was what allowed William to leave his stall and pick up the product from the Camelodromo. This was only possible because Seu Manel would watch-out for William's stall while he was away. Just has it happen inside the Camelodromo, here the traders also cooperated to facilitate each owns' sales. In this case however, cooperation was not associated to diversifying their product offer<sup>18</sup> but rather to help surpass the problems that came with working on the streets, such as, in this case, the fact that street stalls were never totally secured from robbery.

To conclude, in this vignette I've described the main characteristics of work performed by traders. Starting my story from the Camelodromo was purposefully chosen so that the clash between the formalisation of work and the traders' practices could be brought forward. While formalisation aimed for the 'individualisation', 'centralisation' and 'stillness' of trade within the boundaries of their allocated stands, these characteristics were contrary to how traders performed their work. Nor traders nor products were fixed within boundaries but rather always on-the-move. Plus, these fluxes were not dealt individually but collectively through collaborative and cooperative work arrangements.

Collaborative work relates to traders which worked for the same 'informal company'. In this context, work was vastly associated with 'organising flows' of products, people and ever-changing demands. This was shown in relation to their usage of the Camelodromo stands as strategic 'deposits' from which coworkers collaborated to restock their stalls spread through the surrounding streets. This was facilitated by using a mobile app for real-time communication and registering the product' flows in a paper sheet. However, flows were not always easily manageable in an ever-changing environment and thus, dependent on the underlying network of cooperative alliances. This 'cooperative ethos' permitted traders to expand the opportunities arising from situated encounters with clients as well as in relation to securing a stall in the absence of its owner. In the next vignette, I will explore more in depth the various instances in which this 'cooperative ethos' was key in the day-to-day lives of traders.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> However, in the next vignette I will expand on this and show how in fact, a different kind of product diversification was achieved through this sort of cooperation.

# Vignette 7: Cooperating as the fluid organising of street trade

In the last vignette, I briefly shown how a 'cooperative ethos' was intrinsic to the wide community of street traders and essential for the success of the traders' daily work activities. A specific moment when this was evident was in the case when William needed Seu Manel's help to guard his stall while he was away<sup>19</sup>. In this vignette, I will shed more light on the ways in which this cooperative ethos was linked to the traders' work by moving the ethnographic story away from the Camelodromo and into a small street where Seu Manel was daily found working from his informal bar stand.

Barão Vitoria street connected two populous areas in Recife's city centre. On one side, it opened to the Camelodromo, via the Dantas Barreto Avenue. O the other side, it opened to Floriano Peixoto street, where the central bus station was situated. However, labelling this whole space as a street seemed as a tentative bounding of a whole which was too complex and made of, at least, two strikingly different sites. On the side towards the bus station, it had formal shops, sidewalks nicely built, and cars passing by. This was the 'formal' side of the street. As the street funnelled towards the Camelodromo, it narrowed down to the point that no space was left to cars to pass by and informal stalls took over both sides, parked in front of other informal stands, deposits and garages. This was the 'informal' side of the street where Seu Manel had his bar stand and, for local dwellers, this was 'Seu Manel street' which can be seen below in Figure 25.



Figure 25: Seu Manel street

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> See section 6.1. Part III: Working, Vignette 6, Moment #1.

In Figure 26, we can see that associating the name of a person to his business or site was quite common between the informal traders' community. Looking at Seu Manel street, or most streets were informal trade was performed, business felt more proximate and this type of 'personal branding' emerged organically from the ways in which traders' work and livelihoods were intermeshed on the streets<sup>20</sup>.



Figure 26: Personal branding on the streets (left to right: Silvino's snacks; Silvio's hot peanuts; Gordo's bean soup)

The arrangement of Seu Manel street was what can be perceived as a 'backstage' of informal trade. First, and to be sure, there was Seu Manel bar, or as it was known by the locals, Seu Manel 'boteco'21 which acted as a central leisure facility for the informal community. Second, there were plenty of small deposit facilities for informal workers. These were different types of deposits than the ones mentioned earlier. In the Camelodromo, the deposits were associated with the traders' appropriation of stands for easy restocking by coworkers selling on the streets nearby. Here however, these deposits were part of a wider informal infrastructure of deposit-renting facilities which were spread through different localities in Recife offering space for traders to park their stalls and guard their products overnight. Third, towards the middle of the street there were also small garages of carpentry and workshop appliances where traders could quickly fix any broken stalls, tools or other machinery needed for their businesses. Forth, towards the end of the street there was the deposit of Seu Luis<sup>22</sup> where he was found everyday cooking his fruit juices and salads and distributing these to his coworkers to sell on the surrounding streets. These workers would come and go from his deposit in the morning and late afternoon when finishing their shifts, as shown in Figure 27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> This will be expanded on section 6.2. Part IV: Valuing.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Boteco' is a term used in Brazil in relation to meeting places for 'bohemians' where cheap alcoholic drinks and snacks are sold.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> More about Seu Luis business in section 6.2. Part IV: Valuing, Vignette 8.



Figure 27: Coworker arriving at Seu Luis deposit to guard her stall

Fifth, in front of Seu Luis and spread through the pathway, there were the plastic chairs and tables of the 'informal restaurant' of Dona Marta<sup>23</sup>, like shown below in Figure 28. She daily cooked a wide range of Brazilian dishes which she served here and delivered, in person, to informal workers around the vicinity.



Figure 28: Dona Marta informal restaurant

Lastly, and perhaps more importantly, Seu Manel street was strategically located in the city centre while at the same time offering a shelter from non-welcoming eyes. It were all these elements that made Seu Manel street a lively 'backstage' of street commerce where traders were seen carrying their mobile stalls and products back and forth from deposits, fixing their stalls, eating at Dona Marta 'informal restaurant' or socialising at Seu Manel boteco while having a pause from their trading activities performed on the crowded streets nearby.

As illustrated next, in Figure 29, Seu Manel boteco was a perfect leisure facility for street traders. It sold cold beer, snacks, some soft-drinks mostly used for cocktails, and its very own home-made cocktail made of cachaça and local roots and herbs which was quite popular among the locals. It had some wood chairs in the front and plastic ones with tables on the outside laying on the shadow of a tall building which was used as a deposit by the vast Chinese community of sellers that also pervaded the surrounding areas. All these elements made of Seu Manel boteco an attractive spot where informal workers and local dwellers were

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> More about Dona Marta business will be describe throughout the next sections.

regularly found having a drink and a chat, usually accompanied by the background soundtrack of one of the many pirated CDs<sup>24</sup> of Seu Manel broadcasted from his one (and only) speaker hanging on the wall<sup>25</sup>.



Figure 29: Seu Manel Boteco and the assemblage of informal leisure (clockwise: front view chairs, pirated music CDs, special home-made cocktails, wide range of drinks, food and friendly Seu Manel bartender)

This shows how Seu Manel street and Seu Manel boteco were popular places among street traders. These were also a rich places to observe how the traders helped one another in relation to a wide range of issues which daily emerged on the streets. It is focusing on this aspect of informal trade, that I will now go on to describe a specific moment I observed at Seu Manel boteco where the 'cooperative ethos' of the informal traders' community was strikingly noticeable.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> I will detail more the informal trade of pirated music CDs in the following sections 6.2. Part IV: Valuing, Vignette 9 and 6.3. Part V: Supplying, Vignette 11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> As seen on the top right of Figure 29.

#### moment #2

## assembling a 'waiting room', borrowing stock and mobilising supply requests

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Client: Hey!! You know where's the guy from this stand?<sup>26</sup> Seu Manel: He'll be back in a minute. He just went to pick up some stuff. Have a seat in the shadow here and he'll be back soon enough.

William was in the Camelodromo again collecting stuff and Seu Manel, in his usual friendly manner, made of his boteco a temporary 'waiting room' for William's clients. William's client comes and sits in one of the wooden chairs. Then asks for a beer.

#### Client: Really really cold please!

Seu Manel: Aha, hot isn't it?! I'll get you a really cold one. (...) But here! Try this while you wait! It's good! Cleans your blood vessels aha!

Seu Manel gives him the typical small glass cup used for the small doses of cachaça. He pours down his popular home-made cocktail made by his wife. 50cts a glass.

He serves the glass and runs to Dona Marta to borrow some beers from her. It's Monday mid-morning and the kid supposed to deliver the beers is late again. (..) I've noticed that this exchange of supplies between Seu Luis and Dona Marta is common since there is always something missing. (...) I'm also guessing last Friday was good for business in Seu Manel boteco and that's why he does not have beers today. After a few minutes Seu Manel gets back carrying a plastic bag with 3 big bottles of beer.

Seu Manel: Here! Touch here! Cold enough? Ahah Client: Ahah Cold enough alright!

Out the sudden I hear Natasha from my back. She was with Fernanda<sup>27</sup>. Both seemed in a hurry with their açai stalls.

Natasha:	Move, move! Let us pass. Come on guys. Hey! Seu Manel, I'm moving these chairs a bit to the side ok?			
Seu Manel:	Hey hey girls! Eaaasy there! Where are you going? Is it bad in the bus station?			
Natasha:	No no, not that. It's a stupid girl selling in our spot. Luis had enough ahah she's gonna learn a lesson now ahahah!			
Seu Manel:	Ahah ok girls! You teach them a lesson alright?! (and blinks to the client) Cheers to that!			
Seu Manel:	Hey! Natasha! If you see the beers' kid tell him to hurry up with mine. Don't have any and people are thirsty here! It's hot!			
Natasha:	Sure! He might be there. I'll tell him know you asked. See ya later.			
Seu Manel, informal boteco owner @ Seu Manel street Dona Marta, informal restaurant owner @ Seu Manel street William, workshop supplies street seller @ Dantas Barreto Avenue latasha & Fernanda, açai street sellers @ surroundings of Seu Manel street Seu Luis, informal açai business owner @ Seu Manel street [ Field notes: 'afternoon at Seu Manel boteco' @ Seu Manel street (phase III - 25/03/2015 14:30) ]				

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> The client was referring to William's stand while he was away in the Camelodromo.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Natasha and Fernanda were coworkers of Seu Luis. This specific moment when they pass by Seu Manel boteco is detailed further in the next section 6.2. Part IV: Valuing: Vignette 8.

This moment clearly shows a varied number of ways in which the cooperative ethos of street traders was key in their ability of run street trade smoothly.

First, there was the cooperation between sellers that emerged from the proximity and arrangement of their stalls. This was the case when William was not present at his stand and Seu Manel took care of his client. I've shown previously a similar situation when this occurred however, in this case I bring forward how this cooperation between both was not just beneficial to William. Indeed, while William would gain from Seu Manel's help to secure his stall. Seu Manel also gained from William's absence by rapidly assembling a sort of 'waiting room' for William's clients where they were invited to consume from his boteco. This rapid cooperative assemblage is similar to the ways in which the Camelodromo sellers would rapidly cooperate to assemble a momentary diversification of products. However, in this case, products did not move from stand to stand. Instead, they were already assembled together as a by-product of the specific street arrangement. This assemblage of stalls close to each other made this spot a valuable street trade position that benefitted both traders. I will expand more on the emergence and management of these types of valuable street trade positions in the next section, but for now what I want to bring forward is how the 'cooperative ethos' of traders was behind the assemblage of this valuable street trade position that benefited them both, by increasing the sense of security and sales potential, as well as their clients, which benefited from a higher diversification of product offer through the comfort of an urban 'waiting room'.

Second, there were the 'borrowing agreements' made between traders to surpass supply shortages. This was the case of Seu Manel borrowing beers from Dona Marta. Although working on the same food and drinks sector, these workers were not competing but rather cooperating, helping each other on dealing with unforeseen events, and achieving some sort of stability to both sales' flow.

Lastly, there was the case when traders asked the help of mobile street traders passing by to mobilise products or messages to different urban locations. This was exemplified when Seu Manel asked Natasha to personally ask his 'beer delivery boy' to hurry up with his beer supply. I've shown before how 'flows' were intrinsically associated with informal trade. This also exemplifies once more how these flows were embedded on the lives of traders which cooperated with one another to pass and receive information or products to different sites.

To conclude, what I wanted to bring forward with this vignette was that the collective work of traders relied as much on the collaborations between coworkers as in an underlying 'cooperative ethos' that pervaded the whole community of traders and which was key for the ongoing calibration and maintenance of street trade performances. Starting this ethnographic story from Seu Manel street was

### (RE)ORDERING AND (DIS)ORDERING OF STREET TRADE

purposefully chosen as this was a specific site where this 'cooperative ethos' was highly noticeable and materialised as a 'backstage' that encompassed a high variety of informal shops, food delivery services, carpentries, deposits, and lowcost leisure facilities such as Seu Manel boteco. In this 'backstage', the traders' 'cooperative ethos' emerged organically in relation to their own continuous adaptation to circumstances and needs arising from the fluid context of their daily work. Examples of this were the improvised street stalls' arrangements, which assembled a valuable street trade position where each trader cooperated with one another and benefited from scaling each owns' opportunities of trade; the 'borrowing agreements' made between traders to surpass immediate supply shortages; or the help from mobile street traders to move products and/or information to different locations.

### Summary of Part III: Working

Here I will briefly summarise the three main characteristics of the daily assembling of informal urban street trade brought forward by the two previous vignettes – fluidity, collective work, and decentralised trade – and discuss how these relate to the two main modes of working performed by informal urban street traders – collaboration and cooperation.

The first characteristic of informal work made visible in the previous vignettes is that it was widely associated with a fluid urban infrastructure made of continuous flows and changes. In this context, informal work was organised in relation to the products, services, workers, people and demands which were continuously moving. This was widely achieved collectively. And this is the second main characteristic. Whether traders collaborated within the same 'informal organisation' or cooperated within different 'informal organisations', the success of their working activities relied heavily on a vast array of interactions made between them. This was in plain opposition to the aim of formalisation to shift from the fluid dynamics of trade performed collectively within communal urban spaces towards the fixed and regulated ones where traders were to work individually from allocated stands within centralised commercial facilities. And this brings me to the third characteristic of traders' work. Despite the aim to centralise trade within licensed facilities, the traders' collective organisation of work was extremely effective in continuously adapting to and taking advantage of the fluidity of the streets and reproducing a decentered organisation of street trade which was more appropriate to this specific urban and economic context. This was achieved through the interplay between the two modes of collective work of traders: collaboration and cooperation.

If collaboration (detailed in Vignette 6) could be seen as the collective work of traders put forward to 'organise flows' of peoples and demands, then cooperation (detailed in Vignette 7) can be seen as the 'fluid organising' which emerged organically between the wider community of traders on the 'backstage' of their street trading performances and which made street flows both manageable and advantageous for the whole of the traders' community. This happened in two specific ways. On the one hand, cooperation was essential in improvising solutions to surpass infrastructural problems common to working on the streets. On the other hand, it was key to how traders were able to creatively take advantage of the changing arrangements of people, products and services through the emergence of valuable street trade positions which benefited them all. Thus, the traders' strong 'cooperative ethos' was not just a necessity to surpass the hard conditions of the streets but rather, it was an essential mechanism behind the continuous reproduction of a decentered, fluid and highly networked informal workforce which was behind the daily success of street trade.

This concludes section 6.1. *Part III: Working.* Next, in section 6.2. *Part IV: Valuing,* I will follow from here and explore how value came to be attached to products, services and sites in the context of street trade.

### 6.2. Part IV: Valuing

In the context of street trade, the low-cost nature of products sold and services offered on the streets seemed to indicate that the nature of value was less defined by price tag and more by other aspects. This has been briefly exemplified previously when describing the benefits of traders working within 'valuable street trade position'<sup>28</sup>. In this section I will explore more in detail the emergence and shape of these sidewalk assemblages from the point of view of the economic exchanges performed there. My objective is to explore in detail how valuation occurred, in which ways different elements were associated with these processes and what was the role of work-tools, materials and technologies in this. I will address this through the presentation of two vignettes and four situated moments when a valuation process took place and its effects were experienced.

In *Vignette 8: Calculating valuable street trade positions,* I will detail the ways in which value was continuously changing as it attached and detached to street trade positions according to a wide range of elements. I look at this issue from the point of view of an 'informal corporation' of food traders that performed calculative practices to detect these fluctuations so to adapt and take advantage of profitable sites as they emerged. The vignette is enriched with the description of a specific moment when traders coordinated to maintain the leadership of a valuable street trade position which was under threat by competitor street traders.

In *Vignette 9: Co-creating valuable street trade positions,* I will explore more in detail how valuable street trade positions were continuously shaped *in situ* in parallel to the informal urban ambiances and soundscapes so characteristic of the streets where informal street trade was performed. With an underlying focus on the business of pirated music CDs, I present three moments showing how valuation on the streets was booth, and at the same time, contingent to the assemblages of urban ambiances and soundscapes, calculated by traders for the whole community's benefit, and co-created *in situ* by a wide range of actors both formal and informal.

To conclude this section I will briefly summarise the three main characteristics of the daily assembling of informal urban street trade brought forward by these two vignettes and discuss how these relate to the two main modes of valuing performed by informal urban street traders.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> See section 6.1. Part III: Working, Vignette 7, Moment #2.

# Vignette 8: Calculating valuable street trade positions

Looking at how value emerged on the streets, I have previously briefly described the traders' use of 'personal branding' <sup>29</sup> techniques and the sidewalk assemblages of 'valuable street trade positions'<sup>30</sup>. However, given the fluidity of the streets, the 'value' associated to street positions was also fluid rather than fixed. In this vignette, I will focus on this issue and describe how 'informal corporations' of traders collaborated daily to be able to detect, adapt to, and take advantage of the ongoing changes in 'valuable street trade positions'. With this in mind I will follow the ethnographic story from Seu Manel street and delve closer into the informal business of 'açai in a bowl' performed by Seu Luis<sup>31</sup>.

'Açai in a bowl' is a popular Brazilian dish and it is sold both in formal juice shops and by street traders alike. It is made of frozen and mashed açaí fruit topped with banana, granola and mixed with guaraná and other fruits, as shown in Figure 30



Figure 30:Seu Luis açai (top left: açai in a bowl; rest: standardised stalls)

Working with Seu Luis were nine young girls which, equipped with mobile stalls, were daily found throughout the centre selling 'açai in a bowl' for three Reais (1 US\$) and fruit salads for two Reais a small pot and three Reais a bigger one (0,75 US\$ and 1 US\$ respectively). From what I overserved on the streets, these were the prices practiced by most traders of açai which meant that price was not a defining factor associated to the value of their products. But branding was. Both

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> I have briefly described personal branding on the streets previously in section 6.1. Part III: Working, Vignette 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> See section 6.1. Part III: Working, Vignette 7, Moment #2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> I have briefly introduced the deposit of Seu Luis when describing the 'backstage' arrangement of Seu Manel street in section 6.1. Part III: Working, Vignette 7.

the high number of açai traders working for Seu Luis and the aesthetics and branding of their stalls were a visible reminder that this was some sort of 'informal corporation'. As shown in Figure 30, these stalls add all the same size, form, typography and the corporate logo mentioning 'Açai do Luis' which together attached to them a sort of 'corporate branding' as opposed to other solo traders.

While his coworkers were spread through the streets selling açai, Seu Luis was regularly found at Seu Manel street working in his deposit or better put, at the 'açai headquarters', as seen below in Figure 31.



