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Gonzalez, S [orcid.org/0000-0003-3958-2119](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3958-2119) (2017) Introduction: Studying markets as spaces of contestation. In: Gonzalez, S, (ed.) Contested Markets, Contested Cities: Gentrification and Urban Justice in Retail Spaces. Routledge Studies in Urbanism and the City . Routledge , London, UK , pp. 1-18. ISBN 9781138217485

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## **Introduction: Studying markets as spaces of contestation**

Chapter published in González, S. (2018) (Ed.) *Contested Markets Contested Cities. Gentrification and urban justice in retail spaces*, London: Routledge, pp. 1-18

### **Sara González**

Traditional markets, where food and other goods are sold on the streets, in covered regulated spaces or in informal settings, are still serving millions of people across the world despite the advance of corporate and globalised supermarkets. They are not only important spaces for exchange in the local economy but also for social interaction, and in particular they are essential to the most vulnerable communities in our cities, from migrant workers, ethnic minorities, the elderly and the poor. At the same time, in recent decades many markets across the world have been rediscovered as tourist attractions, food meccas and even regeneration flagships. Examples of this are La Boqueria Market in Barcelona, Rotterdam's Market Hall, Borough Market in London, wet markets in Hong Kong, or the Port Market in Montevideo. They are 'must visit' locations for international travellers looking for something different and authentic. But these transformations are clashing with markets' important role as public meeting places and ordinary everyday life places for the most vulnerable. The confluence of these potentially contradictory trends and processes turns markets into 'contested spaces'.

Throughout this book we will show markets as important spaces in the complex fabric and rhythm of our cities today. Markets come and go; sometimes they are fixed, sometimes they are itinerant; they can be regulated or informal. Traders and customers might be displaced from central cities only to re-emerge somewhere else. Sometimes markets are redeveloped and reimagined as gentrified or touristified spaces; Other times they are part of a resistance against this very same gentrification; and they can create opportunities for fairer forms of consumption in the face of unethical practices by multi-national corporations. We therefore conceptualise markets as spaces of contestation between different practices and discourses of city-making. What is clear is that markets are always evolving, changing, in flux and transformation.

There is growing interest in cities as global spaces for the contestation over processes of urban neoliberalisation, the effects of gentrification and inequalities, and also as incubators of just and fairer alternative ways of living (Harvey, 2012). Our book extends in an original way the analysis of these issues to retail spaces, which are generally marginalised within critical urban studies. In particular, we look at the traditional indoor or street markets in cities across the global north and south as new spaces for contestation.

It is impossible to define markets. There is an immense variety of markets throughout the world and across history and there is no comprehensive study of them, as no discipline has particularly analysed markets. In this book we discuss covered and indoor markets, some owned and managed by the state but also those which are managed and owned privately. We also discuss street markets and also touch on informal and unregulated markets. Our aim is not to provide a typology or a fixed definition of markets, but to let the variety and geographical variegation flow and enrich our analysis. Seale (2016, p.12) in her introduction to the book *Markets, places, cities* conceptualises markets as nodes, ‘where material and intangible flows – of people, goods, times, senses, affect - come to rest, terminate, emerge, merge, mutate and/or merely pass through, and are contingent and relational to each other’. Following this view, we find it useful to think of markets in terms of social relations rather than fixed or bounded spaces. Indeed, if there is one common element to all different types and forms of markets is that they bring people together; they connect them in relationships of economic and extra-economic exchange. Reflecting this diversity and fluidity we do not use a uniform terminology across the book when referring to markets; some chapters use ‘public markets’, others ‘traditional markets’ and others use vernacular terms such as *tianguis* for the outdoor stalls in Mexico.

Street or informal markets and covered, municipal, indoor markets have not often been studied together. Street and informal markets and vendors have been studied profusely, particularly from an economic anthropology and urban informality studies perspective (Bhowmik, 2012; Bostic et al, 2016; Cross and Morales, 2007; Ever and Seale, 2015; Graaff and Ha, 2015). In contrast, research on covered and regulated markets is sparse and spread

out across disciplines and geographies. In this book we look at them together. Most of our chapters look at covered and indoor market halls, but several chapters analyse the situation of street markets, though mainly formal and legal ones. Bringing all these kinds of markets together in one book is innovative in itself and our aim in gathering them is to show why and how, despite their variety, they can all become contested spaces in cities today.

