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Contested Marketplaces. Retail spaces at the global urban margins

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Abstract: This paper argues that retail spaces, such as marketplaces are increasingly becoming sites of urban contestation. The globalisation of retail, online shopping and the redevelopment of cities has pushed marketplaces to the margins but they still serve millions of people, particularly the urban poor. Concurrently, marketplaces are branded as authentic consumption experiences for tourists and residents. Building on these contradictions, I propose a novel framework with three analytical lenses to reposition marketplaces as marginal city spaces that serve as productive sites for studying urban transformation processes across the global north and south.

Introduction. Studying marketplaces

Marketplaces have been at the centre of urban life for centuries and despite the rise of multinational retail chains and online shopping, they still provide affordable food and work opportunities for millions of people across the world. Marketplaces also function as spaces for social interaction particularly for vulnerable groups and can promote fairer forms of consumption and production. At the same time, in recent decades, many markets across the world such as La Boquería Market in Barcelona, Rotterdam's Market Hall, Borough Market in London or wet markets in Hong Kong, have become destinations for tourists, foodies and heralded as urban regeneration models. The danger is that these transformations are endangering their important role as public meeting places and the reproduction of ordinary everyday life, particularly for marginalised groups. This clash of trends and processes turns marketplaces into 'contested spaces' at the 'global urban margins'. They are marginal insofar as they often occupy an edgy space in cities: they might be centrally located but are neglected and/or marginalised, squeezed by corporate retail formats and threatened by displacement. However, this marginal location can also foster alternative forms of socialisation away from the marketised city. This paper will show how these often marginal retail spaces are important sites for the study of contemporary global urban transformations and need to be taken seriously by urban critical scholars who have tended to ignore them.

Marketplaces are notably difficult beasts to define. An accepted legal definition in the UK strips them down to 'a concourse of buyers and sellers' generally of more than five stalls, stands or pitches (Wilson, 2018) . This broad definition has a wide scope and allows us to embrace an enormous variety of formats and institutional arrangements: itinerant, periodic, informal, illegal, municipal, open air, street or indoor market halls to mention some. Beyond these typologies marketplaces are also characterised by a 'concrete and public sociality in which exchange is embedded in localized, cultural, social and political relationships' (Slater and Tonkiss, 2001: 13). Seale (2016: 12) emphasises the fluidity of marketplaces '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'. This paper embraces these broad definitions to include their variety but with an emphasis on the more 'traditional' or 'popular' format to differentiate them from other renewed 'niche' markets such as craft, organic, gourmet and street food, events and themed markets[1].

The variegated nature of marketplaces is matched by the diversity of disciplines studying them from anthropology, ethnography, geography, economics, and business studies to sociology. However this spread in their study has not necessarily led to an interdisciplinary scholarship and thus certain fixed categories attached to academic traditions have emerged which I will argue limit our understanding of marketplaces in contemporary times. First, an initial categorisation tends to separate the 'specific' marketplace from the 'abstract' market society or 'market principles'. In Braudel's analysis of the emergence of capitalism he distinguished the marketplace where the public assembles in a place to exchange goods from the markets where private transactions take place (Slater and Tonkiss, 2001). However this sharp division misses the fact that the two are related and intermingled and according to Applbaum (2012) actually converge in some instances as the more traditional types of marketplaces are squeezed out and/or are under pressure from global retail flows. Another critique to this separation has come from African anthropologists who have challenged the notion that capitalist free market 'principles'

should be seen as the model against which to judge other forms of exchange that are very prevalent in the global south (Guyer, 2015; Hill, 1991) Secondly, despite increased acknowledgement of a problematic binary, the academic literature on marketplaces remains largely divided into two camps: studies of marketplaces classed alternatively as informal or as formal/regulated. The vast majority of the literature is dedicated to the former with academics and international organisations mainly interested in street vendors' strategies to survive and resist overregulation and displacement (see for example recently (Bhowmik, 2012; Bostic et al., 2016; Brown, 2017; Evers and Seale, 2015; Graaff and Ha, 2015; Habitat, 2015; Kusakabe, 2006; Roever, 2014). These studies are, in the main, based in cities in the global south or, less often, look at economies of migrant street vendors in global north cities (Schmoll and Semi, 2013; Semi, 2008). In contrast, there is considerably less research on the more regulated marketplaces, which often tend to be owned and managed by public authorities and which can be indoor or outdoor and take place regularly in the same place or are itinerant. These marketplaces exist across the world but are more prominent in cities in the global north.