Figure 31: Seu Luis 'açai headquarters' assemblage (clockwise: camouflaged entrance through Seu Manel street; large freezers; big blender; mobile stalls; açai street-supplier motorbike)

This figure shows this was not just a regular 'deposit'. For sure it did serve to guard the stalls and products. However, here one would also find large freezers used to store the ice, granola, guarana syrup, banana and other fruits; big blenders used to mix the different ingredients needed, a wide range of fresh vegetables and fruits, which he would daily pick from the nearby market of São José<sup>32</sup>, and of course, the mashed açai palm fruit, which was daily brought by Marcelo, a street-supplier, which served both Seu Luis and other formal juice shops in the vicinities<sup>33</sup>. As so, this was where the açai product was itself daily cooked, where street-suppliers would deliver their products to, and where Seu Luis' coworkers would gather before, during and after their shifts, to plan their

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> As I will detail more in the next section 6.3. Part V: Supplying, most of the food sellers would gather their food supplies from nearby markets.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Suppliers which served both the formal and informal business were quite common in Recife. In the section 6.3. Part V: Supplying, Vignette 10 I will detail more on this and on the specific role of street-suppliers.

work strategies while eating breakfast, lunch or in the end of the day when coming back to guard their stalls and review the finances together. It is thus for all these reasons that it seems more respectful to its purpose to call this the 'açai headquarters' instead of 'deposit'.

The 'açai headquarters' benefited from the 'backstage arrangement' that Seu Manel street offered to informal workers<sup>34</sup>. This encompassed, for instance, the nearby carpenters and workshops needed to solve any problems with the açai machinery, the exchange of information between other street sellers passing-by in relation to how crowded were different sites and the affordable food from the 'informal restaurant' of Dona Marta<sup>35</sup>. It was her that daily served breakfast to the whole team of Seu Luis in what could be seen as the daily 'corporate meeting' of this 'informal corporation', as noted in my observations bellow.

(...) Seu Luis had gathered all the bread, manioc, milk, coffee, beans, and other food from Dona Marta and spread it through the desk and on the top of the freezers with the açai pots. (...) There were not enough chairs and some girls were eating standing up. They could always meet outside and make use of the plastic chairs and tables of Dona Marta, but Seu Luis preferred to have the breakfast inside so to gain more privacy with the team while planning the day's work.

[ Field notes: 'morning at Seu Luis deposit'@ Seu Manel street (phase III - 24/03/2015 07:30) ]

Having a 'headquarter' at Seu Manel street offered the geographic advantage of being connected to the crowded areas surrounding the Camelodromo and the central bus stop. However, the prospect of higher sales brought by its central location didn't came without its challenges. If moving in and out of the city was a daily struggle for informal workers that usually lived in the peripheral neighbourhoods, moving within the city centre's crowded streets during work shifts was no different due to the deficient and often chaotic urban infrastructure and public transport system<sup>36</sup>. In light of this, it was not uncommon for coworkers to be late to their shifts and thus Seu Luis had implemented strict rules and harsh fines to ensure that punctuality was followed by all, as seen in Figure 32.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> See section 6.1. Part III: Working, Vignette 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> I have made a small reference to the 'informal restaurant' of Dona Marta when describing the 'backstage' arrangement of Seu Manel street in section 6.1. Part III: Working, Vignette 7 and her business will be more explored in section 6.3. Part V: Suppling, Vignette 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> See Chapter 5, section 5.1. Part I: Legitimising, Vignette 1.



Figure 32: Urban infrastructure and time management (left to right: deficient sidewalks; public transport; sign at 'açai headquarters' saying: "missing one day, two will be discounted, shifts are from 8:00 to 17:30, if late, half the day will be discounted, good work!")

In order to manage the high number of coworkers dispersed through various locations, Seu Luis created an official WhatsApp group named 'galera do açai', which translates to 'açai crowd' in English<sup>37</sup>. Through this, his coworkers could (and should) update him with real-time information on any problem that emerged so that Seu Luis could make decisions accordingly. These decisions were not fixed and they usually changed throughout the day in relation to how certain sites, at certain times, offered higher prospects for açai sales than others, i.e., they were 'valuable street trade positions'. I have briefly shown before how different arrangements of stalls and products found on the sidewalks assembled valuable street positions that benefited both the traders and clients<sup>38</sup>. In this case however, given that the açai workers were mobile, a whole new set of elements are brought to light which were behind the emergence and shape of the açaí's 'valuable street trade positions', as it can be seen in the transcript below.

	() Anyone knows of Soraia? Again late. This can't go on!! She just sent a 'zap <sup>39</sup> ' saying there was an accident in the Agamenon avenue and she's stuck in traffic.
Seu Luis:	Afff. Kids!! She just has to wakeup sooner, isn't it?!
	()
Seu Luis:	OK! Claudia, you go to Soraia's spot. The school kids should be coming already. But move back to your spot [close to hairdresser salons and manicure shops] before lunch time. Natasha, you go to terminal spot. Here, take this [passes her the açai and salad]. Keep me posted on how things are goin, gals.
	Seu Luis, informal açai business owner @ Seu Manel street dia, Soraia & Natasha, açai street sellers @ Seu Manel street Field notes: 'morning at Seu Luis deposit' @ Seu Manel street (phase III - 24/03/2015 07:30)]

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> WhatsApp groups are chat rooms where messages between intervenient are seen by all the members being part of that group.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> See section 6.1. Part III: Working, Vignette 7. Moment #2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Zapzap' was how WhatsApp was usually called on street slang and 'zap' was how traders referred to a message sent via WhatsApp.

In this transcript we see how the solution of Seu Luis to the absence of Soraia had in consideration the fact that some streets could be more attractive during the mornings, taking advantage of the hungry kids walking to school, or close to bus stations before workers' daily commutes. Other streets could me more tempting for açai workers at lunch in specific places where hairdressers salons and manicure shops were present and attracted young woman that were usually found of natural healthy food such as the açai. Given the complexity of all these elements and how they were continuously changing through time and space, the success of açai sales was strongly dependent on how coworkers could rapidly detect, adapt to and take advantage of 'valuable street trade positions' as they emerged. To this benefit, three key work-tools were crucial. These were the 'açai crowd' WhatsApp group, the açai mobile stalls and the stall's inner deposit which I will detail next.

First, in order to detect the emergence of valuable street trade positions, the açai workers made use of the 'açai crowd' WhatsApp group. Through this, coworkers updated the whole company in real-time in relation to how profitable their sites were behaving and consequently coordinated to mobilise more workers and stock to profitable locations or withdraw and move to other sites otherwise.

Second, in order to rapidly adapt to valuable street trade positions as they changed through time and space, the workers made use of their açai mobile stalls, as seen in Figure 33. These stalls' multiple components made it possible for workers to move and work independently from different locations as they emerged as valuable street trade positions. To be sure, the stalls were equipped with wheels which provided the necessary ability of workers to move around different sites. The stalls were also equipped with small compartments to store the açai, the vegetables and the fruits and to store the plastic cups used to serve the clients. There was also a small locker for workers to guard their belongings if needing to be absent form their spot to go to a public toiled for instance, and a sun umbrella to protect workers from the burning sun of the streets.

Third, in order to take advantage of valuable street trade positions, workers needed to be able to maintain the sales' flow in these localities while demand was high. To this regard, the açai mobile stalls had another key component which offered these workers a certain level of self-sustainability through time. This was a small inner 'deposit', refrigerated through styrofoam, where the food stock could be kept cold for some time.

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Figure 33: Açai mobile stall assemblage (clockwise: açai promotional flyer, prices of fruit salad; rubbish bin and plastic chair borrowed from nearby formal store; Natasha and açai mobile stall parked at sidewalk; accounting notebook and kinship clients' debt management; locker with day's earnings and notebook)

The inner 'deposit' of the açai stalls was a key component for the daily operations of these mobile traders as it assured sales-flow in valuable street positions in two important ways. First, because workers were less dependent of the 'açai headquarters' to restock their food, they could move further away and take advantage of distant valuable street trade positions. Second, because there was food stock available in each worker's stall in different locations, workers could coordinate efforts to be re-stocked 'on-the-move'. Re-stocking 'on-the-move' was facilitated by their corporate usage of the 'açai crowd' group to communicate any stock shortages in a site were demand was high and ask for the help of any nearby trader with available stock to come and share it, as it can be seen next in the transcript from the 'açai crowd' group.

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Natasha: Jesus, the açai is finishing already. They're still asking for it. Fernanda: I just had one. They're delicious, real fresh - congrats Luis! ;) Seu Luis: Fernanda, how is it there? Can you bring some to Natasha? I'm busy here and Marcelo is coming [street supplier of açai]. Fernanda: No worries, it's calm down here. I'll be there in a bit Natasha. Seu Luis: Cool! meet here at 12. Marta [from the informal restaurant at Seu Manel street] has stew today and it's smelling good :) Natasha & Fernanda, açai street sellers @ surroundings of Seu Manel street Seu Luis, informal açai business owner @ Seu Manel Street [ Field notes: 'Natasha WhatsApp caption' @ Floriano Peixoto street

. (phase III - 31/03/2015 16:00) ] Although being able to keep stock-flows in valuable street trade positions was overly important, itself alone did not quarantee that a specific site was stably assured by the allocated worker. Assuring a guaranteed place in a valuable street trade position, although aimed by street traders, was a never-ending process which had to be daily negotiated between the different actors which took part in the multitude of dimensions from which the street-trading assemblages where made of. These encompassed informal agreements which were daily negotiated with other local workers, formal and informal, the local residents, and even local authorities. The fact that Seu Luis had been in business in these locations for more than ten years meant that he had stablished kinship relations which favoured him in these negotiations. However, this was sometimes not enough since, as in any valuable market, competition is sure to exist and, on the streets, it did happen regularly and ruthlessly between street traders. Focusing on this competitive dimension of informal trade, I will now present a specific moment which describes how Seu Luis and his coworkers managed to maintain their leadership of valuable street trade positions when these were under threat by competitor street traders.

#### moment #3

## detaching from, attaching to, and re-conquering valuable street trade positions

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I've seen it before. The group of açai girls passing by. They were different from the rest. With their stalls, all the same colours, aligned in a queue, moving through the small street. (...) this time was different though. First, they were only Natasha and Fernanda. Second, they were not moving to their selling locations. Nor were they coming back from them. This usually happen at specific times. Around 8:00 or 17:00. No, this was something else<sup>40</sup>.

- Natasha: Move, move! Let us pass. Come on guys. Hey! Seu Manel, I'm moving these chairs a bit to the side ok?
- Seu Manel: Hey hey girls! Eaaasy there! Where are you going this time all of you? Is it bad in the station?

Natasha: No no, not that. It's a stupid girl selling in our spot. Luis had enough ahah she's gonna learn a lesson now ahahah!

Natasha, açai street sellers @ surroundings of Seu Manel street Seu Manel, informal boteco owner @ Seu Manel street Seu Luis, informal açai business owner @ Seu Manel street [ Field notes: 'afternoon at Seu Manel boteco' @ Seu Manel street (phase III - 25/03/2015 14:30) ]

(...) Seu Luis had mentioned this street competition to me before (...)

Seu Luis: This here I started around 10 years ago. I've conquered this site. And I never went to the other neighborhoods. Never!! I get furious when they come to this side 'agitando o pau<sup>'41</sup>. I get furious, you know?! And fight back! I've earn this place and there's no way they're gonna take that away from me, you know?! I have the most beautiful girls in Recife! No chance! (...)

(...) these açai workers do consider aesthetics to be an important part of the açai streetmarketing strategy. However, this is possibly the least significant of the arsenal these guys put in place to fight back against competitors (...).

Seu Luis: I don't even discuss – 'You'll stay here? Yes? Ok, that's fine!' – I put my stalls on top of anyone that comes here and I lower the prices. They never stay! They can't handle it! I don't invade their territory so don't invade mine!

Seu Luis, informal açai business owner @ Seu Manel street [ Field notes: 'Interview Seu Luis: notes on competition' @ Seu Manel street (phase III - 20/03/2015 16:30) ]

(...) it was only a few days after the episode of Natasha and Fernanda passing by Seu Manel boteco that I finally managed to get access to Natasha's WhatsApp and get a closer look into what actually happen that afternoon.

Claudia: Luis, there's another girl selling here. What I do?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> I have referenced this moment in section 6.1. Part III: Working, Vignette 7, Moment #2 from the point of view of the cooperation arrangements at Seu Manel street.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> In slang Brazilian-Portuguese, 'agitando o pau', refers to when a person or a group is making some kind of disturbance to the normal way things are supposed to be run.

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Seu Luis: Really? What's the matter with these people? Calçadas street is mine! Natasha – how is it there? Can you move? Fernanda: God! It's too much really. I can go, Luis. It's slow here now. Seu Luis: Ok, you go there and put half (price) on the açai. Natasha: I can go Luis. No movement here (...) too hot to be on the streets. Meet in the deposit. Just a minute. Seu Luis: OK. Calçadas street is mine! This girl has to be out. Fernanda: OK. Meet you there. \_\_\_\_\_ - - - - - - -Claudia, Natasha & Fernanda, açai street sellers @ Seu Manel street Seu Luis, informal açai business owner @ Seu Manel street [ Field notes: 'WhatsApp caption from Natasha' @Floriano Peixoto street (phase III - 31/03/2015 16:00) ] (...) not surprisingly, the açai guys managed again to continue their undisputed leadership around this place (...). Seu Manel: Hey girls! Had a good day? How was it with the other gal?

Natasha: She Left! ahah No one would go and buy açai from her when you have three young sexy girls smiling at you with cheaper açai, Right?! Ahahah

Seu Manel, informal boteco owner @ Seu Manel street Natasha, açai street sellers @ surroundings of Seu Manel street [ Field notes: 'afternoon at Seu Manel boteco' @ Seu Manel street (phase III - 25/03/2015 17:00) ]

What this moment clearly shows is that the competition within valuable street positions was though and in order to maintain the leadership in these sites workers needed to constantly survey and fight back against competitor sellers. While surveying these sites for competitors was easy and performed by all coworkers through the 'açai crowd' WhatsApp group, responding to such threats was more complex and it usually involved the conjugation of the three work-tools described to perform two important 'street arsenal' tactics.

The first tactic was associated with being able to rapidly mobilise a high number of workers to the site being threaten by competitors. The fact that Seu Luis had a high number of coworkers, all equipped with mobile stalls selling at different sites meant that he could move them around and operationalise a competitive advantage technique of rapidly placing a highly disproportionate number of his workers around the competitor seller position and this way discourage his stay.

The second tactic was associated with the ability to lower the product prices for some time. By having a vast number of coworkers all equipped with their mobile stalls' deposits meant that Seu Luis could afford to lower the prices below the competition for a long period of time and this way regain his leadership of these sites. Furthermore, he could always move prices back to normal or even increase them once his leadership of these sites was regained.

To conclude, in this vignette I have shown how the valuation on the streets was less associated with price tags and more to do with how traders made themselves

present in different sites through different calculative tactics. On the one hand, the aesthetic branding of their work-tools was essential in transmitting a sense of respect and accountability to their customers, and thus, increasing the perception of 'value' associated to their business offer. However, more important than this was their ability to attach to 'valuable street trade positions'. These sites were made of a wide set of elements which, in line with the fluidity of people and changing demands of the streets, were continuously changing through time and space. It was in relation to this fluid dynamics that 'informal corporations' of traders worked collaboratively in order to be able to detect, adapt to and take advantage of these 'valuable street trade positions' as they emerged. In the case of the acai business, trades were able to detect these fluctuations through the usage of WhatsApp, adapt to them through their mobile stalls, and take advantage of them through their mobile deposits which made it possible to restock 'on-the-move' and thus maintain the sales-flow in these locations through time. Plus, given the high potential for sales in these locations, traders needed to apply tactics to keep away competition. In the case of Seu Luis' business, this was done through the alignment of the three elements described before plus the ability to move a highly disproportionate number of workers to these locations and lowering the prices of their products.

What this shows is that valuation on the streets was shaped by all these elements, where space, time and the crowd present were key, but so were the traders' activities which were intrinsically aligned with calculating when and where valuable street trade positions could emerge and maintaining and taking advantage of these sites. However, and despite their efforts, these assemblages of more-than-monetary value on the streets were hard to manage completely and their fluctuations of value hard to calculate as they were continuously shaped by a wide range of elements. This will be the focus covered in the next vignette, where I will move closer to an analysis of the performance of economic exchanges in valuable street trade positions and uncover the ways in which the assembling of different elements was associated to the emergence and continuous shaping of value *in situ*.

# Vignette 9: Co-creating contingent valuable street trade positions

I have shown previously how 'informal corporations' branded themselves through their stalls' aesthetics and coordinated efforts to detect, adapt to and take advantage of 'valuable street trade positions' as they emerged. However, these were assemblages of more-than-monetary value which were hard to calculate and manage completely since they were continuously being shaped by a wide range of elements. It is in relation to this that in this vignette I will move the ethnographic focus from the calculative practices performed by traders to manage these 'valuable street trade positions' at a distance and look closer into the different ways in which a multitude of elements arranged itself and was responsible for the emergence and shape of value in these sites. With this in mind, the ethnographic story now takes a shift and follows through the presentation of a diverse set of economic exchanges and presents three specific moments bringing forward three key dimensions of contingency, calculation and collective co-creation responsible for how valuation occurred in this context.

One of the richest aspects of informal trade in Recife for me was associated to its aesthetic diversity which was materialised in the numerous stalls found on the streets, as shown below in Figure 34.



Figure 34: Diversity of stalls' aesthetics

Like I have mentioned earlier in relation to the standardised açai mobile stalls, these aesthetics were associated with branding and marketing techniques

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performed by traders<sup>42</sup>. However, opposed to the standardised stalls of 'informal corporations' such as the one from Seu Luis, most stalls on the streets were aesthetically diverse. These traders' work-tools seemed embedded within an emotional attachment of whom has pleasure decorating it and personalising it to fit with where one lives, eats, sleeps and breaths. They were the vivid materialisation of the 'personal branding' practices performed by street traders.

This aesthetic diversity emerged through the attachment of stalls to the sidewalks which in turn enacted different ways of interaction with the urban. The stalls, their colours, the diversity of products sold, the smell of food and coffee, the sellers' voices interacting loudly between themselves through the background sound of popular Brazilian songs, all added up to a rich experience of urban economic life which goes beyond what any shopping mall could dream to achieve. It were all these material, sensorial and aesthetic elements, more than any price tags, that were continuously shaping how value was attached to products and services *in sittu* through lively informal urban ambiances, as I try to show below in Figure 35.



Figure 35: Informal urban ambiances

Focusing on this, I present now a moment I witness at Conde da Boa Vista avenue which shows how the valuation of products and services was intrinsically associated to the informal urban ambiances of the streets.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> See section 6.2. Part IV: Valuing, Vignette 8.

#### moment #4

### from phone cover to protector exchange service, coffee and all in between

#### ----

(...) a young girl stopped and stared at a phone cover of 'hello kitty' [a popular brand among teenagers] at Malu's shelf [a phone accessories street trader].



Figure 36: Trading of cell phone accessories at Conde da Boa Vista avenue

Client: Hey! How much for this one?