This introductory chapter lays the theoretical foundations of the book which are then taken up, expanded and illustrated by the case study chapters. It provides a broad look at markets and ways of understanding their past and current role and situation. I offer a critical review of the global history of markets in order to help us situate their contemporary contested nature, particularly in relationship to notions of modernity. Following from this, I develop the three main analytical frameworks that will be broadly used by the rest of the case study chapters: markets as the frontier for processes of gentrification; markets as spaces for resistance and political mobilisation and markets as spaces for the development of alternative practices of production and consumption. Here I review various concepts and case studies drawn from existing literature gathered together across various disciplines from retail studies to ethnography, geography, urban planning and sociology. The catalogue of theoretical and analytical concepts presented here will be picked up later by the case study chapters. In the final section of the introduction I present the structure of the book and briefly refer to our case study markets. All the markets discussed in this book are conceptualised as contested spaces but they do not all show the same features or processes. Therefore not all case studies develop the three analytical frameworks equally; Some are highlighted more than others, building and expanding on some concepts without necessarily developing others. As markets are incredibly variable and diverse, so is their analysis.

The book draws on original work carried out by researchers in the international network ‘Contested Cities’, which received funding from the European Union between 2012 and 2016 to explore processes of urban neoliberalisation and resistance in European and Latin American cities. Researchers from the network were based in the UK, Spain, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Ecuador and Mexico. As explained in more detail in the Preface of this book, the network developed a sub-group to research the transformation of traditional markets that we were all witnessing in our cities and which we report on in this book.

## **Markets in the modern city narrative**

In this section I provide a brief international history of markets, directly linking their transformations to ideas, notions and narratives of modernity. Through this short history we will see that markets have been, and continue to be, contested spaces because they are linked to disputed notions of modernity, formality and informality that continue until today. Cross (2000) has already advanced this discussion by exploring the changes in public discourse and policy on informal street vending in relation to the notions of modernity and postmodernity, and we are now extending some of these arguments to regular and formal markets.

Markets were, of course, key spaces in the pre-modern and the pre-colonial city as places for the exchange of produce and where the urban and the rural met. Markets both fed cities and were places of encounter between many different ethnicities and cultures. Stobart and Van Damme (2016) show how urban historiography has dedicated a great deal of attention to the role of marketplaces in European medieval history; Markets made cities. Beyond Europe, in pre-colonial and pre-industrial cities, markets were also central as points of encounter in long-distance trade networks, where a variety of produce and ethnicities in customers and traders could be seen (Beeckmans and Bigon, 2016; Bromley et al., 1975; Guyer, 2015).

The onset of modernity and ideas of planning and building cities in a rational way interfered with how small retail was organised in cities. Two main processes seem to have affected markets. On the one hand, to make cities more efficient and aesthetically pleasing from a bourgeois perspective, informal and apparently disorganised and messy trade had to be tamed and tidied up (see Guàrdia and Oyón, 2015, for markets in Europe). According to Cross (2000, p. 40) ‘street vending thus came under savage attack throughout the modernist era’. Shopkeepers and established formal traders also lobbied to eradicate this unfair competition, as street traders did not always pay taxes (Schmiechen and Carls, 1999). On the other hand, from the mid-nineteenth century, the state became more involved in food provisioning, alongside other public functions, in response to the rapid industrialisation and urbanisation of big cities (Guàrdia and Oyón, 2015) and there was a programme of building municipal

market halls in many cities around the world. These two related processes, which I elaborate below, challenged informal street trading and aimed to establish carefully-regulated markets as commercial spaces for the middle and upper classes. These processes, however, were never complete, as we will see.