Marketplaces, understood through the informal/formal binary, have not tended to be studied together (although see recent exceptions in González 2018a and Seale 2016) and in fact their analytical separation has been reinforced by disciplinary boundaries and dominant research agendas. Street markets/vendors have been the interest of anthropologists and ethnographers coming from an informality, international development or 'area studies' traditions while studies of marketplaces classed a formal, although scarce, are found mainly in ethnography, history, urban geography, sociology and food studies and tend to stress social capital, diversity or issues of urban development. Other disciplines that might have paid attention, such as economics or retail geography, have been relatively silent (although see (Crewe and Gregson, 1998) work on car boot sales). As mentioned above, this separation is furthered by a geographical divide: most studies of marketplaces cast as informal are located in the global south while those of marketplaces cast as formal are focussed in the global north.

The reality however is that the supposed neat distinction between informal and formal marketplaces is blurred and processes attributed distinctly to marketplaces in the global north or south can be happening globally. Hence, the disciplinary and academic rigidities and blind spots that have developed in the study of marketplaces have created gaps in knowledge. These dualisms and omissions replicate some of the knowledge gaps denounced by Robinson (2002) more generally within the urban studies field, which she argued create limitations to the understanding of an era of global urbanism. In the field of marketplaces, for example, most of the theoretical developments have been generated for cities in the global south and around street vending but this does not mean that some of the concepts from informality studies cannot be fruitfully applied to marketplaces in the global north. And in parallel, the recent research on how marketplaces in the global north are gentrifying can also be productively applied elsewhere as I will show later.

To breach these gaps and transcend implied in/formal dichotomies I take a comparative gesture (Robinson, 2011) embracing marketplaces' variegated nature and bringing literatures and related areas of study together to situate marketplaces as contested spaces at the urban margins. I will search for common threads of transformation processes taking place in traditional forms of retail, relating, comparing and learning from diverse urban experiences across the world. A further contribution of this paper is to elevate retail spaces as important sites for the study of

contemporary processes of urban transformation such as informality, gentrification, dispossession, privatisation, social exclusion/inclusion or solidarity.

The process for writing this paper has combined several methods: a critical review of existing international literature on street and public marketplaces; a collective and comparative learning processes in the context of the CONTESTED CITIES[2] network where I led a marketplaces working group (see Delgadillo, 2016: and special issue of the Journal Ciudades, issue 114; González, 2018a); my own primary research and observation as a long term customer and activist in Leeds Kirkgate Market (González and Waley, 2013; Rivlin and González, 2018) and my research and collaboration in some UK grassroots market campaigns (González and Dawson, 2015; González and Dawson, 2018).

The rest of the article is organised in three main sections where I develop an innovative framework of three analytical lenses to study marketplaces as contested spaces at the margins. The conclusions offer wider reflections and the contribution these lenses and entry points bring to the field of urban critical geography.

Three lenses on urban contestation and marketplaces

As explained above, the gaps developed in the literature have not allowed us to see marketplaces as key sites of a variety of forms of urban contestation across various geographies because their study has separated them into diverging conceptual frameworks and geographical areas. In the next sections I present a novel framework for the analysis of marketplaces by critically reviewing existing literature and presenting new research along three related 'lenses' which locate marketplaces at the contested urban margins It is important therefore to explain what I mean by urban contestation and how I have conceptualized these three 'lenses'.

I understand urban contestation as a key generative process through which urban spaces are produced, through negotiation and conflict between a multitude of actors embedded in uneven and multi-scalar power networks situated within wide intersectional structures. For this conceptualisation, I am inspired by a research question that Manuel Castells posed in 1983: 'how do structurally defined actors produce and reproduce cities through their conflicts, domination, alliances and compromises'? (Castells, 1983: xvii). For him, the urban form is seen as the product of 'social struggles and bargaining' (Ibid). Castells of course paid particular attention to the role of organised urban social movements in the process of creating urban social change. Today, contestation in neoliberalising cities has stretched out to complex forms and strategies with a wide variety of actors participating and we do not necessarily see strongly organised movements (see f.e. (Mayer, 2017). Retail spaces, such as marketplaces, are also part of the constellation of urban sites which are contested as different actors attach diverging values to them. This contestation is heightened by the fact that marketplaces tend to be located at the urban margins: although sometimes situated in very central areas they have often been neglected and stigmatised, with precarious or underinvested infrastructures and used by groups of populations that are marginalised, vulnerable or that do not have strong property rights.