Malu: 10 Reais. But it won't fit on your phone model (...) you want to change your phone protector? I have this one - it's really good! I can put it on your phone without bubbles. That's only 5 Reais for you, my love.

The girl agreed. While waiting for Malu she decides to grab a coffee from Luis [a food street trader with a stall next to Malu]. The smell of fresh coffee was intense and I was having one myself. Then Marcos [a handcrafts street trader with a stall next to Malu] offered the girl one of his plastic chair to sit.

Marcos: Sit here while you wait and drink your coffee.

She smiled and sat. Then she started singing softly to the music coming from Rafael's [a nearby music CDs street trader which was playing Pablo's new hit - "men don't cry"<sup>43</sup> from his stall speakers]. (...) Malu gave her phone back and smiling, commented with her how all were tired of listening to that song on the streets every day.

- Malu: Oh God, that is too much 'sofrência'44.
- Girl: Ahah (...) but it's addictive! I always start singing when it plays!
- Girl: Here you go! 5 Reais right?!
- Malu: Yes love. I can check if they have that cover for your phone tomorrow. You wanna exchange WhatsApp?

The girl agreed and smiled. When she left, Luis offered Marcos a coffee while pointing out how he also needs to buy a plastic chair for his clients soon (...).

Client, street trade passer-by @ Conde da Boa Vista avenue Malu, phone accessories street trader @ Conde da Boa Vista avenue Luis, food street trader @ Conde da Boa Vista avenue Marcos, handcrafts street trader @ Conde da Boa Vista avenue [ Field notes: 'street trade life' @ Conde da Boa Vista avenue (phase I - 28/11/2014 10:15) ]

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Music video available here: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QLoZhUpzNzQ</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> 'Sofrência' relates to love pain. In this context, it relates to the lyrics of the song that was playing which talks about the emotional suffering of a man in relation to his gone love.

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This moment richly shows how economic life was entangled with a multitude of elements which were continuously attached and detached on the sidewalks. Indeed, and just has I described previously when William's client ended up sitting and consuming Seu Manel's home-made cachaça<sup>45</sup>, in this case, the girl, which only wanted a 'hello kitty' phone cover, ended up paying 5 Reais to Malu for an improvised phone protector exchange service, 50 cents to Luis for a coffee and didn't even buy the item that triggered her to stop in the first place. At the same time, Marcos got a free coffee, Luis was reminded to get a new plastic chair and Malu got a digital communication link with a potential future client. What this says is that on the streets the value of a product or service was a contingent happening to the improvised assemblages of a wide range of elements associated to the informal urban ambiances where economic life was performed. In this case, these elements were a person walking, a phone cover visible on a shelf, a strong teenager-targeted popular brand, the street traders kinship and their material organisation of stalls and plastic chairs within the urban infrastructure, the trader's protector exchange service, a mobile networking software and even the sensorial elements of the smell of coffee and the sound of a popular song known to all.

One important sensorial element of these informal urban ambiances was their soundscapes. The urban soundscapes of Recife were made of numerous sounds and, where street trade was performed, these were invariably accompanied by a background soundtrack that mixed with the voices of traders and passers-by enacting a distinct sensory texture to urban informality. The music was diverse. From global hits, distributed by big music labels, to locally-produced songs, composed by local artists in home-based studios<sup>46</sup>. Invariably, the 'piracy hawker<sup>47</sup> was the conductor of this 'informal orchestra' attaching songs to the urban soundscapes of the streets, as exemplified in Figure 37.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> See section 6.1. Part III: Working, Vignette 7, Moment #2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> In the previous moment, the Pablo's hit "men don't cry" is one example of this.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Piracy hawkers were called 'pirateiros' on the streets, i.e., 'the ones which do piracy. These were the traders of copied music CDs such as the one mentioned in the previous transcript.

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Figure 37: Piracy hawker at Dom Vital square

Piracy hawkers coupled themselves flawlessly with the informal markets by selling a wide range of low-cost copies of media CDs. These could be disposed on the floor or on portable shelfs on the sidewalks or, as it was more common, through their piracy stalls, as it can be seen bellow in Figure 38.



Figure 38: Urban piracy markets in Recife (top: copied CDs disposed on the floor and portable shelfs; bottom: piracy stalls)

The piracy stall was itself an informal socio-technical bricolage of various elements. As I illustrate next, in Figure 39, there were the CDs shelves, an embedded car radio, one or two speakers embedded on the sides of the stall, a car battery placed in the inner compartment, sometimes a portable video player to show clients the quality of video CDs/DVDs. Often there were also stickers all over the stalls. As was the case of most street traders, religious stickers or remarks written on stalls were also common on piracy stalls. On top of this, these stalls were often with marketing stickers promoting other stores which somehow were associated to the local music scene as well as other stickers promoting music events of local artists happening soon in local venues. Each of these elements had an identity of its own that also functioned 'in tune' with the rest by assembling a low-cost mobile broadcasting sound system through which all sorts of musical styles were heard through the streets.

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Figure 39: Piracy stall assemblage (left to right: piracy stall rear view; inner CDs stand; extra CDs shelves; embedded car radio; embedded speaker; inner compartment with car battery; sticker marketing JJ Óculos; sticker marketing music event on local avenue; religious sticker)

*'What's that you're playing?*' This was usually the first thing a piracy hawker would hear from a passer-by. From here the dialogue usually continued with: *'How much is it?*' and often *'What was that that you were playing before?*'.



Figure 40: Economic exchange through urban piracy stall

Given that the prices of the CDs sold by piracy hawkers in Recife were all the same, three Reais for one and five Reais for two (1 US\$ and 1,5US\$ respectively), just like in the previous cases, here price also didn't seemed to be a defining factor in the clients' decision to buy. Rather, as the bellow transcript

shows, a more defining aspect that shaped how people came to value these media products was how they came to know them, i.e., how they came to hear them, which was facilitated by the piracy stalls' broadcasting capability.

> Ana: I listen to it all day while I'm here [working in the restaurant open to the street]. (..) It just gets into your ear ahah that 'muriçoca' song for instance<sup>48</sup>. I have it here, look! [shows me a CD mix with the song she bought form the piracy hawker]. It's just easier to get it from them [from piracy hawkers], you know?!

Ana, restaurant worker and piracy client @ Eudes Costa street, Agua Fria [ Field notes: 'Interview Ana: notes on piracy clients' @ Agua Fria (phase II - 12/12/2014 18:00) ]

However, for a certain song to be heard on the streets was not an easy task as it had to fiercely compete for a 'sound share' with the wide range of sonorous elements that made up for Recife's' lively urban soundscapes. There were, for instance, cars passing by, machinery working loudly, babies crying, dogs barking, birds singing, all mixed with loud electronic sounds coming from the most varied sound systems such as large speakers used by formal shops to promote their products, or marketing vans and small rented bicycles which would pass slowly by the crowded streets promoting local stores or City Council sponsored events, as I show below in Figure 41.



Figure 41: Elements of urban soundscapes (left to right: store speakers; marketing van; marketing bicycle)

There were also some street traders which, equipped with a microphone and speakers, would lively market their products on the streets. This was the case of Pink, a 'caldinhos'<sup>49</sup> trader which was quite popular on the neighbourhood of Casa Amarela in Recife's city centre. As it can be seen below in Figure 42, her nickname was due to the fact she was all dressed up in pink and had a visible pink stall. This was her 'personal branding' technique. On top of this, she was

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> This was heard almost every day on the streets. A popular genre where the lyrics make use of simple yet creative metaphors with double meaning usually associated with parodies around sexual themes. Music video here: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5PARA6LBZs</u>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> 'caldinho' is a soup usually made of left over baked beans. Street traders can be seen carrying these in thermo jars and selling through the streets and beaches in Brazil.

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usually heard through the streets improvising marketing jingles through a microphone connected to a portable speaker. This made her presence and marketing improvisations so popular among the local community that she was sponsored by a local printer shop in return to having their logo visible on her stall.



Figure 42: Pink street trade marketing assemblage (clockwise: portable speaker; microphone; local shop sponsorship; caldinho's mobile stall)

There was also other traders which, possibly uncomfortable with improvisations, played previously recorded marketing jingles on the streets. This was the case of Mario, a popular fruit salads trader which was quite popular in this neighbourhood as well. As it can be seen in Figure 43, his bicycle was equipped with a styrofoam box on the front containing his salads and a sticker promoting his business. On the back it had a box with a speaker connected to a car battery and radio with a plugged-in USB stick containing his marketing jingle which was often sung in chorus by the locals, as partly transcribed bellow.

Mario Jingle: Look at the fruit salad boooooyyy (...) Mario's fruit salad is coooominggg. Mario, food street trader @ Casa Amarela [ Field notes: 'street soundscapes' @ Casa Amarela (phase II - 09/12/2014 11:15) ]



Figure 43: Mario street trade marketing assemblage (Top: bicycle stall; bottom: speaker box; inside the box: car battery and car radio with USB plugged-in; salad container and marketing sticker)

This shows how traders applied different sonorous strategies to deal with the urban soundscapes. While competing for a 'sound share' on such lively sonorous environment was hard for all traders, piracy hawkers counted on the fact that the population were used to, and seemed to appreciate music being played on the streets. It was, if you will, part of the urban lived experience of the city, as Ana, a regular consumer of piracy hawkers, greatly put:

Ana: It's good to have the music here [the music coming from a nearby piracy stall]. It's better than silence. It makes the day better! It wouldn't be Recife without it [piracy hawkers and music playing]

Ana, restaurant worker and piracy client @ Eudes Costa street, Agua Fria [ Field notes: 'Interview Ana: notes on piracy clients' @ Agua Fria (phase II - 12/12/2014 18:00) ]

Indeed, it was not common for me to see people on the streets with the white headphones plugged onto their hears as it became the norm in most western societies. Here, the listening experience was performed collectively, instead of individually, and publicly on the streets, not privately through iPods, iPhones, and the like. Thus, piracy hawkers were not just regular traders of products on the streets. Rather, they were media curators adding a sonorous dimension to urban ambiances, as I try to bring forward visually in Figure 37 and Figure 44.

These curator decisions were not straightforward and they couldn't please everyone's tastes at all times. For instance, Ana, which was also an evangelist practitioner, didn't like that in the end of the day piracy hawkers raised the volume of their stalls' speakers and played teenagers targeted funk songs. Ana: I just don't like when it's too loud or when they start playing those funk songs in the end of the afternoon! That type of music shouldn't be played on the streets like that.

Ana, restaurant worker and piracy client @ Eudes Costa street, Agua Fria [ Field notes: 'Interview Ana: notes on piracy clients' @ Agua Fria (phase II - 12/12/2014 18:00) ]

However, the hawkers' curator decisions seemed to be appropriate to the streets' crowds. Indeed, from what I observed here, the local piracy hawkers would play gospel songs and other 'family friendly' material during day time when the streets were crowded with other traders and families, but would drastically change this towards hip-hop, techno-brega<sup>50</sup> and funk as the night started to settle and the streets became crowded with the youngster crowd more keen of these musical genres. And this brings me back to the analogy I used previously to introduce these traders as 'conductors of an informal orchestra' on the streets. They added a sonorous dimension to the urban ambiances through their calculations of what to play, where and when, and through this, they attached, detached and shaped the aesthetic value associated to specific media products, but also to the sites where these products were played.



Figure 44: Urban piracy hawkers and the sonorous dimension of urban ambiances

Aware of the advantages of partnering with piracy hawkers, local stores would look for them to broadcast marketing jingles on some localities. By the same token, local artists and DJs respected the piracy hawkers' calculations and looked for their suggestions in relation to how their products would be valued in different sites and timeframes<sup>51</sup>. It is looking at this calculative dimension of media valuation within the informal urban soundscapes that I will now present a specific moment when a local DJ interacted with a piracy hawker in relation to how the value of his songs could best be increased on the streets.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Tecnobrega is a musical genre strongly associated to informal urban street trade (see Lemos and Castro, 2008).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> This aspect will be described further in 6.3. Part V: Supplying, Vignette 11.

#### moment #5

## valuation of future success through expected situated audiences

#### -----

(...) A guy came by and offered Anderson a white plastic bag with some CDs. He was a local DJ - Amando, I realised afterwards, and both were quite intimate.



Figure 45: Camouflaged interaction between piracy hawker and local DJ

Amando:	() How's it selling? Is it 'bombing' <sup>52</sup> ? [while giving him a white plastic bag with his music CDs' copies]
Anderson:	Ahhhh, it's ok. Sold some yesterday evening in the 'espetinho' <sup>53</sup> , [checks the white plastic bag] but here is not the best place mate. You should check with Mauro [another piracy hawker]. People here are more into the classics you know?
Amando:	Oh well, I just come from there it's 'bombing' there! <sup>54</sup> () What new stuff you have here? (while checking the CDs shelf)
Anderson:	The same. It's Saturday, you know?! Just finishing here with this [pointing to the CD player playing some classic romantic songs].
	Amando, local artist and DJ @ Recife Anderson & Mauro, piracy hawkers @ Casa Amarela [ Field notes: 'piracy hawking' @ Casa Amarela neighbourhood (phase II - 06/12/2014 16:00) ]

This moment brings some more light into the ways in which piracy hawkers made calculations to how specific musical genres and songs would be valued. These calculations had into consideration the urban ambiances and soundscapes existent in certain localities at specific times which consequently, had associated a target audience. In this case, Anderson, a piracy hawker, was selling mostly classic Brazilian romantic songs because in that area, on a Saturday, this was the appropriate soundtrack for the local residents which would sit on the plastic chairs of a friendly local street skewer seller and eat, drink and socialize while listening to their old favourite songs. Thus, this was a sidewalk assemblage of a specific 'valuable street trade position' for the skewer seller and Anderson, which

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> 'bombing' is slang used by piracy hawkers and DJs for when a music is becoming popular.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> 'espetinho' translates to skewer. Here it refers to the skewer trader site.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> He is referring to the neighbourhood where Mauro, his friend piracy hawker, works.

local residents were accustomed to given the urban ambiance it produced and its attached soundscape. This was the reason why Anderson rapidly made a calculation in relation to the musical material of Amando, a local artist and DJ, which songs were mostly targeted to a youngster crowd, stating that his material would not be valued by his audience at that time and place.

The moment also shows how the piracy hawkers' benefited from a 'cooperative ethos' seen in how they mostly cooperated, instead of competing between them, so to expand the revenues for each one selling different material in different localities. This was seen when Anderson suggested trying another friendly piracy hawker in another neighbourhood more suited for Armando's musical material.

Lastly, the moment shows how this 'cooperative ethos' was expanded beyond the workforce of traders to include the local artists and DJs which considered highly these sellers' calculations in relation to how their songs would be valued within the specific ambiances and soundscapes present in specific sites and timeframes and their personal curation in relation to the best fits between media, ambiances and soundscapes. This was the case when local DJ Amando asked for the advice of Anderson in relation to his musical material and when he confirmed that in the neighbourhood suggested, his songs were a success.

However, and just as it happen with the phone-cover episode I mentioned in the beginning of this vignette, informal urban ambiances and soundscapes were continuously being shaped *in sittu* and thus, the ways in which value was shaped in this context could never be entirely calculated due to their contingent dimension made of such a wide range of elements. Thus, it is without further ado that I will now present the final moment of this vignette. This moves away from the pregiven calculations of value made by the piracy hawkers and moves closer to the complex processes associated with how valuing was shaped *in situ* while songs were actually being played on the streets. This specific moment happened after it rained heavily in Recife on a Saturday night and most bars had to close because of a power cut in the São Mamede neighbourhood. This neighbourhood was usually crowded with people drinking and traders passing by selling snacks, peanuts, CDs etc., as seen in Figure 46.



Figure 46: Nightlife at São Mamede neighbourhood and peanuts street trader

#### moment #6

improvising a sidewalk 'music-requests' bar

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(...) As we got near we saw the car lights and a piracy stall playing music. There were around 15 people sitting on the sidewalk on plastic chairs drinking beer. A young kid was moving from one side of the street to the next with beers. On the other side of the street there was a bar (...) a quite informal space with around 2 square meters. There was no electric power here as well but they were using the car lights from two cars and a styrofoam box with ice which kept the beer cold. The ambiance here was quite friendly with people drinking, singing and some couples dancing on the sidewalk.

We sat and asked for beer and glasses. I noticed the piracy hawker was playing song requests from the couples sitting next to us. These were mainly local hit songs, which I was used to hearing regularly on the streets. He had a glass in his hand and a beer on the floor. The people were offering him beers as he played the songs.

Few minutes after we sat down, one of the couples started a discussion (...) and the piracy hawker started playing some song with lyrics about couples always having discussions and jealously. All of a sudden everyone was laughing about it. The couple started dancing to it, laughing and trying to sing the song, which they'd never heard before.

[ Field notes: 'afternoon at Mamede @ Mamede neighborhood (phase II - 17/01/2015 23:30) ]

This moment richly shows how, independently of all the pre-made calculations associated to how a product would come to be valued within certain times and spaces, value on the streets was ultimately shaped *in situ* by the active participation of a wide range of local actors. These were the street traders, to be sure, but also passers-by, clients and formal shop owners which, through their interactions, were active in the shaping of informal urban ambiances and how products, services and sites came to be valued on the sidewalks.

In this case, it was noticeable how the ongoing production of this informal urban ambiance was so deeply associated to its urban soundscape which people could relate to by singing and dancing. It was this situated assemblage that was responsible for how value came to be attached both to the songs plaid, but also to the beers from the formal shop, being consumed and serving as an 'alternative currency' used to pay the piracy hawker for song requests. Thus, it was through the alignment of all this elements that value was attached to this site making it a valuable street trade position. In a specific time where most of the urban landscape was dark and rainy, this street was crowded with a lively atmosphere, where the collective singing and dancing brought a sense of belonging and community identify. It was in this context of intimacy between all participants that the piracy hawker felt comfortable to test playing a song which could never been calculated priorly, since it was not requested and no one seemed to know it, but which, through this specific atmosphere, made people sang along and dance to it, thus increasing its popularity and value. To conclude, in this vignette I looked deeper into the ways in which value was attached to products, services and sites on the streets. I've shown that, in a context where money and price-tags were not a defining characteristic of 'value', the informal urban ambiances and soundscapes present on the streets were. Traders coupled themselves with these ambiances and shape them through diverse personal branding techniques which encompassed decorating their stalls and making use of sonorous marketing jingles to attract clients. Looking into the valuing processes associated with the economic exchanges performed in these sites I have expanded three main dimensions associated with how value emerged and was attached to products and services. These were the dimensions of contingency, calculation and co-creation.