### **Modern efforts to tame and regularise markets**

In London throughout the nineteenth century, informal street markets were abundant and fed the rapidly-growing population, especially the poorest (Kelley, 2016). However, they were regarded by the authorities as insanitary and traders were often persecuted and displaced to the peripheries (Jones, 2016). In the UK, the removal of informal markets was part of Victorian urban improvement initiatives (Jones, 2016). Covered market halls were built as an educational and moral tool to reform ‘the most offensive kind of lower class street culture and people [...] who often made the old market their home’ (Schmiechen and Carls, 1999, p. 55). The policy did not always work and in London, informal street traders did not necessarily move in these new market halls as they found them too expensive and inconvenient for their customer base (Jones, 2016). The dream of the middle class and sanitised public market hall also failed as middle and upper class consumers favoured the newly-developed department stores such as Harrods or Selfridges, and by 1890s the ‘market hall had become a working class department store’ (Schmiechen and Carls, 1999, p. 193). Similarly, in Paris by the mid-1800s street vendors and street markets were also becoming a concern for the state. In particular, the central markets of Les Halles became a target as an insanitary and crowded space inundated by street traders not suitable for a modern imperial city (Thompson, 1997). Their redevelopment became part of the 1850s Haussmannisation project to bring what was until then a dangerous, unruly and filthy space into the realm of the bourgeois city, not without resistance and protests from the traders (ibid).

In the global south, the relationship between markets, urbanisation and modernisation has parallels but also many differences. The building of markets in colonial cities was part of the ‘urban civilisation’ project of colonial powers. Markets were an important part of the rational plans for cities but, as shown above, modernity could not obliterate their informality and messiness. Beeckmans and Bigon (2016) show how markets built in Dakar and Kinshasa by

French and Belgian authorities in late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were very cosmopolitan, which later became a concern for the colonial authorities worried about the sanitary consequences of ethnic mixing. In Latin America, street trading has always been part of street life from pre-colonial times, often with a conflictual relationship with state authorities (Bromley, 1998). In Rio de Janeiro, the first attempts to impose some regularity and symmetry onto a sprawling street trade goes back the colonial Portuguese authorities in 1789, supported by the upper and middle classes and influenced by hygienist discourses (Antunes Maciel and Leandro de Souza, 2012). By 1841, La Candelária covered market had been built to clean up some of this street trade; However with the rapid growth of the city this area around the market soon became again a meeting place for the poorest in the city. Later in 1907 a new market was opened, hoping again to cleanse the area of undesirables (Antunes Maciel and Leandro de Souza, 2012, p. 67).

The building of the modern Western and colonial city was supposed to eradicate primitive forms of trade by bringing them into regularised markets, which would become exemplars of clean and orderly behaviour. The reality, of course, is that poor people did not go away and still needed cheap access to food and easy business start-ups provided by informal street markets. These kinds of markets, therefore, persisted in many cities of the global North well into the nineteenth century (Fava, Guàrdia and Oyón, 2016), and of course are still very much present in many other cities particularly in the global South. Indoor and regulated markets, although initially established in contrast to informal markets eventually acquired many of the same characteristics and stigmatisation as they attracted the poorest in cities. What we see is a continual effort by the modern state to tame not only street and informal trading but also any formal regular and indoor markets which challenge the modern values of order, standardisation, separation of functions and hygiene.

### *The rise and fall of the municipal markets as public assets*

With the rapid urbanisation and industrialisation of cities through the nineteenth century, feeding the rising population became a major concern of the state, which was becoming by now a central form of organising modern society. In many countries, one way of dealing with this issue was to rein in markets under state control and turn them into key public services.

The regulation of food provision and distribution became one of the most important roles of the incipient local governments in Europe. In France, the French Revolution saw the abolition of all feudal rights related to markets and these became now part of the municipal responsibility like hospitals, schools or jails (Guàrdia and Oyón, 2007). The role of these municipal markets in the spatial configuration of the city differed across countries (Guàrdia and Oyón, 2015). In the UK, iron-wrought central indoor markets were built at the heart of cities, particularly in northern England, although London continued the tradition of street markets (Schmiechen and Carls, 1999). This was followed to some extent in the Scandinavian countries although with less development of the municipal market. In contrast, a more polycentric model was adopted in Paris and then followed in Barcelona, Madrid, Turin or Berlin, cities with higher urban density where neighbourhood markets were built to serve the local population of the district (Fava et al, 2016). In Mexico City, a city which features prominently in our book, local authorities started to get more involved in the regulation of markets from the beginning of the nineteenth century and by 1850s the first municipal covered market was built (González, 2016). In USA a tightly-regulated system of municipal food provision was developed through a network of public markets from the eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century. In New York, for example, there was a political consensus that the municipal model served to ensure the public good of citizens' access to food (Baics, 2016). But by around the 1820s, the council was struggling to keep up their investment in public markets in relation to urban growth; This coincided with trends to deregulate food provisioning at a national level and from then on the idea of the public market entered in a decline (Baics, 2016).