This marginal location puts them at the centre of complex processes of transformation and contestation that I propose can be framed and investigated through three 'lenses' which can be characterised as follows. First, marketplaces are increasingly becoming spaces for the

extraction of profit, their exchange value sometimes outweighing their use value as collective consumption spaces. This process is particularly taking place through the redevelopment of the physical infrastructure of marketplaces and the gentrification of their customer base and traders. Second, marketplaces can become sites for political mobilisation, sometimes directly to resist the processes mentioned above but also more widely as battlegrounds for a wider struggle of groups fighting for the right to the city of the most vulnerable. Third, marketplaces can be sites for the reproduction of alternative social and economic practices that can transcend consumerist values and practices. Evidently, these three lenses can interact and overlap in one single space; they are not to be seen as self-excluding. In the next sections I develop each of these three lenses critically reviewing existing literature and drawing this together with new research.

B Marketplaces as frontier spaces for processes of gentrification, displacement and dispossession.

This first analytical lens locates marketplaces at the heart of multiple processes pushing for further and continuous marketization of land. This is marginalising marketplaces' traditional role of supplying affordable produce and sustaining livelihoods in search for higher value activities. Thus many street vendors are being displaced from central urban areas and marketplaces are pivoting towards high end consumers and tourists. Marketplaces, therefore, are at the frontier of wider processes of gentrification, displacement and dispossession that we can see happening in cities across the world. The relationship between these processes, however, is complex and plays out differently according to the institutional and governance arrangements that surround markets (ownership, regulations, traders' rights etc.) and the local context. In what follows I bring together literature across different contexts and types of markets to chart the trends pushing marketplaces to transform.

Gentrification is a complex and variegated process which is transforming urban landscapes across the world (Lees et al., 2016) although less attention has been paid to how and why it transforms the retail fabric of cities (Hubbard, 2018). Retail gentrification has been defined as:

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" (Gonzalez and Dawson, 2015: 19).

Hubbard (2018: 296) in his own definition stresses the fact that this "upscaling" is inherently linked to the "displacement of the local stores and services on which working class residents rely". Retail gentrification has been generally reported in the literature as a by-product of residential gentrification: retail environments change to reflect higher income residents and visitors and expensive boutiques and chain shops replace traditional local stores (Zukin et al., 2009). As a result, long term residents and users can feel alienated (Valli, 2015) and report a 'loss of place' (Shaw and Hagemans, 2015) particularly if this also entails, as in many north American cities, a 'whitening' of the retail offer (Monroe Sullivan and Shaw, 2011). But there is also research showing retail changes as the initiating force of gentrification such as for example in Santiago de Chile (Schlack and Turnbull, 2015) or Shanghai (González Martínez, 2016)

where traditional housing types are being turned into fashionable shops and leisure spaces displacing residents. In the UK, Hubbard (2017) looks at retail gentrification as a process in its own right which is transforming the discourses and landscape of the traditional British 'high street'.

Processes of gentrification and dispossession affect marketplaces in different ways. It is well established in the literature that unregulated marketplaces are often removed or street vendors persecuted by authorities following revanchist policies particularly in gentrifying city centres in the global South (Bromley and Mackie, 2009; Brown, 2017; Swanson, 2007). Many times traders are forcibly moved from the street or simple market structures and relocated into newly developed purpose buildings where often their businesses fail to prosper (Aliaga Linares, 2017; Selingmann, 2018). The general logic behind these forms of displacement is that street traders are seen as undesirable urban actors whose presence denotes the backwardness of the city which policy makers seek to erase (Roever and Skinner, 2016).