The first moment served as an introduction to the contingent dimension of valuing on the streets. Here I've shown how valuing was a contingent happening, never finished, but always evolving in parallel to the informal urban ambiances and soundscapes which were continuously enacted on the streets. I then moved the focus to the informal business of piracy hawkers and expanded further on the dimension of calculation which I have described previously in relation to the 'informal corporation' of Seu Luis<sup>55</sup>. Here I shown that these piracy hawkers cooperated together by using their knowledge of informal urban ambiances and soundscapes to perform calculative practices and take advantage of valuable street trade positions associated to the target groups of specific musical genres. This 'cooperative ethos'<sup>56</sup> was extended to local artist and DJs which appreciated this traders' suggestions in relation to the best fit between their musical content and specific sites and timeframes. Thus, contrary to the calculative practices of the acai workers presented previously, which were used to gain, regain, maintain and take advantage of their own valuable street trade positions and get rid of competition, in this case calculations were done cooperatively between the wide range of piracy hawkers and shared between them and the local artists and DJs so that everyone could benefit from. Finally, the third dimensions of valuing on the streets was introduced in the third moment of this vignette and it made clear that despite all calculations, valuing was actively co-created in sittu by a wide range of actors such as traders, clients, passers-by, local shop owners, artists and DJs. Indeed, while the piracy hawkers had authority to choose which media products to play on the streets, so did the clients and passers-by through their interactions and feedback making them all co-creators of informal urban ambiances and soundscapes and thus, responsible for its effects on how the value of products, services and sites was collectively shaped on the streets.

<sup>55</sup> See 6.2. Part IV: Valuing, Vignette 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Described earlier in 6.1. Part III: Working, Vignette 7.

### Summary of Part IV: Valuing

Here I will briefly summarise the three main characteristics of the daily assembling of informal urban street trade brought forward by the two previous vignettes – informal urban ambiances, informal urban soundscapes and valuable street trade positions – and discuss how these relate to the two main modes of valuing performed by informal urban street traders – calculating and co-creating.

Contrary to the modernist view of value as purely monetary, valuation on the streets was more-than-monetary and intrinsically associated with the fluidity of street trade, the decentralised trading activities and the collective organisation of traders' work. On the streets, value fluctuated in parallel to changes happening on the sidewalk made of, for instance, social class of passers-by, their age, arrangement of stalls, combinations of products, time of day and place. The different assemblages between all these elements produced *informal urban ambiances and soundscapes* responsible for how value came to be attached to the traders' products and services. These ambiances and soundscapes both shaped how products and services were valued and were shaped by them enacting '*valuable street trade positions*' which were co-created by a wide range of actors that benefited from trading in these sites.

This was in plain opposition to the formalisation program in the ways in which the standardisation of products and services within categories and trading activities within centralised facilities didn't take into account how value came to emerge from the complex combinations between all these elements that produced informal urban ambiances and soundscapes so intrinsic to the urban lived experience of Recife. It was in this context that traders actively tried to make themselves present and noticed in valuable street trade positions and collectively organised so to detect, adapt to and take advantage of fluctuations of value in these sites as they occurred. This was achieved through the interplay between two modes of valuing processes: their calculative practices and their contingent co-creation of value on the streets.

Because street traders had the experience and knowledge of how value fluctuated in relation to possible combinations of products, services and sites at different times, they made calculations à priori in relation to where and when these assemblages would enact valuable street trade positions for their businesses. As detailed in Vignette 8, this was particularly noticeable in the ways in which the coworkers of Seu Luis açai collaborated in order to be able to collectively coordinate their attachment to fluctuations in valuable street trade positions, fixate to these sites while demand was high as well as surpass competitor threats to their leadership in these sites. However, these calculations were never complete since 'valuable street trade positions' were more fluid and continuously shaped in sittu by a wide range of elements. As Vignette 9 made clear, value was a highly *contingent* happening, enacted through the emergence and shape of informal urban ambiances and soundscapes. Focusing on these soundscapes, I also shown a calculative dimension of valuing happening not à priori, but in parallel to the emergence and continuous shaping of valuable street trade positions. In the case of the piracy hawkers, this was noticeable in the ways in which their 'cooperative ethos' was used not against competitors but to the benefit of all by taking advantage of the fluidity of valuable street trade positions to fit to each owns' target audiences. However, all calculations were always incomplete since value fluctuations were shaped in situ not only by the community of traders, but by a wide range of actors which, collectively, through their interactions, were responsible for how informal urban ambiances and soundscapes emerged and thus, how value came to be attached to products, services and sites. Thus, value on the streets was not stable or fixed, but rather continuously evolving as it was spatially and temporarily located within informal urban ambiances and soundscapes and attached to the local community's experience or urban life.

This concludes section 6.2. *Part IV: Valuing*. Next, in section 6.3. *Part V: Supplying*, I will follow from here and explore how street trade supply was daily achieved.

### 6.3. Part V: Supplying

This makes for the last part of ethnographic material. Previously I've described how the work of street traders was vastly collective and associated with the fluidity of the streets<sup>57</sup>. I've also described how this fluidity was intrinsic to how value got to emerge and attach itself to products, services and sites<sup>58</sup>. In this final section I will focus on the supply processes responsible for the availability of products on the streets. With this in mind, I will describe the flows of products from retail stores to the sidewalks, the networks responsible for this and how this was daily achieved. I will address this through the presentation of two vignettes, each comprised of a situated moment when a supply process occurred.

First, in *Vignette 10: Distributing to the streets through local* economy, I will show how the flows of products from retail to the streets were entangled in-between formal and informal supply networks and how these entanglements were materialised in the ways in which formal stores in the city centre of Recife come to be appropriated as retail stores for street traders and made use of a rather 'informal' workforce of street-suppliers to do so. Focusing on the trade of mobile phone accessories, I describe a specific moment when a street-supplier surveyed the streets to supply his current clients with new products, collected supply-debts from these traders, and fostered new supply deals with other street traders.

Next, in *Vignette 11: Expanding local economy and culture through street trade*, I will focus on the trade of piracy media to show how informal workers feed from, but also feed into these supply networks and how these recursive interactions between them acted as scaling devices which expanded the availability and popularity of the local artists throughout different localities. A specific account of the supply of pirated products is presented showing how the encounters between street-suppliers and piracy hawkers were achieved and how this related to expanding the local artists' material available to other piracy hawkers selling in other locations.

To conclude this section I will briefly summarise the three main characteristics of the daily assembling of street trade brought forward by these two vignettes and discuss how these relate to the two main modes of supplying performed by informal urban street traders.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> See section 6.1. Part III: Working.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> See section 6.2. Part IV: Valuing.

# Vignette 10: Distributing to the streets through local economy

In the previous sections, I've briefly mentioned the supply dimension of informal street trade. The 'beer-boy' responsible for the supply to Seu Manel<sup>50</sup>, the 'açai-boy' responsible for the supply to Seu Luis<sup>60</sup>, ... there was often someone, a 'boy', a 'guy', less often a 'girl', which was on the business of moving products from one place to another and making these available to both the formal and informal local economies. These were 'street suppliers' and they were part of an important network of retail stores, formal shops and informal businesses responsible for the availability of products on the streets. In this vignette, I will delve deeper into this side of informality and, picking up from previous ethnographic stories and adding some new ones, I will shed more light into the ways in which street traders were daily supplied. With this in mind, the ethnographic story follows to show the different ways in which food traders were supplied and the role of local retail shops. Following this, I will describe more in depth how the supply of phone accessory material to street traders was daily achieved.

Besides the fluidity of street trade composed by persons, stalls and traders always on the move, there was the numerous tools, vehicles, and materials associated to the supply of products to the streets. It was the level of proximity between the supplying site and selling site that enacted whether the products were to be moved by feet, bicycle, or motored vehicle and the signs of this underlying informal infrastructure were seen throughout the streets of Recife, as I show in Figure 47 bellow.



Figure 47: Elements of the informal infrastructure of street trade supply

These products could move from retail to selling point via a 'street-supplier' or the trader himself would collect these before his shift. In the case of Seu Mauro, a food trader working in a stand in the Boa Viagem neighbourhood (as seen in Figure 48), because he was far from the city centre, he had his supplies reached to him through others by bicycles or vans.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> See section 6.1. Part III: Working, Vignette 7, Moment #2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> See section 6.2. Part IV: Valuing, Vignette 8, Figure 31.



Figure 48: Seu Mauro food groceries informal street stall at Boa Viagem

Interestingly, as the transcript bellow shows, his supply services were performed both by formal and informal suppliers.

(...) As usual, I had my morning coffee today at Seu Mauro's little stall just in front of my

(...) As usual, I had my morning coffee today at Seu Mauro's little stall just in front of my place (...). when I saw him arranging the packs of chips I asked him how he got them.

Seu Mauro: What, this? This guy comes here every week to bring this to me. He's from PepsiCo (...) they're ok. I can pay via bank transfer within eight days.

(...) I often saw guys in bikes bringing him the most diverse types of food, drinks etc. It was hard to make any guess whether these were formal or informal workers. They were part of a wide infrastructure of mobile workers which supplied one another via cars, motorcycles and most often bicycles – build to transport water to the buildings, food to the stalls, newspapers to the shops, etc.

Seu Mauro, informal food stall owner @ Boa Viagem [ Field notes: 'morning at Seu Mauro' @ Boa Viagem (phase III - 17/03/2015 08:30) ]

For instance, there was the formal PepsiCo van which daily supplied him with snacks and beverages just has it did for other formal coffee shops in the vicinities. However, there was also a young boy which, on a daily basis, would bring him his mom's home-made cake from the close-by neighbourhood of Pina. Being formal or informal, what these two suppliers had in common was the fact each would daily distribute products to Seu Mauro's stand location and this was quite common for traders selling in locations spread out far away from the city centre where most retail shops were located.

In the cases where street traders were closer to retail shops, they could sometimes collect their supplies themselves before starting their shifts. In the case of food sellers, they would often collect their fresh ingredients from local markets. This was the case of Dona Marta<sup>61</sup>, which, as most informal workers

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> Introduced previously in section 6.1. Part III: Working, Vignette 7, Figure 28 and section 6.2. Part IV: Valuing, Vignette 8.

sold food near the São José market, made arrangements to get her food supplies from here, as the transcript bellow shows.

Dona Marta: I don't do that. My husband does. I cook here. I need it fresh here in the morning to start cooking. So he goes there [to São José market] and picks it up (...) like... before 7 he's here already with all I need to start cooking the breakfast for the girls [for the Seu Luis açai street sellers]. Dona Marta, informal restaurant owner @ Seu Manel street [ Field notes: 'Interview Dona Marta: notes on food assemblage' @ Seu Manel street (phase III - 25/03/2015 15:30) ]

As Figure 49 shows below, São João market, at Dom Vital square, was a densely populated site where formal and informal commerce was vastly present.



Figure 49: São José market: (top: inside stands; bottom: its surroundings with street traders at Dom Vital square)

Although informality tends to spread and embrace a decentralized organizing structure, it is also true that it has historically been denser in the surroundings of local markets. In the case of São José market, this was noticeable as both street traders, clients and passers-by vastly populated its surrounding streets. At the same time, this was where most of the street traders selling in the city centre got their products from. Indeed, these streets were not only full of commercial activity, both on the stores as on the streets, but were also full of retail shops which sold anything from food and beverages to clothes, technological gadgets, office supplies, cell phone covers, etc.

Some of these retail shops were official, formal, licensed, like PepsiCo, while others were on the outset of such framings. These were shops which sold their products to both clients and other sellers – often street traders – with whom shop owners managed to maintain some sort of 'supply-agreement'. Here, the formality of selling products within four walls, in a store, with a desk and a counter and offering receipts, was deeply entangled with the informality of selling products to be resold on the streets. This sort of 'formal feeding the informal' was strikingly visible on the sidewalks. For instance, there were formal shops which used the sidewalk space to extend the space available to show their products; magazine shops which used bicycle services to sell their products to street traders around the centre, or even a considerable number of shops which were on the business of selling street stalls to traders, like shown in Figure 50 below.



Figure 50: Formal feeding the informal: (left to right: hat shop using sidewalk, magazine shop using bicycle to sell to the street traders, street stalls shop with stalls for sale present on the sidewalk in front)

There were also retail shops with employees that sold their products both inside the stores as well as on the streets through street-suppliers, as Nando told me:

\_\_\_\_\_

Nando: There's lots of them here [street suppliers] For instance, there's three Chinese guys that pass by to collect the money and sell more material [phone accessories]. Hawkers pay them a percentage every day depending on the amount of money they make per day.

Nando, arts and crafts street seller @ Conde da Boa Vista avenue [ Field notes: 'Interview Nando: notes on supply network' @ Conde da Boa Vista avenue (phase III - 17/03/2015 16:00) ]

These street suppliers formed a vast informal network responsible for the supply of products to street traders. They were spread through the streets and had formed flexible agreements with street traders concerning their supply services.

In the case of mobile phone accessories<sup>62</sup>, these products made part of those types of products which sales were less derived from the consumers' decision to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Like I have shown previously in section 6.2. Part IV: Valuing, Vignette 9, Moment #4.

go to a shop to purchase them but rather sales were often contingent to the serendipitous encounters between traders and passers-by. These encounters were enacted through the sidewalk assemblages of stalls, shelfs, ambiances and soundscapes, as I illustrate below in Figure 51, from which the voices of traders marketing their products were loudly part of, as seen in the transcript below.



Figure 51: Street trade of mobile phone accessories at Conde da Boa Vista avenue

(...) They [the mobile phone accessories traders] are in both sides of the avenue, but mostly in front of the main door of the shopping mall [Boa Vista shopping mall]. (...) There's all sorts of covers, chips, accessories and I don't know what else that can be plugged into and attached into a mobile phone (...), all fixed in the shelfs on the sidewalks and loudly advertised by the street traders.

Malu: Glass protector is here! Chip-cutter is here! I apply protector and cut the chip. Look at the cover boys and girls. Look the cover. It's only five Reais. I have all models.

Hey miss, look at this [pointing to a cover] it goes well with your purse don't you think?

Malu, phone accessories street trader @ Conde da Boa Vista avenue [ Field notes: 'street commerce soundscapes' @ Conde da Boa Vista avenue (phase I - 28/11/2014 10:00) ]

In this context, most of the shops in the city centre that were on the business of mobile phone accessories were in fact retail shops which feed street traders with their supplies and operationalised robust processes to ensure that their supplyagreements with street traders were properly maintained. It is now in relation to this specific informal organisation of supply that I present a specific moment when a street-supplier of mobile phone accessories was performing her daily tasks.

moment #7

supplying products, collecting money and surveying clients

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(...) I was talking to Nando when he pointed me to one of these street suppliers.

Nando: Look there! There she is. Look!

(...) She was walking on the sidewalk, quite fast actually, with a trolley. I followed her all the way to the front of Riachuelo shop (...) She passed by some street traders of phone accessories, looking at them and sometimes stopping and asking stuff. (...) Then she stopped

next to one and they talked a bit. (...) She opened the trolley and shown some of the products inside. These were cell phone covers and other accessories. (...) Then she gave some phone covers to the seller to check. After a while the seller paid her with some notes and no change was given. They both wrote something on their notebooks and look at each other notebooks and discussed about their content. Then she closed the trolley and continued walking and talking to other sellers. (...) She repeated this process some more times while she was walking through the Boa Vista avenue. Then she passed by Malu and they talked but it seemed like it was just a 'hey' greeting. As she continued walking and talking with other sellers, I went to talk with Malu about what was that all about.

Malu: She has a store at Direita street, close to the Camelodromo, you know?! (...) She used to sell on the streets, then I don't know what happen. I guess she got successful and started selling retail, (...) so I talked to her and that's it. (...) At the store who works there is her husband (...) It's the same price buying to her or in the store.

(...)

She's ok. She brings the material, we choose and she gets the money. No receipt and we can pay all or per day. (...) When I finish paying my debt, I pay like 1000 Reais of stuff. That goes for one month or two months of material you know? (...) Then per day I pay like 50 if it's a good day or maybe around 25 if not. (...) We make note of what I owe and that's it. When I finish paying my debt I can buy more, but sometimes she gives me either way if I can pay like 50 or more that day. (...) Sometimes I'm one week without paying her. But I can get my stuff from the other guys [other streetsuppliers] while I still owe her. They're all the same price of retail so it's ok.

Nando, arts and crafts street seller @ Conde da Boa Vista avenue Malu, phone accessories street trader @ Conde da Boa Vista avenue [ Field notes: 'Observation & Interview Ju: 'supply network' @ Conde da Boa Vista avenue (phase III - 17/03/2015 16:30)

What this moment has shown is that these suppliers were responsible for more than just the moving of products from retail to selling points. In fact, these workers were responsible for the maintenance of previously celebrated street-supply agreements with street traders as well as fostering new deals. This was achieved by surveying the streets to collect money from street traders which whom a supply-agreement was in place, marketing new products to them and fostering new supply deals with other traders so to increase their business out-reach.

It is also noticeable how the practices of these street suppliers were deeply entangled with the street traders' informal ways of doing business. This was facilitated by the fact that the owners of 'formal' shops, which turned into retail shops, had previously been street traders themselves. This imbrication of street supply with informal trade was materialised in various ways. For instance, sales had no formal receipt and the management of debt was via hand written notebooks that both the traders and suppliers needed to regularly compare. Also, the supply agreements were flexible enough to accommodate the fluctuations of informal trade. Indeed, traders could pay their debts in total, which was rarely the case, or in small payments in relation to their daily earnings. Traders could also choose between different street suppliers which worked for different retail shops. After all, the supply costs were the same and the debt management services offered as well. Through this, traders spread their risk of being left without supplies if unable to pay their debts or in the absence of their regular supplier.

To conclude, in this vignette I have shown how the supply of products to street traders was deeply entangled in-between formal and informal supply flows. Both big formal supply corporations, such as PepsiCo and smaller retail ones, such as phone accessories, merged themselves with the urban informality through business processes which were entangled with the street traders' informal ways of doing business. Big corporations mixed their formal delivery routes and schedules with the supply to informal street traders working in the vicinity of their 'official' distribution locations. Smaller retail shops in city centre had street-suppliers which walked the streets and were responsible for managing supply-agreements with street traders. This formal/informal entanglements were hardly noticeable given that street-suppliers, just as street traders, performed their work tasks in the same urban environment, applied similar selling techniques and discarded formal profs of exchange.

These smooth entanglements of formal/informal supply flows made for a big part of the local retail business in Recife in relation to food, technological gadgets, but also clothes, crafts, and even local artists' media. It is in relation to this economic and cultural product that in the next vignette I will focus on the underground supply network of piracy media and describe how piracy hawkers both feed from but also feed into these supply networks.

# Vignette 11: Expanding local economy and culture through street trade

This makes for the last vignette of my empirical story. Throughout this chapter one thing has come clear - street trade was fluid, ever changing and collectively performed by a wide range of actors, both formal and informal, which were deeply responsible for how value got attached to products, services and sites. Focusing on the supply of street trade, in the previous vignette I've shown how this formalinformal entanglements were intrinsic to the availability of products on the streets. In this vignette, I want to describe a specific case that shows the possibilities arising from these relations between formal and informal supply in relation to local economy and culture. With this in mind, I will follow the ethnographic story about piracy hawkers and delve into the underground supply network behind the availability of pirated music CDs on the streets with a specific focus on the supply of the local artists' media.

An underlying supply network which was less visible, but not less effective, was the one responsible for the copied media CDs and DVDs which were widely available on the piracy stalls and heard through the streets. In an era of digitized media content where media is made available through internet streaming and sharing sites, it was surprising to witness the popularity of its materialized formats of CDs and DVDs on the streets, as illustrated bellow in Figure 52.