This decline of the municipal market model in New York was mirrored in Europe, and by the beginning of the twentieth century the model was in crisis. The UK, which had been a pioneer of the covered market hall, was the first to move to a new food retailing system with large wholesalers and food chains, according to Guàrdia and Oyón (2015). These two authors mark the 'definitive crisis' of the covered municipal market after the Second World War with a convergence of several factors: destruction of the physical infrastructure, individual car ownership, the dispersion of the population and the supermarket revolution. We can add to these factors the shift in the role that local authorities would play, particularly from the 1970s, as they moved from being predominantly managers and deliverers of public services to being urban entrepreneurs as well (Harvey, 1989). Local authorities, particularly in the



North Atlantic zone, became increasingly under pressure to generate income; Central government funds would started to withdraw, so cities had to attract and compete for external private investment (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). In this new phase, public markets, often serving the poorest in cities were a hindrance to the neoliberalising spirit of many local leaders.

### *Narratives of decline, resurgence and commodification*

As I have already suggested above, the modern narrative was for informal and street trading to disappear. The story went that market halls in Europe and in Latin America, the focus of our book, were the natural evolution that would formalise, dignify and impose order in small street retail. The next step with globalisation was for market halls to be superseded by supermarkets and similar multi-chain retailers. However this modern narrative has not fully become reality (Cross, 2000). Street, informal trading and market and indoor halls are still very much present in cities and for many different reasons even growing; sometimes reflecting new tastes and desires for a more authentic type of consumption and sometimes due to the lack of other forms of employment.

This narrative of the decline and obsolescence of markets, a common thread in our book, has partly been promoted by the academic discourse. Stobart and Van Damme show that while marketplaces occupy the interest of medieval historians, this focus disappears when it comes to ‘narrative accounts on urban modernization in the industrial age’ (2016, p. 361). The emphasis for retail historians has been on analysing innovations, prioritising the novelty of the department store, chains, internationalisation etc. And in terms of contemporary research, there is little research on markets from a retail perspective. Retail theory has generally been dominated by neoclassical assumptions and evolutionary ideas, such as the ‘retail wheel’, which understands that new forms of retailing start as low-cost and with low margins, and then naturally evolve and expand by ‘trading up’, searching for wealthier customers and selling at higher prices (Brown, 1995). Of course, markets as we approach them in this book do not always fit this ‘retail wheel’ and can often remain stubbornly at its beginning. As Brown (1995) notes, these theories are based on universal assumptions of linear evolution, mostly in retail environments of the global North.. These dominant modernist narratives have

therefore overlooked and underestimated the role of markets, generally relegating them to a marginal place in our cities, as relics of past times. From a different perspective, research interest in markets has come from ethnographers and anthropologists (and occasionally urban sociologists and geographers) interested in informality and generally approaching them from a ‘development’ angle and hence most of times also marginalised from the main circuits of academic knowledge production.

At the same time as this marginalisation and decline, many of our case studies in the book show that markets are also experiencing a resurgence and many are being redeveloped (Seale, 2016) and rebranded to cater for an increasing demand for a niche shopping experience related to local food, authenticity and as a turn away from the omnipresence of supermarkets. This recent resurgence, in fact, repositions markets into their pre-modern role, but in a way which is commodified and ready for consumption; in a postmodern society, saturated with exchange value, the market becomes a place where we can temporarily seek a break and explore the opportunity to consume ‘tradition’.

### **Contested Markets: Three analytical frameworks**

Bringing this historical analysis up to the contemporary phase, our book presents an innovative way of looking at markets as contested spaces from three overlapping perspectives, which we use as threads for our case studies. These three analytical angles are complex and intermesh with multiple processes which have been studied by a variety of academic disciplines. In the following pages we sketch out these processes, laying out a mosaic of conceptual tools and concepts which are then taken up, expanded and fleshed out by the case study chapters in the book.