These processes of displacement and dispossession that have so far been mainly identified in the streets vendors' literature are also taking place around indoor and regulated marketplaces. Here, as marketplaces and traders are more established, processes of dispossession tend to be longer-termed and more progressive and often preceded by a phase of disinvestment and stigmatisation. In Sofia, the so-called 'Women's Market' was for decades neglected and stigmatised; the media labelling as too 'oriental', not deemed appropriate for a modern and European Sofia (Eneva, 2018). In the case of Spanish municipal marketplaces, Salinas Arreortúa (2016) explains how a discourse of decline and infrastructural obsolescence has been imposed by public authorities in the last decades to justify the need for a transformation of the traditional public market. Similarly, in Quito (Kingman Garcés and Bedón, 2018) and Mexico City (Delgadillo, 2018), the popular marketplaces and neighbourhoods of San Roque and La Merced have been stigmatised and neglected by authorities, referring to delinquency, prostitution and lack of hygiene, as a pretext to transform the areas. Similar processes have been observed in London (Dines, 2007; González and Dawson, 2018), Dublin (Bonnin et al., 2017) and the city of Tucuman (Argentina) (Boldrini and Malizia, 2014).

This disinvestment and marginalisation, coupled with the often very central and strategic location of marketplaces in cities, has driven marketplaces towards a 'gentrification frontier' (González and Waley, 2013; Smith, 1996). This push to gentrification is accelerated by the particular qualities that can turn marketplaces into an 'authentic' consumption experience for middle and upper classes and tourists. The search for urban authenticity has long been recognised as a marker of gentrification (Bridge and Dowling, 2001; Ley, 1996; Zukin et al., 2009) and this is heightened in the case of marketplaces as they are re-branded into pre-modern spaces (Pintaudi, 2006), where sellers and buyers are said to connect beyond a monetary experience (Coles and Crang, 2010). Critical scholarship is starting to attend to these trends. Mateos (2017: 15), for example, in her analysis of the redevelopment of the San Antón Market in central Madrid, notes its staged authenticity where she observes an 'instrumentalisation of the traditional, from a top down gaze, reifying the working class [culture] and turning it into an object of contemplation'. Similarly, Delgadillo (2017) offers a critical analysis of the recent policy in Mexico City to formalise and protect the intangible heritage of marketplaces, arguing that it exaggerates the cultural, identitarian and touristic function of marketplaces over their economic and everyday life function for low income users.

As mentioned before, much of the literature on retail gentrification sees these changes in the retailscapes as a reflection of the wider neighbourhood change however, in some cases the redevelopment of marketplaces has actually been the catalyst for the wider gentrification of a neighbourhood. For example in Barcelona, the Santa Caterina Market was completely transformed in the early 2000s with the design of an iconic roof clearly aimed at attracting Barcelona's surging tourism. But in the process many of its long term traders and surrounding businesses were displaced to make way for higher end restaurant and boutiques and a supermarket inside the market (Hernández, 2016; Medina and Álvarez, 2009; Pascual-Molinas and Ribera-Fumaz, 2009). This kind of transformation of the municipal market has been the hallmark of the so-called 'Barcelona markets model' (Ajuntament de Barcelona: n/d) aimed at turning marketplaces into leisure 'destinations' rather than neighbourhood food supply centres; a model that is now travelling and being sold to other cities (Salinas Arreortúa and Cordero Gómez del Campo, 2018)

There are numerous and increasing accounts of gentrification of marketplaces but this does not mean that this process is sweeping across all marketplaces or that is uniform or homogenous. Indeed we need to be wary of simplifying a complex process into simplistic definitions of gentrification that do not apply everywhere (Bernt, 2016). Instead we can understand gentrification as a variegated and uneven process (Lees et al., 2016) that is drawn out, often incomplete and resisted (see next section for this). For example, García Pérez et al. (2018) through their nuanced study of the relationship between marketplaces and their neighbourhoods, find that in Madrid, there is a process of 'selective gentrification', where the most central marketplaces have been redeveloped and heavily invested for tourists and middle class shoppers while marketplaces in peripheral locations can still be affordable for a wide variety of consumers including migrants. For example, Los Mostenses market is discussed in the media as an 'anti-posh' market: neither gourmet, modern or expensive' (López Iturriaga, 2016).

These variegated forms retail of gentrification are made more complex due to the variety of management and ownership models in marketplaces and wider global economic trends. For example, still in Madrid, San Fernando Market, in 2012 embarked on a trader-led process of revitalisation after a long period of decline. But in a context of economic crisis of Spain, this move attracted creative young entrepreneurs and has eventually led to its transformation into a space for bars and nightlife, where the traditional stalls struggle to survive (García Pérez et al., 2018; Sequera, 2017). In a different context, La Vega Market in Santiago is owned and managed by the association of traders who are committed to maintaining it as a public space that is open and affordable for all (Schlack et al., 2018). However the market has been for some years framed as a tourist and foodie destination by the local and international media and the traders are starting to see more customers demanding high quality and more expensive produce. This could potentially lead the traders to start shifting their offer, neglecting the more traditional function of the market, although the trend is not established yet.