Figure 52: CDs cabinet from mobile piracy stalls

This had to do with the specificities that informality itself added to the consumption and valuation of media content on the streets. In Recife, the populations experienced sound and got to know new media products collectively on the streets. In this context, having a piracy hawker to curate the media in relation to ambiances and soundscapes was something that buyers trusted and looked for<sup>63</sup>. The materiality of the CDs fitted perfectly with this culture. Although it was limited in its storage capacity in comparison to other available formats for digitised content such as DVDs or USB pen drives, these limitations were what made it suitable for both consumers and traders of music media on the streets. As transcribed bellow, it was the opinion of Geo, a producer of local artists, that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> See 6.2. Part IV: Valuing, Vignette 9.

it was exactly because the CD format had less storage capacity that made it not only cheaper for consumers but more in line with the extreme volatility of the song's popularity on the streets and thus, more appropriate for the piracy hawkers street business.

Geo:	It's harder for people to get those [DVDs or USB Pen drives]. Only for movies or classic songs collections. But you won't be selling much of those. () If the hawker does it, he has to sell it more expensive. Because then he will lose 100 CDs he could sell instead.
	The pen drives are even worst. It costs around 30 Reais with 4 GBs so no one wants to buy 50 Reais of music. It doesn't make any sense.
	Today you can put 40 songs in a CD, then tomorrow you'll see another DJ with another 40 songs. It's just easier to get a CD per day with new songs that are everyday coming out rather than to get all the music in a pen drive. It's more expensive and does not make any sense. No one wants that!
	producer of local artist's & DJs @ Carmo Church, Camelodromo notes: 'Interview Geo: notes on piracy supply' @ Camelodromo (phase III - 12/03/2015 13:30) ]

Focusing on this specific product – the copied music CD - I will now describe how its supply was performed through what I will define as a 'piracy network' as illustrated in the diagram present in Figure 53 bellow.

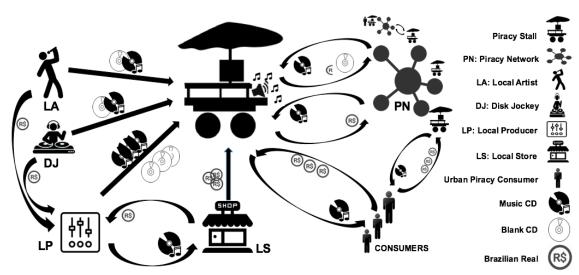


Figure 53: Recife's piracy network: urban piracy supply and local music circuit

The 'piracy network' ('PN' in Figure 53) was comprised of high volume digital reproduction technology, reproducers who copied the music through this technology and a wide range of distributors – street-suppliers – who supplied these copies to the piracy hawkers. To best describe how all these elements worked out it is productive to first separate the copied music CDs into three types: infringed copyright music, local artists' copyright-free music ('LA' in Figure 53) and music compilations from local Disk Jockeys (DJs) which would usually have

a mix of the two previous types ('DJ' in Figure 53). All these three types were supplied and/or benefited from the 'piracy network' as it will become clear.



Não sou contra a Pirataria, pelo menos no meu caso, pois o servicos desses homens que saem de casa pra garantir o pão de cada dia de sua familia, acaba ajudando muito nos Artistas, pois nao dependemos de gravadora e sim do reconhecimento do pulblico e da populacao...



# Unlike · Comment · Share Figure 54: João do Morro Facebook status in favour of piracy hawkers: 'I am not against piracy, at least in my case, since the work of these men which go out to get the daily bread for their families, end up helping a lot of artists because we are not dependent on record labels but rather on the public's recognition of my work.

I have described previously how local artists renounced to copyright protection and offered their material for free to piracy hawkers who they trusted to promote their products to the general public<sup>64</sup>. João do Morro, a nationally known musician from Recife, greatly put this in a Facebook status shown above in Figure 54.

But informality was also present in the ways in which the music of local artists and DJs was produced. As DJ Zeca told me (see Figure 55 and transcript bellow),

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> See section 6.2. Part IV: Valuing, Vignette 9, Moment #5.

most often production was done by the artists themselves through their own home-computer and 'pirated' digital production software.



Figure 55: Local DJ Zeca personal branding (clockwise: Jesus ring; personalised ring; expensive diamond ring; personal branding tattoo saying "DJ Zeca the General"; visually rough teeth brackets)

DJ Zeca: I do it myself [music production]. Been doing this for too long now. I know the streets; I know what's coming, you know? What's 'bombing'<sup>65</sup>. (...) I mix myself, my computer, fruity loops<sup>66</sup>, CDs or 'blog dos bregueiros'<sup>67</sup> (see Figure 56). That's all you need, got it?! I know the most popular songs at the moment because I go to lots of shows. That's why my CDs sell well. I know what the crowd wants, I know! (...) And you need to know how to mix. Anyone can mix, but they don't do it the right way, you know? I do. That's why my CDs are popular on the streets ahah.

DJ Zeca, DJ and piracy hawker @ Recife city centre & Camelodromo [ Field notes: 'Interview DJ Zeca: notes on DJing' @ Camelodromo (phase III - 31/03/2015 13:30) ]

Local artists also relied on small local producers ('LP' in Figure 53), such as Geo referenced before, who were well equipped with production technologies and thus were searched by them, but also by DJs and even local stores ('LS' in Figure 53) in order to produce marketing jingles<sup>68</sup>. Besides producing the media content, these local producers were also responsible for its distribution which was done through the uploading to specific download sites (see Figure 56) and through piracy hawkers with whom they formed kinship relations, as shown next.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> 'Bombing' is slang for when a music is becoming popular on the streets.

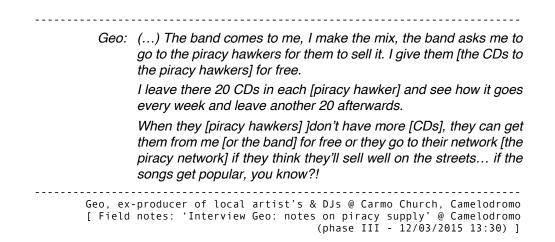
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> Software commonly used for music production by local DJs.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Internet site where local artists upload their media products so that DJs can remix it.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> Such as Mario's fruit salad jingle. See section 6.2. Part IV: Valuing, Vignette 9, Figure 43.



Figure 56: P2P music media download site 'blog dos bregueiros' (left: top songs downloaded with link to download; middle: new songs uploaded; right: link to music videos on YouTube)



Thus far, we know that the local artists' media was free of copyright, produced through amateur home-based technologies and pirated software and freely distributed to piracy hawkers. This could be done through the artists themselves, local DJs or small-scale producers which acted as mediators of these two. However, as Geo referenced in the previous transcript, these products didn't just get freely to the hands of piracy hawkers. Rather, if piracy hawkers sold enough of these products and believed they could earn money from their sale, they could invest in buying for more copies from the piracy network from which they got the copies of most of the copyright infringed material they also sold on the streets. In this case, as I'll detail next, this could lead to the local artists to become widely popular throughout different locations.

The piracy network obtained their original content via one of two sources: or it was downloaded from internet sharing sites such as the 'blog dos bregueiros' referenced before, or brought by piracy hawkers so to get more copies and

restock their piracy stalls. This 'copying service' had the cost of 1 Real (0,3 US\$) each or, if the hawker offered the blank CDs to be copied, for 50 cents (0,15US\$) each, thus getting a 50% discount in this case. Interestingly, once a piracy hawker brought a CD to the piracy network to get his copies, if this content was not yet available in the network's catalogue, it would be added to it and made available to all piracy hawkers which were spread through different locations and got their copies from the same piracy network. Aware of this, local artists, DJs and producers not only gave their material for free to the piracy hawkers, but often also offered blank CDs to them, since through this means the cost of copies would be reduced 50%, as the transcript below shows.

Geo: Sometimes we give them [the piracy hawkers] blank CDs so they'll get cheaper copies. ( .. ) They [the piracy network] burn them and spreads it through more piracy hawkers. That is ok because the band gave authorization for them to copy and spread their songs when they gave it for free to the piracy hawkers. \_\_\_\_\_ Geo, ex-producer of local artist's & DJs @ Carmo Church, Camelodromo [ Field notes: 'Interview Geo: notes on piracy supply' @ Camelodromo (phase III - 12/03/2015 13:30) ]

As the transcript above shows, the offer of blank CDs to piracy hawkers was a motivation strategy used by local artists so that the piracy hawkers would continue promoting them on the streets and, by bringing their material to the piracy network to get more copies, further the chances of these artists to become known through different localities and this way increase their popularity and revenue-streams coming from live shows in different venues.

The piracy hawkers interacted with the piracy network through the piracy suppliers. During these encounters, the piracy hawkers made their requests for further deliveries based on their perceptions of street-demand and/or by checking the piracy network's 'catalogue' of available products. Next, I present a specific moment when a meeting between a piracy hawker and a supplier took place.

moment #8

meeting piracy supplier, collecting CDs and camouflaging pirated products

\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

Edson made a sign to Felipe, grabbed a backpack from inside his stall, next to the battery, and went walking. He didn't let me go with him. He said the guy [piracy street supplier] did not know me and he had to go alone so there's no trouble. (...) the time and place of these meetings changed regularly. (...) He did mention that when there were any changes on the scheduled times and places he would get a phone call [no text messages or WhatsApp]

(...)

He got back after fifteen minutes and put his bag inside the piracy stall's inner compartment, lightened a cigarette and randomly talked to Felipe while he opened the bag and re-stocked his stall with the copied CDs just bought.

(...)

After a while, Edson played one of his newly bought copies and Felipe, surprised commented:

Felipe: Ah Cool [the music broadcasted from Edson' stalls]]! They have that already [referring to the fact that the piracy network had his brother's DJ mix CD copies already available]. I brought them yesterday [his brother's CDs to be copied by the piracy network].
Edson: Ahahah Surprise! Let him [Filipe's brother] know I'm making him popular!

Edson & Felipe, piracy hawkers @ Eudes Costa street, Agua Fria [ Field notes: 'Observation: notes on piracy supply' @ Agua Fria (phase II - 12/12/2014 12:30) ]

This moment clearly shows how these meetings were extremely camouflaged. This was needed given the illegality of this transactions. The camouflaging was achieved through the alignment of different elements. For instance, there was the continuous change of these meetings' time and space so to not draw suspicion. On the other hand, the communication between piracy hawkers and street suppliers was made without leaving any written proof, such as text messages or WhatsApp groups as it usually was the case between informal workers. In this case all communication was done via phone calls. At the same time, all this was hardly achievable if piracy hawkers did not collaborate between themselves. This was needed to watch out for a hawkers' stall while he had to leave to pick up his material from the supplier or, for instance, to disperse the attention from the task of guarding the pirated material through randomly talking about other subjects.

The moment also shows how new media material could be scaled through these interactions. In this case, it shows how because Felipe brought his brother's CDs to the piracy network to get copies, these were made available to other piracy hawkers such as Edson. Thus, what this says is that the piracy hawkers feed from but also feed into a complex supply network responsible for the distribution of music media to the streets. The main difference was that what they feed from the supply network was usually infringed copyright material and what they feed into it was usually free copyright material given freely by local artists and DJs, which, through this means, was available to other piracy hawkers in other locations consequently increasing the artists' popularity and revenue streams.

To conclude, in this vignette I've shown how the supply of digitised media to the streets was greatly associated with the fostering and expansion of local economy and culture. This happened through the piracy network which not only was responsible for the supply of infringed copyright material but also for the one of local artists' media which had renounced to copyright. The ways in which these two types of products were entangled were many and they did not start nor end just in the supply service. Indeed, looking at the hawkers' CDs' shelfs one could see how both types of products were displayed and mixed together. Also, listening to the music broadcasted by a piracy stall was a sonorous experience

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that travelled back and forth from local unknown artists' songs to beats and remixes of internationally known ones. To this respect, the local DJs compilations were the sonorous inscription that loudly made clear how local/international artists, amateur/professional musical productions and legal/illegal copyright where all deeply entangled with each other's and materialised within the urban soundscapes of informal trade. These soundscapes were the aesthetic and sensorial dimension of the formal-informal entanglement present on the streets and searched for by local artists and DJs which looked forward for their material to be coupled with the supply flows of piracy networks and, through this, expanded to different localities increasing their popularity and revenue streams.

#### Summary of part V: Supplying

Here I will briefly summarise the three main characteristics of the daily assembling of informal urban street trade brought forward by the two previous vignettes- entangled formal-informal supply flows, informal street-suppliers and the scaling device of piracy supply networks – and discuss how these relate to the two main modes of supplying performed by informal urban street traders – distributing (products to the streets) and expanding (local economy and culture).

Throughout this chapter it has become clear how formality and informality was more proximate than apart. This was seen, for instance, in relation to the usage of the 'formal infrastructure' of the Camelodromo to expand informal trade through its surroundings<sup>69</sup> or in the ways in which formal CDs shops or coffee shops and piracy hawkers and other traders were both active participants in shaping the value of each own's products, services and the sites were they traded<sup>70</sup>. This section pics up from these examples and makes clear that, contrary to the formalisation argument of a clear distinction between the formal and informal trade where the later was an enemy of the former, this was rather hard to see in practice. Specifically, looking at the supply of the streets, we see this operated through formal and informal supply flows which were deeply *entangled* with one another. Moreover, it was through these entangled supply flows that products got distributed to the streets but also, and rather surprisingly, that street traders helped to expand the local economy and culture.

As detailed in Vignette 10, products moved from retail stores to the traders' stalls via formal supply delivery routes used to supply formal shops in the vicinity or via *street-suppliers* which, although working for formal retail shops, formed a kind of

<sup>69</sup> See section 6.1. Part III: Working.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> See section 6.2. Part IV: Valuing.

informal supply infrastructure responsible for the availability of products on the streets. Thus, formality feed into informality. However, as detailed in Vignette 11, informality also feed into these supply networks. In the case of the piracy hawkers, not only they got their products from piracy supply networks but they also feed these networks with material from local artists which have renounced to copyright protection and were happy to have their material included in these networks. This happened mainly through the continuous interaction between piracy hawkers and piracy supply networks which acted as a *scaling device* through which the artists' material could reach wider audiences. This scaling device was made of the existence and expansion of a repository of local music that got continuously updated with new material and distributed to different localities through the recursive interactions between the piracy hawkers and the piracy network. This reinforced the propagation of digitized local music, increasing the revenue for local artists and helping on the preservation of local culture.

This concludes the presentation of the ethnographic material focused on the governing officials practices associated with the formalisation programme (in the previous chapter) and the street traders' practices as they went along with their work (in this chapter). In the next chapter I will follow do discuss the empirical findings presented and address this thesis' research questions.

## CHAPTER 7. DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I will align the empirical data presented previously with the poststructuralist approach to informality and, through its dual-lens of *critique* (section 7.1) and *possibility* (section 7.2), address this thesis' research questions.

In section 7.1. (*Re*)ordering regimes of individualist formalisation, I address this thesis' first research question (**RQ1**). Drawn from Foucault (1977, 1982, 1980), and Foucault-inspired literature on classification, I argue that the (re)ordering of street trade implemented by formalisation programmes acts as a regime of truth which, through classification, seeks to legitimise and reinforce a modernist understanding of economic life, city culture and urban development where street trade has simply no place to exist. This is anchored in an individualising developmentality aimed to shape the 'conduct of conduct' of all actors.

In section 7.2. (*Dis*)ordering possibilities of communitarian informality I address this thesis' second research question (**RQ2**). Draw on assemblage thinking (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) and assemblage-inspired literature on the urban context (Farías and Bender, 2012; McFarlane, 2011), I argue that, contrary to the formalisation individualist rationale, informal trading practices are communitariandriven and entail an effective means by which street trade is organised and successfully achieved which is contrary to the formalisation programme's modernist understanding of urban markets. More importantly, I show how these practices are associated with a communitarian-based organisation of labour and livelihoods responsible for the daily reproduction and strengthening of the local community identity, both the formal and informal commerce and local culture. I finish the chapter with a reflection on the contested nature of development that is negotiated daily between the formalisation programmes' imposition of individualising rationales and the communitarian-based development possibilities which are enacted by informal traders.

## 7.1. (Re)ordering regimes of individualistic formalisation

Aligning the empirical data presented in Chapter 5. *Formalising street trade* with the theoretical underpinnings presented in Chapter 3, section 3.1. *Formalisation and (re)ordering regimes,* and the review of the post-structuralist approach presented in Chapter 2, section 2.2. *Post-development and informality,* I will now address the thesis' first research question:

**(RQ1)** In which ways are the governing officials' practices of formalising street trade implicated in the cultural and socioeconomic development of street traders?

Formalisation seeks to legitimise the need for a modernist-based socioeconomic order through operationalising a formal (re)ordering regime of street trade (Foucault, 1977). The regime's aim is to assure the broad population that the proposed (re)ordering of trade is unquestionably necessary as it will benefit the broad population. The establishing and daily governing of this (re)ordering regime is facilitated by the classification scheme and the practices of classification, which work together towards enacting an individualistic developmentality among all actors (Foucault, 1982; Lie, 2015; Ilcan and Phillips, 2010).

Classification reinforces the formal (re)ordering regime's truth claims in two ways. First, through its classification scheme, by forcing a strong reading of street trade which strengthens the perception of traders' organisation as 'messy' and their practices as 'deviances' (Cross, 2000). Second, through its classification practices, which strengthens formalisation with perceptions of objectivity, accuracy and expertise which are only functionalistic towards establishing the formal (re)ordering of trade (Introna and Whittaker, 2004; Miller, 2001).

Classification also facilitates the governing of the formal (re)ordering regime in two ways. First, in relation to individual traders, as it facilitates the extension of control and surveillance through panoptic effect. Second, in relation to the broader population of traders, as it permits formalisation to be performed at a distance and *en masse* (Foucault, 1982).

In sum: The (re)ordering regime of formalisation, through its regulations, classification schemes and practices of classifying traders through an information system, seeks to shape and normalise the everyday practices of all actors to freely accept the proposed (re)ordering of trade and align with its individualistic developmentality.

In the next three sub-sections, I will expand on each of these topics by detailing how the practices of *legitimising* the formalisation programme and *classifying* of

traders into the licensing system were implicated in establishing an *individualist developmentality* which acted against the ways in which street traders daily experienced their work and livelihoods.

#### Legitimising a formal (re)ordering regime

In this first sub-section, I will discuss the ways in which governing officials' practices of *legitimising* the formalisation programme were associated with the operation of a formal (re)ordering regime which sought to establish and reinforce a normative cut which separated the 'informal mess' of street trade from the 'formal order' of formalised trade and in so doing, dismissed traders' practices which were contrary to its narrative.

What was seen in Recife was that the formalisation programme acted as a regime of truth (Foucault 1977, 1980) which sought to legitimise the need for a (re)ordering of street trade. Its truth claim was that 'street trade, as it was practised on the streets, was problematic and needed to be solved through formalisation for the betterment of all'. To establish this claim, the regime put in place three key rationales aligned with modernist views of urban and socioeconomic development which spoke to the concerns and imaginations of street traders, formal store owners and the broader population of the city. In relation to the concerns of these three actors, the regime framed the problem of street trade in relation to urban development by associating it with the deficient infrastructure and poor mobility of Recife. In relation to economic development, by associating it with the unfair and illegitimate competition it meant for the local formal economy. In relation to social development, by placing it as responsible for the low income and poor livelihoods of street traders. On the other hand, the regime framed its solution of formalised trade as it being aligned with the aesthetic of a modern urban infrastructure, fairer trading conditions, and the betterment of street traders' livelihoods.