#### *Markets as frontier spaces for processes of gentrification*

Our first analytical perspective looks at markets as contested spaces which are undergoing processes of gentrification. Gentrification is a concept often used to describe and criticise changes in the social make-up of a neighbourhood (Clark, 2005; Lees et al, 2013). Simply

put, it can be seen as the replacement of a working class and/or low income population by middle class as dwellers, consumers, or both. It is a complex process involving changes in the built environment, services (such as education) and the retail mix which shifts to accommodate a wealthier population. Most research into this process focuses on the residential urban environment and on the residents' (old and new) experiences. There has been much less research on how gentrification also takes place through and affects the retail environment and how users (old and new) are also affected. A definition we have used before defines retail gentrification in these terms:

the process whereby the commerce that serves (amongst others) a population of low income is transformed/replaced into/by a type of retail targeted at wealthier people. From a different angle, we can also see it as the increase in commercial rents that pushes traders to increase price of their products, change products or change location.

(González and Dawson, 2015, p. 19)

Within the contours of this broad definition, the gentrification of markets can take many different forms, as we will see in our case studies. Sometimes it can be part of a wider residential neighbourhood gentrification process, where the retail offer is 'upgraded' to fit the new residents while the older ones are priced out or left out of place. Other times markets can be part of 'retail-led' regeneration strategies, where the market itself could become a flagship for the redevelopment of an area. In historical city centres, like those in Latin America, the gentrification of markets often forms part of 'heritage-led' redevelopment strategies; buildings are restored and upgraded and in the process the old occupants and their clientele is partly or totally replaced.

These processes of gentrification are related to the recent resurgence of public markets discussed above in which they are re-discovered and consumed as a traditional experience. Markets are reframed as 'authentic' pre-modern shopping experiences, where users escape the anonymity and antiseptic environment of the supermarket. Zukin (2009) has already highlighted the importance of shopping for authenticity as a driver for gentrification. High-income residents or tourists, in the face of standardised suburban or hyper-corporate city centres, crave a sense of place, a return to what gave cities and neighbourhoods an identity

and distinctiveness. This can be a particular typology and look of housing and a distinct retail landscape: independent coffee shops, small DIY shops, grocery stores or a traditional bakery. These places develop a marker and an aesthetic of authenticity which has been associated with the hipster sub-culture (Hubbard, 2016). Significantly, this process of ‘boutiquing’, as identified by Zukin et al (2009, p. 48) ‘mark[s] an area as safe for commercial investment that will upgrade services and raise rents’, leading to further rounds of retail and residential gentrification. Consequently, the original stores often cannot afford the new rents and have to abandon their businesses; sometimes, they might adapt to reflect the new customer base, for example changing their products. Either of these processes end up displacing the previous users of the neighbourhood retail offer, as they can no longer find or afford the products they used to consume, or they simply feel excluded from this upscale and often racially-marked environment (Sullivan and Shaw, 2011). Retail gentrification is happening in many places and can take many forms, and some work on it is emerging (for example, Bridge and Dowling, 2001; González Martínez, 2016; Pascual Molinas and Ribera Fumaz, 2009; Schlack and Turnbull, 2015; Sequera and Janoschka, 2015).

As we will see later in the book, in many places processes of gentrification are directly linked to previous phases of abandonment or disinvestment. As I explained above, in many countries, markets as municipal services have suffered a decline which has been aggravated by the emergence and massive expansion globally of supermarkets and retail chains. We have argued before (González and Waley, 2013) that this situation of disinvestment pushes public markets into the gentrification frontier in a similar way in which Neil Smith (1996) analysed inner-city and working class neighbourhoods. Because of their traditional role as meeting and trading places, markets are very often in central and strategic urban locations. In the context described above of middle class search for authentic experiences and the neoliberalisation of urban policies, state authorities, who often own markets, are under great pressure to upgrade them and turn them into more profitable assets. As illustrated in our case studies, this retail upgrading leads to the displacement not only of the older traders but also of market customers and users and potentially of surrounding independent businesses.