Finally, the current transformation of marketplaces sees processes of urban regeneration and gentrification interacting with foodist and gourmet consumption trends, an emergent theme in gentrification research (Anguelovski, 2015; González, 2018c; Hubbard, 2017; Martin, 2014). In Kirkgate Market, in Leeds, a recent redevelopment project has been centered around a 'new dining experience, street food cafes serving tasty treats from across the world' (Leeds City Council website, n/d) and the local authority has specifically recruited new traders to sell

products such as artisan bread, delicatessen or craft beer. The plans for the major redevelopment of La Merced Markets in Mexico City (Delgadillo, 2018) include a new national gastronomic centre. And there is an emerging and international trend of self-defined gourmet markets such as San Anton in Madrid or Mercado Roma in Mexico City which has been spearheaded by the internationally acclaimed foodie markets of La Boqueria in Barcelona and Borough Market in London (Salinas Arreortúa and Cordero Gómez del Campo, 2018)

These new trends for food consumption are in turn interacting with tourism. Medina and Álvarez (2009) in their comparison between marketplaces in Barcelona and Buenos Aires identify how the food offer shifts as tourists become more interested in marketplaces – selling prepared food, food souvenirs and small portions of prepared fruit etc. In Spain, where these trends are exacerbated and marketplaces are now established as tourist destinations, there is public concern about over-touristified marketplaces (Franch, 2017). One article in the major El Pais newspaper refers to the 'Boqueria syndrome', in reference to the extremely popular market in central Barcelona where, in 2016, 20% of the stalls offered take away products (such as small pots of fruit) and tourists with cameras outnumber residents doing their shopping (Araguás, 2017). In fact in their discussion on marketplaces in Barcelona and Madrid, Hernández Cordero and Andreeva Eneva (2017) explain how marketplaces become 'tourist icons' as they represent the perfect way in which tourists can, in theory, experience the local everyday life culture.

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

The second analytical lens positions marketplaces as sites of political struggle. Marketplaces have long been arenas of contention for the control of public space between traders and the state, particularly during urban modernisation processes in the 19th century. (González, 2018b; Jones, 2016; Thompson, 1997). More recently, as discussed in the previous section, many marketplaces experience contested redevelopment projects which mobilise traders, customers and other adjacent businesses and urban actors. Furthermore, state authorities and developers can clash over different roles that marketplaces play in the city. Because of their historical importance to public life, these controversies can generate much wider debates about the city, and in particular the right to the city for the most vulnerable.

Significant scholarship already exists on street vendors and their struggle for public space, particularly in cities of the global South (Awuah, 1997; Brown, 2017; Brown et al., 2010b; Brown et al., 2011; Clark, 2002; Lyon, 2003; Mackie et al., 2014; Milgram, 2015). This research has revealed the struggle of street vendors to use public space, resist displacement and sustain livelihoods particularly in central urban areas. The literature also highlights the various forms in which traders are organised and how they influence and participate in urban governance. Although these forms of political mobilisation by informal and street traders highlight a reactive defence of their livelihoods (Graaff and Ha, 2015; Habitat, 2015; Roever and Skinner, 2016), traders often demand the right to the city more generally for the marginalised and poor (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., 2010a; Brown et al., 2010b) which can have an impact in planning and urban policy decision-making. (Milgram, 2015) highlights the practices of 'insurgent citizen' and everyday activism of market traders by occupying public space, extending or subletting their stalls or monitoring police presence to avoid repression (Turner and Schoenberger, 2012). Gillespie (2016) builds on Bayat's notion of 'quiet encroachment' to show how informal traders in Accra are actually becoming quite bold in their collective actions to appropriate public space to sustain their livelihoods.

The overwhelming majority of this research on marketplaces as spaces for urban mobilisation is focused on cities in the global South and on the agency of informal and/or street traders, with the dispute over public space and displacement being the major triggers for contestation. This research very much sits within the informality and development studies research traditions. However, as traditional indoor and regulated marketplaces come under the kind of pressures explained the previous section, they are experiencing similar threats to those of marketplaces cast as informal. These struggles are shifting the debate towards the public nature of marketplaces in cities, as some of the last bastions of inclusiveness, affordability and diversity at the margins of the neoliberal city.