These conceptualisations were strongly based on a modernist ideology that placed the existent ordering of street trade as messy, marginal and a force against development (Bromley, 2000; Seligmann, 2001; Brown, 2006; Turner and Schoenberger, 2012). Through the same token, formalisation was framed in relation to it being the necessary '(re)ordering' of trade aligned with notions of 'modernity' and 'economic development' and thus, to be accepted by all and unquestioned as civilising force (Foucault, 1977). This (re)ordering assumed that trading should be performed individually (as opposed to collectively), within fixed locations (as opposed to it being scattered throughout the urban centre) and it should obey to specific pre-defined product/service categories (as opposed to the traders' free choosing of product/service mixes). It was through this new ordering that trading should be performed so that a desired 'formal city' (Escobar, 1995;

Bender et al., 2010) was realised and the visions a modern urban and socioeconomic development could be achieved.

Framing street trade in this manner served two main political objectives. Firstly, by framing informal street trade aligned with the populations' concerns about the urban infrastructure and mobility and the formal stores' preoccupations associated with unfair trade, the programme built a normative authority which was hard to question since these were main concerns shared by the broad urban population. Second, by positioning traders responsible for the dirtiness and deficient mobility of the urban centre, it framed informal work in opposition to responsible citizenship and diminished the traders' capacity to have a voice in the formalisation processes while simultaneously positioned formalisation as the only means by which their 'citizenship' could be 're'-gained. This was the developmentality behind the formalisation programme's legitimacy (Lie, 2015; Ilcan and Phillips, 2010) and it shows significant similarities with the ethnographic insights on the use of 'citizenship' in relation to 'public space' documented in 'revanchist urban policies' (Smith, 2005; Brown, 2017; Hunt, 2009).

What this says is that formalisation was not implemented to solve a specific problem of street trade, but rather it served as a crucial mechanism to enforce a transition towards a modernist vision of socioeconomic order in the urban context that was based on a specific conceptualization of civilization in relation to homogeneity, stability, structure, order and truth (Farias and Bender, 2012; Dovey 2012; Mitchell, 1991; Scott, 1998). Informal urban street trade was considered (dis)ordered, diffuse, it was messy and thus, uncontrollable and should not be allowed within the planned (re)ordering proposed by the formalisation programme. It is in this context that any practices of street traders which were key in relation to the infrastructural, economic and social development were not taken into account. This was seen, for instance, in relation to the local solutions that traders put in place to alleviate some of the infrastructural problems of the city, how they brought dynamism and increased sales to a variety of local formal stores and how their practices were extremely valuable for their daily lives and for a vast number of low-income populations 71. These practices were dismissed as formalisation sought to legitimise a normative cut which separated the 'informal mess' of 'uncivilised' trade from the 'formal order' of 'civilised trading' (Smith, 2005; Brown, 2017; Hunt, 2009). It was within this apparatus of a formal (re)ordering regime that classification assumed a crucial political role.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> This will be expanded in the next section 7.2. (Dis)ordering possibilities of communitarian informality

#### Classifying as formalomorphist knowing

In this sub-section, I will discuss three main implications of the governing officials' practices of *classifying* street traders into the formalisation programme. First I will argue that the classification scheme shaped informal street trade as a formalomorphist-based object of knowledge. Here I adopt Cross (2000) concept of 'formalomorphism' to stress that the ways in which the information about street trade was captured and made visible through the classification scheme were mostly based on its utility towards the desired shift to formalisation (Foucault, 1970). To this point, classification practices were essential in establishing the perception that the formal (re)ordering regime of formalisation was based on objective knowledge and decisions were made based on unquestionable auditing expertise which ultimately was key on expanding the reach of control and surveillance necessary for the program's success.

The first major implication of classification is associated with how its classification scheme shaped informal street trade as a formalomorphist-based object of knowledge. The aim of the formal (re)ordering regime was to 'regulate' trading activities by 'licensing' traders which conformed with the 'standards' associated with stall specifications, product categories and permitted trading sites as well as the rules dictating how each of these elements were to be 'ordered' together for each individual trader. In order to discipline street traders into the aimed formalised (re)ordering of street trade, it was first necessary to gather knowledge about their existent 'informal' orderings of trade as they were practised on the streets. Key information elements about these orderings which needed to be disclosed were who were the individual stall owners, their locations and which products they sold. To facilitate this, a classification scheme was operationalised. This scheme was behind the structure of spreadsheets and paper forms used to capture and monitor the formalising processes and thus, turn street trade into an object of knowledge. However, the knowledge about street trade which was provided by this classification scheme was not neutral and, as I will detail next, served mostly to reinforce the formal (re)ordering regime as normatively unquestioned. In reality, for the purpose of formalisation, it was only important to make visible whether traders were complying with regulations or not. For instance, any activities not contemplated in the aimed formalised (re)ordering of street trade, were not necessary to be known in detail but rather be left invisible or simply signalled for disciplinary measures. This was facilitated because the classification scheme was not structured primarily in relation to capturing the reality of the streets but rather in aligning itself with formalisation (Cross, 2000) and, this way, signalling what was and what was not permissible street trade (Henman and Dean, 2010). This was operationalised through partitioning the information of street traders in terms of stall ownership, location and product categories and this partitioning was only functional towards the further partitioning

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of traders as being ready for licensing or not. Thus, the knowledge about street trade that the classification scheme permitted was formalomorphist, i.e., it was always biased by its utility towards formalisation. Indeed, the formalomorphistbased partitioning of traders was based on the following rationale: if a trader is associated to more than one stall, location or product category, than it is not ready for licensing and it is committing a 'deviant' practice. This 'rule' was not explicit in the classification scheme but rather it was implicit in the ways in which street trade, as an object of knowledge, was shaped through it in relation to a strong reading of street trade which only allowed one-to-one relations between traders, product categories and locations. This was problematic as this 'order' was in stark contrast to the ways in which street trading activities were commonly performed where stalls were shared between family members, trading was mobile and multiple mixes of products and services were offered.

This is to say, the 'ordering' of street trade, as it was practised by traders, was more associated to many-to-many relations between these elements rather than the specified one-to-one relations which the classification scheme allowed. What this did was it turned most of the traders' activities to be visible in the 'other column' and thus signalled them for disciplinary measures. The fact that most of the traders' practices could only be captured in the all-encompassing category of the 'other column' while the ones which aligned with the 'order' imposed by the formalisation programme would be captured in their specific category and column contributed to strengthening the normative cut which associated 'order' with the practices aligned with formalisation, and 'disorder' with the informal ones. This was problematic as these were the standard practices of street traders and, as it will become clearer through this chapter, essential for their daily lives and key for the development of the urban centre. Thus, what this formalomorphist-based classification scheme did was it signalled the traders' organisation of trade as diffused, messy and (dis)ordered and consequently framed their practices as 'inappropriate' while at the same time it reinforced the belief in the proposed solution of the formalised (re)ordering of street trade as an unquestionable truth.

The second major implication of classification is associated with how it reinforced the formal (re)ordering regime with perceptions of objectivity, accuracy and expertise. Normative visions of order, structure and modernity and its alignment with 'truth' are so powerful that populations are easily seduced by them. This was seen in the ways in which some street traders would partner with officials by reporting themselves in the programme and helping to survey their sites. This was facilitated by the traders' perceptions of classification being objective, based on accurate records and trusting the expertise of those responsible for auditing and analysing this data (Introna and Whittaker, 2004; Graham, 2014). Previous research has highlighted how accounting information such as tax and pensions are relatively impenetrable to average people and take on the appearance of being objective and accurate (Graham, 2014). This is despite figures often being merely best estimates (Miller, 2001). Similarly, in Recife, traders and fiscals assumed that the classification scheme allowed for the objective and unquestioned specification of what trade was being conducted, where and by whom. This led to the knowledge claims of fiscals, on behalf of the City Council, being accepted as objective and true (Hayes and Westrup, 2012).

This aligns with studies that highlight how the apparent objectivity of records and analysis facilitates those in positions and roles of auditors to make claims of knowledge that are unquestioned (Introna and Whittaker, 2004). Auditing expertise is fundamental to the exercise of power (Miller, 2001). However, claims of expertise in Recife were not equal since only the City Council had access to information technology, spreadsheets, and gualified staff (relatively) who could audit the records, and issue licences or fines accordingly. As such, it was only the City Council staff which were in a position of expert auditors capable of distinguishing between formal and informal street trade (Cashmore and Morgan, 2014; Richardson and Cashmore, 2011). In the Global South, expert knowledge such as that related to auditing and analysing formal and informal street trade takes on special significance (Hayes and Westrup, 2012). Street traders, largely being the urban poor, were not able to question the classification scheme or records in the spreadsheet (Banerjee and Linstead, 2004). This is despite the spreadsheet not being especially sophisticated. Many traders only had a basic level of education and were unfamiliar with spreadsheets and information technology more generally. For instance, traders didn't know how the information regarding their family members or written on the margins of paper forms would be dealt by auditors so they relied on the expertise of those responsible to make decisions accordingly. For the City Council, information such as this was only important as it signalled a 'deviance' to the formalisation rules which needed to be addressed. What this says is that the perceived accuracy of the records was merely functionalistic in relation to how it could facilitate the experts' auditing necessary to achieve formalisation. It was in relation to this main objective of formalisation that classification was appropriated as the main vehicle by which control and surveillance of these populations were achieved.

Thus, the third major implication of classification is associated with how it facilitated the extension of control and surveillance of street traders. The classification scheme facilitated the experts' monitoring of the traders' compliance with the programme. This happened both in relation to the examination of individual traders as well as in relation to the broader population of traders.

In the first case, by rendering individual traders as an object of knowledge purposefully partitioned in relation to their 'formal' and 'informal' practices, the

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classification scheme provided for their conformity with regulations to be examined. This was the scheme's main objective. The more complete the details were pertaining to an individual trader, the more he was rendered visible. The more he was rendered visible through the classification scheme, the higher the chance of his activities to be registered in the 'other column' and signalled as inappropriate (Bowker and Star, 1999). This happened mainly because of their collective and dispersed nature of activities contrary to the fixed one-to-one relations between traders, stalls, product categories and locations within which the classification scheme was based. Thus, the more these activities were known as 'deviances' in this way, the more it was assumed that disciplinary measures were needed for traders to conform and comply with formalisation (Foucault, 1982). Thus, individual monitoring acted as a main vehicle shaping the perception of individual traders as 'deviant citizens' which needed to be disciplined so that their 'cultures of informality' were dismissed in favour of a newly modernised citizen-worthy profile (Hunt, 2009; Kooper, 2012).

In the second case, by rendering the population of street traders as an object of knowledge purposefully partitioned into governable subsets (individuals, locations, products, legal or illegal), the City Council could plan and operationalise the formalisation programme at a distance. The classification scheme allowed for office staff to review if the formalisation project was on track and if certain districts or areas should be subject to more targeted intervention. This meant that they could examine and compare their formalisation programme over time and make ongoing interventions accordingly. Thus, the monitoring of the population of traders' main usefulness was in relation to making decisions to intervene in certain locations based on the number of unlicensed traders and the perception of the willingness of these populations to accept disciplinary decisions.

What this says is that the monitoring of street trade was biased as it worked towards achieving the (re)ordering of street trade as opposed to carefully examining the existent ordering of street trade. To paraphrase Foucault (1977, p. 143), the classification scheme was put in place to eliminate the effects of imprecise distributions of traders, their uncontrolled trading activities and their diffuse circulation. Classification schemes transform 'confused, useless or dangerous multitudes into ordered multiplicities' (Foucault, 1977, p. 148). Through knowing, partitioning and examining the street traders' activities in these ways, the classification scheme transformed individual street traders from being a unique and unknowable population into a manageable and ordered population (Foucault, 1977, p. 148). In light of this, the possibilities for expanded control and surveillance allowed by classification permitted formalisation to be planned and implemented *en masse*.

In Recife, this extended control and surveillance had a panoptic effect on traders (Knights and McCabe, 2003). When fiscals were seen reviewing the print out of the spreadsheet on the streets, this was a visible reminder to traders of the legitimacy and authority of the fiscals and facilitated the self-registering of traders and their families even though this could count against their licensing. At the same time, licensed traders were active in surveying their sites and reporting on unlicensed workers. Alternatively, others would seek to avoid detection. However, it should be noticed that this panoptic effect was necessarily incomplete. This was noticeable when fiscals feared being assaulted by traders in locations where unlicensed traders were in high number, or due to their sympathy with traders. What is seen in Recife, and in the literature that has examined informal street trade in the Global South (Turner and Schoenberger, 2012; Little, 2015), is that the state often ignores the flouting of some formal regulations, as 'political costs of imposing regulation may greatly outweigh the benefits of intervening' (Dibben et al., 2015, p. 387). After all, the success of formalisation relies not on coercion but on shaping an individualist developmentality on all subjects to voluntarily accept its modernist based construct of society and culture (Lie, 2015; Ilcan and Phillips, 2010), as I will describe next.

#### Formalising as individualistic developmentality

Thus far, I have established that the classification scheme was fundamental to operationalising power and establishing formalisation as an individualising strategy. It did this by rendering individual traders visible and examining their conformity or non-conformity with the regulations. The regulations were made operational by the classification scheme which partitioned people, places and products (Suchman, 1994; Henman and Dean, 2010). The classification scheme thus was far from neutral. It disciplined individual traders through attaching individual accountability and responsibility for aligning with the regulations. In this sub-section, I will highlight that the individualising strategy needs to be understood as operating within a governing rationale that shaped the imaginations and practices of all actors to align with an individualist developmentality.

Formalisation, operationalised through the classification scheme, operated within a governing regime – which can be read as a formalomorphist form of governmentality (Cross, 2000). Formalisation had a moral basis. It was tied to claims of cleanliness, mobility, licenced trading and other desired aesthetics of formalisation and progress associated with the future prosperity of the population. Informal street trade was seen as being detrimental to achieving this vision. As the literature on governmentality has highlighted (Miller, 2008), such moral rationales are hard to question and come to construct the ways of thinking and acting. This focusses the attention away from the problem (whether formalisation was necessary) and instead offers reformatted solutions (licencing and enforcement). Formalisation thus becomes hard to question, as all actors assume that formalisation is the appropriate way in which trade should be conducted and that the ways to be a successful trader or government official are already known (Ilcan and Phillips, 2010). Thus, key to formalisation was the normalisation of the moral basis and expectations for formal street trade.

Formalisation provided for the self-examination of the practices of traders and fiscals, and thus was akin to what Ilcan and Phillips, (2010) refer to as a key instrument 'that privilege and oblige particular conceptions... [encouraging] certain individuals, groups and places to reinvent themselves.' As studies of accounting and calculative practices have highlighted, classification schemes such as those in spreadsheets have been central in connecting responsibility to the political rationalities of the day (Graham, 2014, p. 1627). Classification schemes are mundane but crucial technologies that enrol traders in formalisation programmes. They come to recognise themselves as requiring change, for them to align with the regulations, and to be responsible for their own future and the future of the broader population. This was perhaps most evident in the ways that traders were responsible for registering themselves, specifying the individual owner of the stall, the location they trade from and the products they sold. It also led in some cases to them reporting unlicensed traders to fiscals. Such acts of confession saw them defining themselves, in terms of the formalomorphist rationale. Fiscals were required to elicit who the owner of the stall was, and to explain the licencing and regulation process to traders (even though this was often difficult). Fiscals too were individually accountable for demonstrating that more licences and fines were being issued. The active participation of fiscals and traders was thus central to the individualising strategy of formalisation.

The classification scheme, operating within this governing rationale, was performative. The classification scheme acted on traders and fiscals to shape the capacities and conduct of all actors (Miller, 2008; 2001; Rose and Miller, 1992). It constructed the subject positions of government officials, traders and citizens, as being responsible for their own future and the future of the broader population as I will outline below.

For government officials, the rationality of formalisation was understood in relation to their success in completing the forms in detail, in issuing licenses and fines and a modernistic-based aesthetic construct of mobility and cleanliness of the streets. As Graham (2014, p. 1627) argues, we 'understand ourselves reflexively in relation to who we were and who we will become.' Even on those occasions when fiscals would ignore and advise rather than enforce regulations,

they did not question formalisation as a governing rationality, purely the speed and way in which it was implemented. As such, the formalising rationale, operationalised through the classification scheme, was fundamental in conducting the conduct of government officials. The formalising discourse recast understandings of informal street trade by contrasting it with what it was not – clean, unhindered mobility, regulated products etc. Informal street traders came to understand themselves as part of the problem and that their activities needed to change for the betterment of the city and /or to maintain their possibility of being a trader. Thus, success as good traders and citizens was defined by aligning their trading practices to the regulations, seeking out information about when they may be able to move into a mall, and reporting other traders that were not in compliance. Not all traders aligned themselves to such an image of what street trade would become. However, formalisation, and the classification scheme, also acted on them, as it led to them avoiding detection and sanctions.

Finally, what about the citizens themselves? Based on my interactions with citizens, and the literature, I can suggest that formalisation partitioned citizens between those that welcomed formalisation as being 'urban desirables' from those that did not align with the formalising rationale as being 'urban undesirables' (Swanson, 2007, p. 709). Thus, in line with other cities in the Global South, it not only placed informal street traders as backward and hindering the development of Recife, but also the citizens who purchased goods from them (Bromley, 2000; Seligmann, 2001; Turner and Schoenberger, 2012). However, such a partitioning was partial and unclear. There were long-established norms around community and lifestyle in Recife. Shopping, eating, drinking, friendship, music as well as low prices were all fundamental aspects of the street scene of Recife and the day to day activities of all citizens. Indeed, such a community understanding of informal street trade is pervasive across the Global South (Carrieri and Murta, 2011; Mete et al., 2013). Perhaps paradoxically, both the middle-class residents that lived in the suburbs (those citizens that the formalisation appeared to privilege) and the fiscals continued to purchase products from informal street traders, enjoy the music that came from their music stalls while drinking coffee and eating food in the bars, etc. This highlighted the partiality of the formalising regime of governance amongst citizens as it exposed contestation between the individualistic mentality of rule and the collective and community understanding of citizenship, livelihoods and street trade work, as it will become clearer in the next section of this chapter.

This concludes the *critical* take on formalisation and the answer to this thesis' first research question. Next, I will present the *possibility* take on informal trading practices and address this thesis' second research question.

# 7.2. (Dis)ordering possibilities of communitarian informality

Aligning the empirical data presented in Chapter 6. *Informal street trading* with the theoretical underpinnings presented in Chapter 3, section 3.2. *Informality and (dis)ordering possibilities,* and the review of the post-structuralist approach presented in Chapter 2, section 2.2. *Post-development and informality,* I will now address the thesis' second research question:

## **(RQ2)** In which ways are the street traders' practices of street trading implicated in their cultural and socioeconomic development?

Contrary to the formalisation narrative, the informal street traders' practices are not only an effective and lucrative way of practising business but also, and more importantly, they are integral to the ways in which a community-based cultural and socioeconomic development is daily assembled which benefits the whole local populations (Farías and Bender, 2012; McFarlane, 2011). This is seen specifically in relation to informal street traders' practices of *working* on the streets, *valuing* of trade and *supplying* of products.