There is a wealth of research documenting the displacement of street and informal traders, particularly in cities in the global South. Bromley and Mackie (2009) make an explicit

connection between the process of gentrification in central areas in Latin American cities and the efforts by state actors to remove street traders from them. The process of displacement is generally preceded by a campaign to stigmatise of traders. In a similar way to how street traders were described in London or Paris in the nineteenth century, today ‘street vendors are described like locusts, coming in ‘plagues,’ ‘droves,’ and ‘deluges,’ and the city is depicted as being both invaded and asphyxiated’ (Bromley, 2000. p. 10). In our book, we show how these processes of displacement are also occurring in formally-regulated markets, not only in streets but also in covered market halls in cities in the global North. These displacement processes are, however, usually less dramatic and aggressive than the eviction of street vendors and therefore we need more nuanced ways to understand gentrification-induced displacement, such as those discussed by Marcuse (1985) and Slater (2009). This includes paying attention not only to the displacement of traders but also of those who use the market for shopping and socialising as well as the displacement of products.

*Markets as spaces for mobilisation, contestation and debate over public space and the city.*

Our second analytical framework looks at markets as spaces for political mobilisation, contestation and struggle for public space. As already stressed, markets form part of wider processes of urban and retail change, involving a diversity of actors which often turn them into spaces for contestation. Projects for the refurbishment, redevelopment or modernisation of markets frequently do not progress quietly or in an uncontested manner. On the contrary, market transformations are often challenged by the traders themselves, neighbours, customers and other adjacent traders and urban actors. Authorities at different state levels and private developers can have disparate views about the present and future of markets, and this brings them into potential conflict. Because of the central role that markets and street trading have historically played in cities and their public nature, contestation around markets often spills into much wider debates about the city, and in particular the right to the city for the most vulnerable.

There already exists an abundant literature on informal trading and contestation for public space, particularly in cities of the global South. In Latin America, the work of Bromley and Mackie (2009) reports on the resistance of informal traders against their displacement from

the centre of Cusco in Peru. Apart from planned demonstrations, traders also occupied or re-occupied the streets they were being displaced from, or nearby less surveilled areas. Crossa (2009) has analysed the complex practices of street traders as they struggle to remain in the historic centre of Mexico City. Most of the time, conflicts see street traders confronting state authorities, but struggles also emerge between formal and informal traders (see Bromley and Mackie, 2009; Omoegun, 2015).

These forms of political mobilisation by informal and street traders can be regarded as part of a labour struggle. Street traders around the world, who most of the time belong to marginalised groups, share workplace insecurity, harassment, precarity and eviction from their workplace (Graaff and Ha, 2015; Habitat, 2015; Roever and Skinner, 2016) and these are the main issues they mobilise around. But often the contestation around markets goes beyond labour issues to become a struggle for the right to use the urban space to develop a livelihood. Central urban spaces attract the greatest footfall from residents, worker-commuters and tourists, and informal traders want to take advantage of this possibility for trade. But, as discussed already, state authorities increasingly implement aggressive techniques to ‘recover’ the streets for safe and sanctioned activities in the public space. Streets, particularly in populous global South cities, become a veritable battleground between authorities and informal traders (Mackie et al, 2014).

Informal trader mobilisations, however do not only concern these spatial battles for streets in order to develop their livelihoods, but have enlarged to make wider claims about the right to the city and debates about the use of public spaces. These claims have been strongly developed by national and international networks of informal workers and traders. For example, Streetnet, which emerged in Durban in 2002, launched a campaign in 2006 in alliance with other organisations representing the urban poor in response to what was seen as an exclusive view of the city particularly in the wake of the football World Cup in South Africa in 2010 (Streetnet, 2010). In the buildup to Habitat 3, the UN Summit on urban issues held in Quito in October 2016, informal and street trader organisations and networks mobilised to make sure their demands for an inclusive city would be listened to (WIEGO, n.d. ). Informal traders, then, are not only reactive or defensive actors narrowly concerned

with their trading space but often develop an important ‘urban voice’ (Brown et al, 2010) which can have an impact in planning and urban policy decision-making.

The overwhelming majority of research on traders and markets as actors and spaces for urban mobilisation is focused on cities in the global South and around informal and/or street trading, with the dispute over public space and displacement being the major triggers for contestation. In this book, however, we make an original contribution by showing that these struggles are now increasingly affecting regular and formal markets, which brings a new dimension as we will see in our case studies. Furthermore, in this book we also analyse mobilisations not only by traders but also by market users and shoppers, which tend to mobilise against the disappearance or marginalisation of traditional retail markets, as a sign of the loss of local identity in the retail landscape and of retail gentrification. Broad alliances between traders, local community groups and campaigns can emerge to defend ‘our market’, as we will see in the following case studies. In these cases, the neighbourhood and/or the city are invoked as the scale of the struggle, making the markets a metaphor or a symbol for wider urban struggles.