This emerging evidence shows that the majority of these mobilisations around indoor and regulated marketplaces arise out of contestation over and against redevelopment projects which often follow periods of abandonment and neglect[3]. The most common of political mobilisation is partly or wholly opposing plans to demolish, redevelop or relocate a traditional market. These plans immediately affect traders who can sometimes negotiate compensation or relocation deals individually or through negotiation via their trader associations and continue their businesses elsewhere or in the redeveloped marketplaces. But going beyond this immediate resistance campaigns are emerging that form a collective alliance between the traders and market users and/or residents of the surrounding areas to contest the redevelopment project on the grounds that it will destroy the marketplaces' wider role as a public and inclusive space. The resistance here goes beyond the material concerns of the traders for their livelihoods and turns the market into a symbolic battleground between the interests of developers and local authorities for maximising the land value, on the one hand and the traders and users/residents for maximising the community value.

This type of mobilisation is evident in the various campaigns that have emerged in London and more widely in the UK against the demolition, relocation, displacement and gentrification of marketplaces (González and Dawson, 2015; González and Dawson, 2018). In London, Friends of Queens Market (FoQM) first emerged to save their market from a redevelopment project that would have seen it relocated and marginalised alongside a new supermarket. The campaign, led by concerned market users and traders was key in challenging the image of decline that the council and developers used to justify the demolition (Dines, 2007). FoQM has argued for the key role of the market as a source for affordable produce in one of the poorest neighbourhoods in London as well as a welcoming space for ethnic minorities who can find job opportunities and specialist produce. More than 10 years on, the campaign is still fighting to maintain the community element of this space. In Leeds, the campaign group Friends of Leeds Kirkgate market began in 2010 by concerned customers who feared the market was being neglected by local authorities as a pretext to privatise or gentrify it (González and Waley,

2013). The campaign later in 2014 opposed a project to redevelop the market arguing that its social impact on vulnerable market users had not been considered by the local authority who instead was more interested in the income generating opportunities created by the redevelopment (Friends of Leeds Kirkgate Market, 2014). The campaign attracted many supporters across the city who saw the market as a metaphor for the transformation of the whole city centre, towards a more corporate and privatised space.

Similarly, in Quito, the San Roque Market has become a hub for the defence of the grassroots economy ('economía popular' in Spanish) and food sovereignty of the city as well as the indigenous cultures and languages that form part of it (Kingman Garcés and Bedón, 2018). The traders, with support from residents and academics, are organised in the Front for the defence and modernisation of San Roque Market and see the market as a 'home for all', organising social, cultural and political activities – with critical geographer David Harvey as a guest! (Frente para la Defensa, n/d). Their political organisation has frustrated and delayed several redevelopment proposals that would have seen the wholesale aspect of the market displaced to the periphery. The authorities see the area as an opportunity to extend the touristic appeal of the nearby UNESCO listed city centre (Kingman Garcés and Bedón, 2018). Overall, these campaigns go beyond stopping particular redevelopment proposals and the impact on the individual traders, but are in fact elevating the market to a 'public good' as Boldrini and Malizia (2014) point to in their analysis of the resistance against a market redevelopment project in Argentina.

Many of these campaigns are also denouncing the gentrification of marketplaces and the related processes of displacement and dispossession explained in the earlier section. In Barcelona, a neighbourhood movement in the Gràcia district has directly challenged the 'model of Barcelona markets' described earlier. They criticise the plans for the €33m redevelopment of their neighbourhood market, which they argue is an out of proportion mega-project and seeks to turn it into a tourist attraction. Instead they promote public investment that will strengthen social cohesion and include spaces for food cooperatives with a focus on serving the needs of the local residents (Gràcia cap a on vas?, 2017). In Madrid, various neighbourhood movements have also denounced the transformation of their local public markets into tourist and middle class residents consumption destinations displacing long term traders and users (Lavapiés ¿donde vas?, 2017). In London, the campaign to save Seven Sisters Market against its demolition and relocation has explicitly denounced social cleansing and gentrification in social media and public demonstrations (Wards Corner, n.d.). Boldrini and Malizia (2014) also interpret as counter-gentrification initiatives the resistance to the privatisation of marketplaces in Tucuman (Argentina). Soares Pereira (2017) goes further and sees marketplaces as a 'spaces of resistance against the neoliberal push by public actors' (p.45) in his research on the resistance against the privatisation policy of the marketplaces in Juazeiro do Norte (North East Brazil).