In the first case, the traders' organisation of work was associated with managing and taking advantage of a fluid and decentralised context of trading on the streets. In this context, traders were organised collectively, through *fluid coworking practices*. Their fluid organisation of collective work made them resilient and extremely adaptive which was key for the success of business but also, and more importantly, in developing and strengthening the local community identity (Gandini, 2015; Merkel, 2015; Ferguson, 2014; Spinuzzi, 2012; Simone, 2004) which, through the formalisation programme's aim to individualise, centralise and fixate trade, was under threat.

Secondly, on the streets, value was a more-than-monetary process which emerged as a *contingent* happening to the interplay between the traders' *fluid* coworking practices and the sidewalk assemblages. Because of their tacit knowledge of the streets, traders were looked for by both formal and informal businesses as primary curators for the best fits between products, services and sites (Antal et al., 2015; Zelizer, 1997). Thus, they were key in helping the whole local economy flourish throughout the urban centre which, through the formalisation programme's aim to standardise products and services within categories and trading activities within centralised facilities, was under threat.

Lastly, the supply of products was performed through an *entanglement* of both formal and informal supply circuits which were efficient and rapidly adaptive to the changing street demands (Castells and Cardoso, 2012; Lobato and Thomas, 2018; Pinheiro-Machado, 2009). These entangled supply circuits were beneficial

not only to local retail businesses but also in relation to local culture preservation as they offered higher incentives for the promotion and diffusion of products from local producers which, through the formalisation programme's aim to separate formal from informal trade, was under threat.

In sum: The long-established ways of practising informal trade on the streets are associated with a collective and community understanding of work and livelihoods which is contrary to the individualistic developmentality within which formalisation programmes operate. Formalisation, through its classification schemes and practices of classification, is ontologically grounded on values of individualisation, fixation, standardisation and separation aimed to centralise trade within facilities, categories and sites. By contrast, the indigenous knowledges and practices of traders are based on values of community, fluidity, contingency and entanglement associated to their decentralised trading activities. It is through these knowledges that the communitarian-based organisation of informal traders' work, value and supply become key in the daily development and strengthening of the local community identity, economy and culture.

In the next three sub-sections, I will expand on each of these topics by detailing how the street traders' practices of *working* on the streets, *valuing* of trade and *supplying* of products were implicated in the continuous enactment and strengthening of a communitarian-based cultural and socioeconomic development which benefited the whole local population. I finish the chapter with a small summary of the main points presented.

#### Fluid coworking and local community

In this first sub-section, I will discuss how the street traders' practices of *working* on the streets were implicated in their cultural and socioeconomic development. First I will compare the three main characteristics of street trade work with what the formalisation proposed. I then describe the benefits of traders' collective organisation of work in relation to the fluid context of informal street markets and finally show how this was associated with strengthening the local community identity.

As the data highlighted, street trade work had three main characteristics. These were the *fluidity* of the environment in which traders worked, how traders organised themselves *collectively*, and finally, aligning both, how their organizational structure facilitated not only the daily management but also the ongoing reproduction of a context of *decentralised trade* which traders saw as beneficial. These three main characteristics were in plain opposition to what the formalisation programme proposed. Indeed, the (re)ordering of trade proposed by the formalisation programme aimed towards a shift from the fluid dynamics of

trade performed collectively within communal urban spaces towards the fixed and regulated ones of working individually from a store within a centralised commercial infrastructure. This (re)ordering was aligned with a modernist vision of economic life in the city which promised to bring more efficiency to trade and consequently a betterment for the lives of traders and the whole community. However, traders were accustomed to working collectively, instead of individually, and didn't see in the fluidity of street trade some sort of 'inefficiency' but instead something manageable and, more importantly, they saw it as more advantageous and profitable than working within the fixed pre-allocated facilities proposed by the formalisation programme. What is more, looking at their collective working practices it is noticeable how these were intrinsically associated with the local community identity and thus, deserving of more attention.

The relation between informality and collective work has been the focus of 'coworking literature' which is rather celebratory of this and associates the 'coworking movement' with the rise of co-production and shared consumption within the so-called collaborative and sharing economies (Spinuzzi, 2012; Gandini, 2015; Zanoni et al., 2017). In this organisation of labour, workers with diverse backgrounds and specialisations, work together in 'coworking spaces' so that they become better prepared to collectively cope with fast-changing market dynamics (Spinuzzi, 2012; Gandini, 2015; Merkel, 2015; Waters-Lynch, et.al., 2016). Although most of the coworking literature focuses on informal work in relation to freelance or non-institutionalised labour typically found in the Global North, the informal street trade work found in the Global South also shows striking similarities. Indeed, while the collective work performed by traders was not seen with a positive lens by governing officials, their working practices shared many of the virtues found in 'coworking spaces' as they also collaborated and cooperated so that collectively were better prepared to take advantage of the possibilities emerging from the fluid dynamics of these markets.

The fluidity of street markets was hard to control by the Municipality which fought it through the formalisation programme's intent to individualise traders and centralise and fixate their trading activities. Nevertheless, traders were accustomed to and successful in dealing with the fluidity of these markets. Indeed, fluidity has been positively referenced in relation to diverse empirical contexts such as technological work and organising (Orlikowski and Scott, 2008; Orlikowski, 2009; Schreyögg and Sydow, 2010), international cooperation (Umans, 2016) or knowledge sharing (Ravasi and Verona, 2001). Not surprisingly, it has also been referenced in relation to the context of urban infrastructures (Dovey 2005; Dovey and Sandercock, 2005; Dovey and Ristic, 2017) as well as in what concerns the specificities of the Global South (Burrell, 2012) and those of urban trade (Kärrholm, 2008; Pfaff, 2010; Lepawsky et.al., 2015). In Recife, what the data shows is that this fluidity was not only associated with flows of people, products and workers but also with the ways in which the arrangements of these elements were fluid, continuously changing, unpredictable in both their form and character. Hence, it was not just the street market dynamics that were fluid, but the traders' collective work which was extremely resilient and adaptive, i.e., fluid in its organisational form (Styhre, 2007; Faraj, et.al., 2011).

It was because the traders' collective work was assembled in this *fluid* manner that they were able to both manage the dynamics of a decentralised street market and also be quick and adaptable in taking advantage of the emergent possibilities that this economic context entailed. In a way, their collaborative practices were associated with 'territorialisation' process aimed at making these flows somehow more manageable and thus more predictable. However, given the intrinsic unpredictability of street trade, cooperative alliances were continuously made and unmade. These were deterritorialised processes which both improvised responses and provided alternative solutions for the contingencies that these flows produced. One such contingency was associated to the fluctuation of value which derived from the ongoing attachments between traders, products and sites which continuously emerged and took shape throughout the urban centre and which I will discuss more in detail in the next section. For now though, what I want to retain here is that traders, through their fluid coworking practices, were able to not only manage but take advantage of the fluidity of trading on the streets by means of establishing cooperative alliances and, through this, were a fundamental force in strengthening the cohesion of the community identity.

Community identity has been referenced as a main characteristic associated to both 'fluid objects' (De Laet and Mol, 2000; Winters et. al. 2008; Faraj et. al., 2011) and 'coworking spaces' (Garret et al, 2014; Amin, 2012; Surman, 2013). In relation to the urban context, this happens in the ways in which collective work favours a renegotiation of the urban commons through shared spaces, resources and values (Ferguson, 2014) that facilitates an 'alternative, community-based organisation of labour' (Merkel, 2015) while 'providing for and reproducing life in the city' (Simone, 2004, p. 408). In Recife, what the data shows is that it was through the ongoing performance of the traders' *fluid coworking practices* that they continuously reinforced their 'trust links' while fostered a communitarian ethos. This was seen, for instance, in the ways in which they made the communal urban space a place of belonging where both privileged and less privileged classes could interact, they partnered to make widely available cheaper products in sites populated with lower classes, and they organised collectively in order to update infrastructural deficiencies. As such, their *fluid coworking* practices were a key element in not only managing and reproducing a decentralised and fluid organisation of trade but also in strengthening the local community identity which was under threat due to the formalisation programme's aim to individualise, centralise and fixate trade.

#### Contingent valuing and local economy

In this sub-section, I will discuss how the street traders' practices of valuing products and services were implicated in their cultural and socioeconomic development. First I will compare the three main characteristics of street trade valuing with what the formalisation proposed. I then review literature on value as a more-than-monetary process and discuss how valuing, in this context, was a contingent process which benefited the whole local economy.

As the data highlighted, on the streets, value fluctuated in relation to the *fluid* urban infrastructure made of continuous flows and changes. As such, products and services didn't differentiate much from one another in relation to their monetary price but rather, in relation to the sidewalk arrangements within which they were exchanged. In this context, valuing on the streets had three main characteristics. These were that value was a contingent process to the emergence and shape of informal urban ambiances and soundscapes which were associated with the enactment of valuable street trade positions. These three main characteristics were in plain opposition to the envisioned plan of the formalisation programme. This is because the standardisation of products and services within monetary prices or categories and trading activities within centralised facilities didn't take into account that value on the streets was not fixed within monetary prices nor categories, but emergent, collectively shaped as a contingent result of urban ambiances and soundscapes which could never be calculated by traders in its totality nor planned-out in full through a form or classification scheme of a database. Moreover, it is noticeable that the continuous managing and reproduction of valuable street trade positions was essential in fostering the local economy and thus, deserving of more attention.

The processual ways in which value comes to be attached to things has been the focus of valuation studies research programme. This program follows a sociological lens and focuses on 'valuation as a social practice' (Lamont, 2012; Helgesson and Muniesa, 2013; Muniesa, 2014). Antal et al., (2015) argues that 'value' should not be understood as something that objects inherently have nor as something completely subjective and being brought to life solely by means of social construction where people attach to, or discharge from on the basis of identification or differentiation processes within wider social categories. For the formalisation programme though, value seemed to be understood as a purely monetary quality to only be shaped positively by means of associating products and services with modernised facilities which would appeal to traders and consumers. However, while in the Global North value seems to be prone to 'regulated' public and macro-designs (Callon, 1998; Caliskan and Callon, 2010; MacKenzie et al., 2007), these top-down elements are less important in the context of the Global South and specially in the context of the unregulated

markets (Zelizer, 1997). Indeed, contrary to the formalisation's solely-monetary perception of value which could be contained within top-down regulations and commercial infrastructures, valuing on the streets was a more-than-monetary process which emerged as a contingent happening, an actualisation 'among many possible others' (DeLanda, 2006, p. 12). This contingent happening was a spatially and temporarily located process which took place in 'valuable street trade positions' which emerged through the interplay between the traders' *fluid coworking practices*, and the sidewalk assemblages of informal urban ambiances and soundscapes which together formed the visible and audible aesthetic stamp so common to the collective identity of informal commerce and which shaped the whole local economic landscape.

Indeed, contrary to the formalisation narrative positioning informal street traders against formal shop owners and the local economy, what the data has shown is that street traders were valuable mediators that were looked for by formal shop owners, local artists, and other vendors both formal and informal. This happened because of their tacit knowledge in relation to economic patters of the streets. Because they possessed the knowledge about the tastes of the different crowds present in different sites at different times, this made them experts in facilitating the best fits between products, services and people. For instance, in the case of piracy hawkers, they even partnered with formal store owners, local artists and DJs to calculate how specific media products could best be attached to specific urban ambiances and soundscapes common to specific localities at specific times. Thus, they were key elements in curating valuable combinations between products, services and specific urban sites. Valuable street trade positions were fluid, always changing and dependent of a wide array of elements. In this context, through the traders' ability to rapidly attach and detach from urban ambiances and soundscapes, they enabled content to be found, valued, bought and ultimately attached to the lived experience of the urban centre. Through this, they were crucial in shaping the value of products and services sold by both formal and informal vendors nearby as well as influencing the value of these trading sites thus helping the whole of local economy flourish which was under threat due to the formalisation programme's aim to standardise products and services within categories, and trading activities within centralised facilities.

### Entangled formal/informal supply and local culture

In this sub-section, I will discuss how the supply of products to informal street traders was implicated in their cultural and socioeconomic development. First I will compare the three main characteristics of street trade supply with what the formalisation proposed. I then go on to position street trade supply within the

'piracy cultures' literature and discuss how the entangled formal/informal supply circuits were associated with fostering and strengthening local culture.

As the data highlighted, the supply of products to the streets had three main characteristics. These were that street trade was supplied by an *entangled network of both formal and informal circuits* which encompassed both formal retail shops as well as *informal street-suppliers*. Moreover, these entangled formal and informal supply circuits acted as *scaling devices* through which local producers could expand their reach of sales throughout different localities. These three main characteristics were in plain opposition to the narrative of the formalisation programme. This was because the governing officials believed that not only the market dynamics within which formal and informal markets operated were intrinsically different but also that both did not relate in any way other than the informal traders' unfair competition which affected formal business owners. However, contrary to this, the data shows that formality and informality were more related than apart. Moreover, this entanglement was extremely effective and beneficial for the local retailers but also to formal and informal vendors and local cultural media producers and thus, deserving of more attention.

The ways in which the supply of products to the streets was performed, specifically in the case of media products, shows similarities with the 'piracy cultures' literature. In opposition to 'piracy', which relates to the illegal sharing of copyrighted content, piracy cultures refers to the complex set of practices performed by communities and networks associated to the production, consumption and distribution of products that fall beyond mainstream and/or institutionalised rules (Castells and Cardoso, 2012). This literature moves the focus away from discussions surrounding the legality/illegality of content and instead celebrates piracy cultures in relation to the practices behind the maintenance of these alternative circuits. Specifically, a branch of this literature looks into the context of the Global South and informal markets to explore how these cultures are associated to the social, economic and cultural fabric of these communities (Sundaram, 2009; Larkin, 2004; Liang, 2009; Lobato, 2012; Lobato and Thomas, 2012; 2018). The specificity of looking at the street trade supply in Recife from the lens of 'piracy cultures' is that although these networks did fall beyond the regulations concerning formal circulation of products, they were also made of an entanglement of both formal and informal supply channels and, through this, associated to the local socioeconomic and cultural fabric.

It has been documented how legal and illegal circulation of products are often entangled and co-constitutive (Lobato, 2012; Lemos and Castro, 2008; Pinheiro-Machado, 2009). In the case of Recife, this was seen in the ways in which formal retail businesses distributed their products to both formal shops and informal traders nearby, making use of *street-suppliers* who conducted their day-to-day business on the streets with no visible difference from informal street traders in both their fluid and collective organisation of work as well as in their negotiation of value as contingent to the sidewalk arrangements. This was the case of piracy hawkers who got their blank CDs from local music shops, but also got their media copies illegally from piracy supply networks or legally from local producers and artists who renounced to copyright protection. This formal/informal entanglement was strikingly clear, and heard, on the streets through the soundscapes broadcast from the piracy stalls of both legal and illegal copyrighted material, as well as formal marketing jingles of local stores and informal personal branding of local DJs or promoting local events. These ongoing relations between formality and informality were not only effective in distributing products but were also a key element driving cultural engagement of the local community with local products.

Cultural engagement through piracy cultures has been documented in relation to digital media. Examples of this are the promotion of local independent cinema in Europe through P2P networks (Cardoso et al, 2013), encouraging local music production in Norway through affordable home-based studios (Spilker, 2012), fostering sharing economies of collective production of subtitles for foreign movies in Brazil (Sá, 2015), or countering governmental censorship of content in China through alternative circuits of content circulation (Li, 2013). In the case of Recife, local culture was experienced, preserved and fostered through an assemblage of economic incentives, kinship relations and a piracy culture associated to formal and informal circuits of supply which stimulated the distribution of local content. Specifically, in the case of the media piracy supply, these networks assembled a multitude of mechanisms such as monetary incentives but also alternative currencies such as blank CDs as well as kinship relations which, together with piracy supply networks favoured the circulation of local cultural products to be traded within urban sites, heard within urban soundscapes, and scaled to different localities. As such, the entanglement of both formal and informal supply circuits shared many of the virtues found in piracy cultures in the ways in which these circuits were efficient and rapidly adaptive to changing demands facilitating affordable access to otherwise hard-to-get content. Moreover, contrary to the formalisation programme narrative, these entangled supply circuits were effective in increasing revenues and benefiting both formal and informal businesses as well as facilitating the promotion and diffusion of local content through local/global interactions (Madon and Sahay; 2001) and thus, fostering the preservation of local culture which was under threat due to the formalisation programme's aim to separate formal from informal trade.

This concludes the *possibility* take on informal street trading practices and the answer to this thesis' second research question. Next, I will finish this chapter with a small summary of the main points and follow to the conclusion of the thesis.

#### Summary of Chapter 7: Discussion

Addressing this thesis first research question (RQ1) what the findings have shown is that formalisation seeks to enact and expand an individualistic developmentality among all actors (Foucault, 1982; Lie, 2015; Ilcan and Phillips, 2010). This is facilitated by operationalising a formalomorphist governing regime (Foucault, 1977) aimed to shape the concerns, imaginations and aspirations of all actors to align with its modernist-based understanding of what an 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' socioeconomic behaviour is (Cross, 2000). The formalisation's purpose of (re)ordering the urban socioeconomic landscape is further enhanced through its regulations, classification schemes and practices of classifying traders through an information system. Classification, operating within this formalomorphist governing regime, imposes an overdetermination of what a socioeconomic order is to be which strengthens the perception of informal street trade as 'messy' and 'inappropriate' while it reinforces the solution of an individualised (re)ordering of trade as unquestionable. Interestingly, such individualisation is done in the name of community - for the betterment of all (in relation to mobility, hygiene, economic development etc.). However, what this does is to challenge the existing understandings of community/family ownership of stalls, space, infrastructure and ambiance, etc. (Escobar, 1995; Bender et al., 2010). What the data has shown is that while informal trade is ontologically grounded on indigenous knowledges and practices associated with community, fluidity, contingency, entanglement and decentralisation, the regulations and classification schemes used by the formalisation programme are based on individualisation, fixation, standardisation, separation and centralisation. Specifically, traders were organised collectively, as opposed to individually. They were mostly fluid through the urban centre, as opposed to trading from fixed locations. Their product and service offer was not standardised but rather it emerged as a contingent happening to sidewalk assemblages and changing flows of demand. Overall, informal street trade was decentralised, made of a multiplicity of assemblages between products, services, sites, traders and populations which were contrary to the formalisation purpose of centring trading activities within purposefully built facilities. Thus, by framing the available categories of name, location, product sold, etc., and the possible relations between them, classification reconfigures the practices of those enforcing formalisation, those seeking to comply with formalisation, those that are unaware of the requirements of formalisation, and those that seek to avoid formalisation. As such, not only the intended formal socioeconomic (re)ordering works towards individualising trading activities, but the practices associated with classification shape individual identities as they reinforce the individual accountability of all actors for being responsible for their compliance with formalisation (Scott, 1998). Formalisation thus, through classification, seeks to shape the conduct of conduct of all actors towards an individualistic developmentality (Lie, 2015; Ilcan and Phillips, 2010) which is contrary to the traders' collective and community understanding of work and livelihoods.