*Markets as spaces for building alternative and counter practices of production and consumption.*

Our third main analytical framework is that of markets as spaces for building alternative and/or counter-practices of production and consumption outside or beyond corporate networks. We also consider within this sphere the ways in which markets can create spaces for solidarity and social inclusion creating what Mele et al (2015, p. 104) refer to as ‘corrective spaces’ to the ‘excesses of advanced urbanism’ characterised by corporate consumerism, excessive regulation of public spaces and the erosion of indigenous urban landscapes. Therefore, we argue that some of the practices surrounding the use of this ‘traditional’ type of retail can be considered a form of resistance or a kind of counter-practice to processes of neoliberalisation.

One of the most well-recognised features of traditional retail markets is that they are not simply retail spaces for the monetary exchange of goods but they are also social spaces where traders and customers develop meaningful relationships. This social function is particularly important to the most vulnerable residents of cities such as the elderly, single mothers, young people, ethnic minorities, migrants and refugees and people with health problems (Morales, 2009; Project for Public Spaces, 2003; Watson and Studdert, 2006). These inclusive features ran counter to the kind of urbanism and aspirational cities that prevail with mega-developments, privatised and securitised spaces and increasingly unaffordable and precarious housing. Markets can therefore act as a kind of refuge for excluded groups of people.

Markets are also particularly important in creating spaces for social interaction between groups of people from diverse backgrounds, age, class, culture and ethnicity. Cities across the world are becoming more diverse but this does not necessarily mean that citizens necessarily interact with people from diverse backgrounds in their everyday life. It seems, however, that markets can open up spaces for interaction as they throw people together in a less conflictual way than in other spheres such as the housing or labour market. Watson (2009) observes how people in markets ‘rub along’, sharing same spaces and although not necessarily engaging in deep interaction, at least tolerating each other, potentially creating practices of tolerance. Indeed, ethnographers have looked at markets as a microcosm of cosmopolitanism (Duru, Luckman and Bishop, 2011) or what Anderson (2011) calls a ‘cosmopolitan canopy’. We should not however fall into a romantic notion of the market and see them as havens for ideal inter-ethnic and inter-class cohabitation. Pardy (2005 cited by Hiebert et al, 2015, p. 11) argues that in fact markets might develop these inclusive features precisely because they could be places of ‘indifference to difference’ where people can practice ‘mutual avoidance’ and share a space without meaningful interaction. .

Markets can also be spaces for solidarity and this can happen in many different forms. Even though markets are by definition spaces for the monetary exchange, our own experience and the literature shows that plenty of non-monetary exchanges happen in markets. For example, as shown in some of our case studies, market traders report on caring for customers, particularly the elderly, those feeling lonely or those with mental health issues. As reported by Stillerman and Sundt in the case of street markets in Santiago de Chile, ‘personal networks



and acts of reciprocity are significant in relationships among vendors and between vendors and customers' (2007, p. 192). This trust, they argue, is developed because of the absence of state supervision and the lack of formal agreements. Our research and observation in formal and regulated markets shows that these reciprocal relationships also take place there, admittedly where there is also an element of informality and a more direct relationship between customers and sellers than in shopping malls, for example.

Another form of solidarity economy is when markets and/or market traders actually use alternative circuits and production and distribution networks from the corporate and globalised ones as in the case study of Mercado Bonpland (Chapter 8). Within this broad field of solidarity economies, we find a big range of different types of markets, from the rekindled farmers' markets so popular in the US and UK to the traditional subsistence markets of small towns and settlements across the world (Bubinas, 2011). In the US, farmers' markets that connect producers with consumers directly have been used as tools for social mobility and community cohesion (Project for Public Spaces, 2003). But they also have been criticised for creating exclusionary spaces, as food can be significantly more expensive and they often run by and frequented by middle class white consumers (Alkon and McCullen, 2011).

There are therefore many ways in which markets can become alternative spaces to the commodification of social relations and segregation between groups that we increasingly experience in cities. Sometimes, using and working in markets can be conscious and political micro-acts of resistance, but perhaps more often they are subtle forms of 'subaltern urbanisms' (Roy, 2011) practiced by ordinary people in their everyday life.

### **Our case study markets**

The case studies in our book represent the variety and diversity of markets in cities across Europe and Latin America. In particular, we discuss markets in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Santiago de Chile, Quito, Madrid, London, Leeds and Sofia. Our markets, therefore, are all situated in relatively large cities ranging from the very large Mexico City (8.8m people) to Sofia (1.2m) and Leeds (750,000). As such, the markets are immersed in complex urban processes and transformations. As discussed above, the innovation of this book is that we

mainly focus on formal and regulated markets as opposed to the majority of the academic literature in this area, which tends to focus on informal street markets. Most of our case studies are also covered and indoor markets, often owned by public authorities or in cooperation by the traders themselves. However, as we have started to develop in the introduction of this book, despite their formal, regulated and fixed nature, they are also somewhat informal spaces and they are, in the main, spaces at the margin of the official discourses of the city. In our case study markets we develop the three analytical frameworks discussed above to show how markets have become contested spaces in our cities.

The first market that we present in the book is that of La Merced, situated at the edge of the historic centre of Mexico City (Chapter 2). This is a complex of several indoor markets surrounded by formal and informal street traders with thousands of people selling an enormous variety of produce now under pressure for redevelopment. La Vega central in Santiago de Chile (Chapter 3) is also a big complex of covered markets at the edge of the city centre, owned and managed by the collective of traders, which gives it an interesting political role. The market and the wider neighbourhood, historically a space for low-income and marginalised workers and customers, is now seeing signs of early gentrification and it remains to be seen how the traders might manage this process.

In London, we also discuss the gentrification and real estate speculative pressures on markets and we focus on three different trader and/or customer campaigns which have emerged to resist the demolition or transformation of their markets (Chapter 4). The theme of political organisation around markets is then taken up by another chapter (Chapter 5) on Mexico City, this time discussing the formally organised *tianguis* markets, made up of street stalls. The chapter discusses the struggle for the use of public space and the political role of the leaders of the trader associations.

In a comparative chapter between Madrid and Mexico City (Chapter 6), we analyse the process of ‘gourmetisation’ of markets, a trend related to the rise of a ‘foodie’ culture amongst middle class consumers looking for authentic experiences that they can find in markets branded and marketed as ‘traditional’. Chapter 7 looks in more detail at the recent

and uneven transformations affecting the relatively large network of municipal markets in Madrid, amidst a process of retail gentrification in many neighbourhoods of the city and the power of global retail chains. In Chapter 8 we visit Buenos Aires, and analyse the ‘solidarity market’ Bonpland, a small indoor market which was taken up by a neighbourhood assembly after the 2001 Argentinian economic crisis and which has become a hub for alternative consumption and production networks across the country.

The cases in our remaining cities in Leeds, Sofia and Quito (Chapters 9, 10 and 11) all show markets which, because of their historical marginalisation by the authorities, have become refuges for marginalised groups. However, this is now under threat because of processes of redevelopment. In Leeds, Kirkgate Market has become a culturally and ethnically superdiverse space, where people from very different backgrounds interact and develop networks of care and reciprocity, but it is unclear whether its current transformations and the local authority’s aspirations for an upscaled market will guarantee this inclusivity. In Sofia, the so-called ‘Women’s Market’ was for decades stigmatised and connected to pre-modern notions of Eastern Europe. The chapter shows how the market is still a space for marginalised communities but not necessarily integrated, with groups interacting side-by-side. In Quito, the San Roque Market has become a place for the reproduction of the popular culture of the indigenous groups manifested in collective organising around festive and religious traditions, but there is a long struggle with the authorities who have repeatedly tried to move and dismantle the market and its diverse community.

In the chapters which follow, we develop these case studies in depth by building on the three analytical frameworks presented in this introduction. The diversity of markets themselves and their relationship to the neighbourhoods and cities where they are based as well as the variety of expertise of the researchers means that the case study chapters draw on the three analytical frameworks in differing ways. The concluding chapter returns to these analytical threads with a comparative analysis of the markets, reflecting on the similarities and difference across them.



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