And this brings me to the thesis' second research question (RQ2). What the findings have shown is that through the daily assembling of informal street trading the traders foster a community-based cultural and socioeconomic development which benefits the whole local populations. Contrary to the formalisation programme discourse, the ways in which informal street trading is daily assembled are efficient in managing and taking advantage of the existent socioeconomic context of the streets and also key for the daily reproduction and strengthening of the local community identity, both the formal and informal commerce as well as local culture (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Farías and Bender, 2012; McFarlane, 2011). This is seen specifically in relation to informal street traders' practices of working on the streets, valuing of trade and supplying of products. It is because traders are organised collectively, through fluid coworking structures, that they are not only able to successfully take advantage of and adapt to the challenging conditions of street markets but also, through a 'cooperative ethos' foster and strengthen the local community identity (Gandini, 2015; Merkel, 2015; Ferguson, 2014; Spinuzzi, 2012; Simone, 2004). Through the traders' tacit knowledge of the streets they are able to assemble the best fits between products, services and sites bringing dynamism and bolstering the local formal and informal businesses (Antal et al., 2015; Zelizer, 1997). Lastly, through the traders' interactions with larger-scale formal and informal supply circuits, local producers are able to broaden their revenues and get cultural media products distributed throughout different localities (Castells and Cardoso, 2012; Lobato and Thomas, 2018; Pinheiro-Machado, 2009).

In sum, the formalisation's overdetermination of what a socioeconomic order is to be and its imposition of individualising subjectivities to assist in its implementation acts against the traders' collective and community-based understanding of work and livelihoods which, contrary to the formalisation discourse, is key for the local community identity, economy and culture.

## CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION

This is the final chapter of this thesis. Here I will present the main contributions this research offers in relation to the understanding of formalisation and informal trade in the Global South and reflect on its implications for policy and research (section 8.1), discuss the theoretical and empirical limitations of this research (section 8.2) and present some recommendations for future research into informal urban street trade and formalisation (section 8.3).

#### 8.1. Main contributions and implications

This research offers novel empirical and theoretical insights on the ways in which formalisation programmes and informal street trade are performed and how they relate to the enactment of development. The importance of this issue lies in the fact that formalisation policies which aim to regulate informal street trade are widely failing and informal street trade is growing and expanding, specifically throughout the Global South, making it more of the norm rather than the exception (ILO, 2018; Roy, 2005; 2009). Moreover, critics argue that formalisation programmes can act against the traders' livelihoods and long-established practices they have developed for decades (Escobar, 2011; Gibson-Graham, 1996; Williams 2005; Roy, 2005; 2016; Evers and Seale, 2014). Post-structuralist scholars claim the main reason for this is ontological as both policy and academia tend to frame the issue of informal trade through modernist understandings of 'development' and 'the economy' which restrains a grounded understanding of the ways in which development is enacted and experienced by these populations (Benjaminsen et al., 2006). This research speaks to these concerns by offering a post-development take on formalisation and informal trade which looks into the knowledges, practices, materials and technologies associated with both the processes of formalising trade and those of informal trading to assess how these relate to the enactment of development on the ground. The objective of looking at both formalisation and informality as active participants in the enactment of development is aligned with Escobar's (2011) post-development call for the urgent need to both critically assess 'development' and the 'western economy' as 'regimes of representation' which, in this case, come to shape formalisation policies, while at the same time shed light on 'different subjectivities' and 'hybrid, creative, autonomous alternatives to it' which, in this case, are found on the traders' daily practices (Escobar, 2011, p. 216–217). This is the rationale behind the post-structuralist dual lens of *critique* and *possibility* which guides this research.

From a *critical lens* perspective, studies have argued how formalisation is aligned with the modernist quest of 'urban planning' to reach an homogenous and stable 'formal city' which would be easier to control and manage (Escobar, 1995; 2010; Scott, 1998; Bender et al., 2010; Holston, 1989). Authors have suggested how formalisation acts as a 'technology of governance' designed to operationalise 'revanchist urbanism' policies (Hunt, 2009; Smith, 2005; Brown, 2017) and how these are often unwelcomed by street traders and the urban poor (Bass, 2000; Omoegun et al., 2019). Moreover, in Brazil, studies have shown that municipalities often enforce disciplinary tactics aimed to shift the traders' 'cultures of informality' (Hunt, 2009) towards 'citizen-worthy' profiles (Carrieri and Murta, 2011; Kopper, 2012).

The findings of this research speak to these studies and contribute to them by showing the ways in which formalisation seeks legitimacy through operationalising a formalomorphist governing regime (Cross, 2000; Foucault, 1977) aimed to shape and normalise an individualist developmentality among all actors (Foucault, 1982; Lie, 2015; Ilcan and Phillips, 2010) which is contrary to the traders' collective and community understanding of work and livelihoods. This is further enhanced through the important role of classification. The findings reveal that the regulations, classification schemes and practices of classification enforce a strong reading of what a socioeconomic order should be and impose individualising subjectivities to assist in its implementation. Classification is not neutral; it acts on people by structuring the possibilities available to individuals. It creates roles and identities and governs what people consider to be important and appropriate (Henman and Dean, 2010). In the case of formalisation, classification is fundamental in establishing the problem of informal trade as unguestionable and the solution of formalisation as self-evident by discarding or turning invisible the socioeconomic ordering of informal trade and its developmental possibilities. To shed light on what these developmental possibilities may be, this research applied a *possibility lens* perspective on the investigation of street traders' practices.

There has been a diverse set of literature which has looked at informality from a *possibility lens* perspective. These studies follow Gibson-Graham (2008) call for the need to investigate 'alternative economic spaces' (Leyshon et al., 2003; Zanoni et al., 2017) where socioeconomic development is enacted *differently* (Fickey, 2011). This project aligns with Sennett's (1970) take on the possibilities of (dis)order in the urban place and looks at informal trade as made of assemblages between indigenous knowledges, practices and materials responsible for *alternative* orderings of society, culture and the economy (Farías and Bender, 2012; McFarlane, 2011). Topics brought forward from these perspectives suggest that informal street trade is collectively experienced as a more-than-capitalist practice (Persson and Malmer, 2006; Williams and Round,

2008; Williams, 2004; Snyder, 2004; Seale, 2015) where community livelihoods, solidarity and kinship relations are entangled with economic practices (Cholez and Trompette, 2013; Neethi et al., 2019; Lyons and Snoxell, 2005; Watson, 2009; Williams, 2005; Singerman, 1995; Usman, 2010; Williams, 2002; Darling and Wilson, 2016; Vargas 2016) in the co-production of public space (Singerman, 1995; Nurudeen and Usman, 2010; Williams and Windebank, 2002; Middleton, 2003; Keswani and Bhagavatula, 2014; Koster and Nuijten, 2016; Falla and Valencia, 2019) to solve problems where formal provision is lacking or unfitted (Meagher, 2007; Nunan and Satterthwaite, 2001; Madon and Sahay, 2002).

This research enters in dialogue with these studies and contributes to them by adding empirical insights into the ways in which the ordering of informal trade is associated with a community-driven cultural and socioeconomic development which benefits the whole local community. Specifically, it looks into the daily assemblages of traders' indigenous knowledges, practices, materials and technologies (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Farías and Bender, 2012; McFarlane, 2011), and highlights how community identity is strengthened through the *fluid* and *collective* organisation of traders' work practices (Gandini, 2015; Merkel, 2015; Ferguson, 2014; Spinuzzi, 2012; Simone, 2004). It also shows how the local formal and informal economy adapts to and is bolstered through the help of traders' curation of the most valuable fit between sites, products and consumers (Antal et al., 2015; Zelizer, 1997). Lastly, it shows how local culture is fostered and enriched through *entangled* formal/informal supply circuits which favour local producers (Castells and Cardoso, 2012; Lobato and Thomas, 2018; Pinheiro-Machado, 2009).

What this study reveals is the contested nature of development that is negotiated daily between the individualist developmentality imposed by formalisation and the communitarian-based development possibilities which are enacted through informal trading practices. It richly details the ways in which the formalisation programme's overdetermination of an urban socioeconomic order and its imposition of individualising subjectivities to assist in its implementation acts against the communitarian-based possibilities that are enacted through the long-established ways of practising informal trade and which, contrary to the formalisation discourse, greatly benefit the cultural and socioeconomic development of these communities.

These developmental possibilities are turned invisible by a 'development imaginary' (Cooke and Soria, 2019) upon which formalisation is based that is ontologically distant and even contrary to the values within which informal street trade is practised. This 'development imaginary' is based on shared values and belief systems, mostly northern, which self-perpetuate through the ongoing relegitimisation of their status as regimes of truth, whilst de-legitimising the

indigenous knowledges inherent to the traders' practices (Santos, 2007). What the thesis shows is that the 'development imaginary' inherent to formalisation is strengthened through the regulations and classification schemes which enforce the belief in a specific organisation of society and the economy ontologically grounded on values of individualisation, fixation, standardisation and separation aimed at centralising trade within facilities, categories and sites which are contrary to the indigenous knowledges and practices of traders based on values of community, fluidity, contingency and entanglement associated to their decentralised trading activities. This is problematic as these values are not just characteristic of an informal organisation of trade but associated with an allencompassing economic, social and cultural organisation of the urban landscape. Consequently, formalising the informal becomes not just an urban/economic project but indeed a broad-ranging intervention aimed to change the very way of life of a broad range of urban population (Cardoso, 2016). This intervention is enforced by both denying participation to traders in the negotiations pertaining to their future as well as on an ontological ground which shapes what is known about street trade, in which terms it is known and consequently how such knowledge is to be used in relation to shaping a specific vision of an imagined urban future.

In relation to the case presented in this thesis, the implications of this are that, for instance, when looking at the classification scheme used to gather information about street trade in Recife, if it was possible to register the association of one worker with the various types of products and services he sold, a different and more appropriate categorisation of products could be found. In addition, if one could register the association of a worker with different selling locations, one could potentially find patterns in relation to the consumers' behaviour in different localities at different times. Hence, if this information could be captured, it could help to form a better picture of an appropriate urban infrastructure which could be built on top of the existing practices taking into account the cultural and socioeconomic specificities of traders and local communities. Specifically, in the case of Recife, the Municipality could build up from its long history of informal street trade and include its specific organisational needs into the urban infrastructure making it not only attractive within the urban landscape but also, and more importantly, less prone to modernist-based urban planning rationales which threaten the local community, economy and culture. However, this was not possible through the classification schemes, or even not aligned with the City Council's agenda and this perhaps helps to explain informal urban street trade's resilience and adaptability to continuously produce and reproduce itself despite the substantial efforts to make it vanish.

This anecdotal example is not intended to give a prescription on how a classification scheme should be designed to include the developmental possibilities of traders. Its objective is also not to show how a formalisation policy

should be designed and implemented in order to account for a specific developmental possibility of traders. Rather, the example serves to make it clear that these developmental possibilities exist, but certainly others as well, and these are not accounted for by formalisation due to the ontological ground upon which its 'development imaginary' is based which does not offer space for the traders' own development to be known, discussed and democratically shaped by all.

Farias (2011) positions this as an issue of 'urban politics' and urges that 'new modes of representations are necessary, as well as new democratic spaces in which complex, controversial and conflictive urban assemblages, instead of human interests alone, can be represented in all their heterogeneity'. This is not just a manner of conflict between classes of urban populations and their interests but, more deeply, between knowledges and knowings (both in the plural) and the existent conflicts between different 'cosmograms', this is, between different ways by which different elements of the world are articulated and their mutual connections known (Latour, 2004b; 2005). So in which ways can this issue be addressed by both urban planners and academic scholars?

In relation to scholars on the subject of informality, just as Escobar (2011) urges researchers to 'rethink development' and Gibson-Graham (2014) asks to 'rethink the economy', the study of informality should be driven by the objective of deeply understanding the conditions of possibility associated with the flourishing of these communities' own socioeconomic and cultural development. For such knowledge to emerge it needs to be freed from overarching regimes of representation which have constrained the understanding of informality in relation to already known social, economic or political knowledge. Just as I tried to implement in this research, both Escobar (1997) and Gibson-Graham (2014) argue this is best achieved through a combination of 'thick description', which can make for the 'small facts' to speak to 'larger issues', and 'weak theory' which, rather than confirming what's already known, it 'observes, interprets, and yields to emerging knowledge' (Gibson-Graham, 2014).

In relation to urban planners and formalisation policy officials the main challenge is to offer space for the development possibilities of traders to be turned visible, accounted for and be given the main stage in the discussions pertaining to formalisation policy designs and which should certainly include the populations affected by these policies. In relation to this, and following up from Sennett's (1970) argument on the possibilities of urban (dis)order, more recently he urged for the need for urban planning to accommodate the idea of planning for an 'open city' (Sennett, 2017). Just like an 'open software' architecture gives space to bricolage in the ways in which it is thought of and shaped by all its users, the planning for the 'open city' should be thought of and shaped through the democratic participation of all its population (Sennett, 2017). Moreover, this democratic participation is to be understood in relation to a symmetrisation of knowledge positions between experts and traders as well as any population group affected by these policies so that any information regarding its design and implementation is democratically owned, i.e., 'shared, socially accessible, discussed and open' (Farias, 2011). This could involve strategies such as 'fluid governance' and 'informal planning' (Certomà et al., 2019). Through fluid strategies of governance, formalisation policies should be designed in order to afford for the incorporation of a number of heterogeneous social actors which, through multiple sets of tools and modalities of interactions, could 'own' these policies and democratically 'shape' its design and implementation (Marres, 2016). As a result, formalisation could be thought of as 'informal planning' which stands for an 'organised form of collective planning that builds upon grassroots initiatives but also entails different forms of collaboration and dialogue with official planners' (Certomà et al., 2019).

Politically, what this means for formalisation policies is to understand their design and implementation not in relation to any specific realisation of a perfect state of urban and socioeconomic organisation of trade but rather to focus on the effective 'right of access to participation' in relation to street traders but also all urban populations affected, i.e., 'the right to citizenship for all, the right to shape and influence' (Thrift and Amin, 2002 p. 142). Moreover, any form of knowledge obtained, be it by formalisation policies and their classification systems, or via academic research on the topics of informal urban street trade, should also be thought of in relation to its effect and impact in fostering the participatory democratisation of this space. As so, this knowledge should be rephrased and translated back into the everyday life and ordinary language of the populations it is meant to affect so it becomes open for democratic discussion and revision.

## 8.2. Limitations

The limitations of this study derive mostly from the theoretical scope and the empirical fieldwork.

Theoretically, critical studies on singularities and generative ones of emergent possibilities have mostly been looked at as being in opposing fields of inquiry which have positioned both at a central stage of normative and ontological discussions. This is seen, for instance, in philosophical debates within post-development scholars (see Pieterse, 1998; Escobar, 2000; Pieterse, 2000) or within critical urban studies' scholars and assemblage urbanism' researchers (see Brenner et al., 2011; Farias, 2011; McFarlane, 2001; 2011a; Rankin, 2011)<sup>72</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> See also a rich discussion on this topic between Lucy Suchman and Katherine Gibson Graham in relation to systems thinking and post-capitalist studies – https://vimeo.com/79740274

In relation to the urban domain, Farias (2011) suggests four dimensions of inquiry within which structuralist critique is distinct from post-structuralist engagement. A structuralist lens performs critique of capitalist structures and it aims towards revolution, while a post-structuralist lens performs an inquiry into urban assemblages and it aims towards *democratisation*. Although this might appear as an oversimplification, it is helpful for delineating both perspectives. The fact that I applied both a *critical* lens to investigate the manifestations of power within formalisation essentialism and a *possibility* one to investigate the generative possibilities within informality gives this research a strength which doesn't come without its limitations. For instance, the thick description of my ethnographic engagement with the field emerges from the fact that the inquiry was performed bottom-up, it was generative, without being guided in advance by overarching theoretical concepts. Any in-depth study contains in itself the cost of being harder to generalise findings. Because of this, the theoretical analyses act as 'enabling constrain' (Introna, 2013). It enables the communication of findings with wider disciplinary domains while at the same time it constrain the available options of 'readings for difference' (Gibson-Graham, 2008) which it aims to produce. Indeed, just as it happens with formalisation essentialism, any conceptual divisions, although theoretically important, act as 'regimes of representation' which both can help on theory building as well as constrain 'other' ways of reading empirical findings. Also, the challenge of aligning these findings with both a Foucauldianinspired literature and assemblage research meant that what this research gained in theoretical cross-reference between the fields has come at the cost of it having slightly less theoretical depth in each specific theoretical domain.

Concerning the empirical field, as I have mentioned in chapter 4, my access to the empirical setting was guite challenging. Moreover, although this investigation embraced a wide temporal span, its ethnographic depth over time became somewhat more limited to the domain of informal street traders while it had less access to the practices and technologies associated with the formalisation programme. Because formalisation and street trade is such a highly contested domain, as governing officials became aware of my growing familiarity with street traders, they also became suspicious of my intentions and less welcoming to their facilities or answering my requests. If this wasn't the case, I could have potentially gathered more data in relation to other knowledges, materials and technologies and assessed their alignment/contestation to the indigenous ones of traders. A potential strategy to cope with this could be to investigate more deeply on the role of mediators between governing bodies and informal street traders, such as unions, NGOs and other civil society actors which could not only offer a wider picture of these issues but also potentially help on the maintenance of access to both sides of a highly contested space such as formalisation and informality.

### 8.3. Future research

This research may be seen as a starting point of dialogue that aligns a postdevelopment overarching focus on the negotiations and frictions between formalisation programmes and informal street trade practices. The urgency of this project lies in the fact that something as pervasive as informal street trade throughout the Global South is under threat and may disappear by virtue of modernist developmental agendas which aim to turn the social, cultural and economic diversity into a normalizing gaze easier to control. This research offers a multitude of venues for potential further research.

For instance, concerning future research that considers the important, yet underresearched, relationship between formalisation and classification, I suggest several possible lines of future development. First, I argue that there is a need for similar in-depth studies in different cities in the Global South that can help us explore the ways in which formalisation programmes are put in place with different regulations, cultural conditions, infrastructures etc. Second, that future studies should focus on mundane classification schemes to further understand why formalisation works itself out in the ways that it does. While the spreadsheet at first glance looked like a very basic technology, and thus potentially uninteresting, this research reveals it has profound effects in understanding issues of regulation, trade and community. I would encourage further reflection and development of how classification schemes operate within formalomorphist governing regimes, and shape, in this case, the conduct of conduct of street traders, government officials, and citizens.

On this issue, it is also urgent to align the critical studies on formalisation and classification with investigations which aim to make visible how socioeconomic development is enacted through indigenous knowledges associated with the ongoing achievings of street trade. In relation to this line of inquiry, I would suggest further studies look at more empirical domains associated with street trade. Examples of these could include cell-phone and computer repair shops, second-hand products, handcraft street artists and sellers, circulation of local produced products such as food, cultural media, etc. In-depth investigations on how these markets are assembled daily, looking at how working practices are structured, valuation achieved and its alternative forms of distribution and supply, offers the possibilities but also further our understanding of the ways in which indigenous knowledges and values associated with work and livelihoods are being assimilated or challenged by virtue of urban planning and formalisation policies.

#### CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION

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