An important characteristic of the way marketplaces are being turned into spaces for political mobilisation is that these movements and campaigns involve an alliance between traders and market users/residents which brings in a cross-fertilisation of skills, expertise and discourses. In the face of redevelopment projects, traders are generally concerned with their most immediate business and livelihood and focus on their leases, rents, charges, relocation costs or compensation. Market users and residents would generally focus on wider aspects, inserting the market, as described above, into wider struggles around the gentrification and privatisation of

cities thus expanding the appeal of the campaigns and gaining support from other groups and urban movements. For example in the campaign to save Seven Sisters Market in North London (a Latin American market), a strong link has been established not only with other groups in the immediate neighbourhood (Tottenham) but also with another Latin American community threatened by retail gentrification in South London (Roman Velazquez, 2016).

However disputes between market traders and users/residents campaigns might also arise as their interests do not always align. In the case of the redevelopment of a Barcelona market mentioned above, some of the remaining traders have clashed with the anti-gentrification campaign. After many years of neglect and delays in the investment for the market the traders worry that the delay caused by the current dispute will put their businesses in jeopardy (Benvenuty, 2017). Delgadillo also mentions disputes between the very large and diverse community of traders about the proposed redevelopment of La Merced markets in Mexico City (Delgadillo, 2018). Market traders also often believe they might benefit from the gentrification of their market, adapting to a higher income clientele and higher rents and hence might not agree with resident campaigners. And of course not all market redevelopment projects lead to contestation and conflict; many go unquestioned or do not transcend beyond internal quarrels between traders themselves and with market operators. The general public often uncritically praise the positive change that the remodelling and modernisation of an old market building offers, as in the case of the renovation of San Anton Market in Madrid (Mateos, 2017). Other times, as it can be expected from a diverse collective, market traders do not always organise collectively under a common cause. Street traders, more specifically, as self-employed and often informal can struggle to achieve a collective 'voice' (Bhowmik, 2012; Brown et al., 2010b). Indoor or fixed market traders, often will have a very different agenda to informal street traders sometimes clashing over location and taxation (Omoegun, 2015). The ways and forms in which marketplaces can become spaces of urban contestation are therefore complex and variegated.

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

The third analytical lens proposed here locates marketplaces as spaces for building alternative social and economic relations. . This entrypoint also draws into consideration the 'extra-economic' sphere of marketplaces and in particular their potential role in creating spaces for solidarity and social inclusion. This broad analytical sphere is encapsulated by Mele et al. (2015: p. 104) view that marketplaces can be a 'spatial "corrective" to the excesses of advanced urbanism'.

The discussion on whether marketplaces can be spaces for encounter and social interaction between disparate groups has a long tradition particularly amongst ethnographers and anthropologists and it also extends more generally to other retail spaces Pottie-Sherman (2011) in her literature overview identified two camps: those that see marketplaces as a place for meaningful interaction between diverse groups and those that believe that although there is an aura of sociability, ultimately exchanges in the marketplace are driven by profit maximisation on the part of traders and thus resemble the 'market principles' seen in the wider 'market society'

(Maisel, 1974 cited in Pottie-Sherman, 2011). There seem to be more evidence of the first, however. For example, Watson (2009: p. 1581) conceptualises people's interactions in marketplaces as 'rubbing along'; sharing spaces albeit with limited interactions that can nevertheless 'mitigate against the withdrawal into the self or private realm'. Semi (2008) discusses the role of market banter as a communication strategy that breaks boundaries amongst traders and with customers from different ethnicities. In our increasingly diverse cities, ethnographers have viewed marketplaces as a microcosm of cosmopolitanism (Duruz et al., 2011) or what Anderson (2011) calls a 'cosmopolitan canopy'. Somewhat in a middle ground Pardy (2005, cited in Hiebert et al, 2015:11) argues that in fact marketplaces might develop these inclusive features precisely because they could be places of 'indifference to difference' where people can practice 'mutual avoidance' (see also Smith, 1965 cited in Pottie-Sherman, 2011). Hiebert et al. (2015) suggest that despite the long tradition of research looking at marketplaces and diversity there are various trends affecting marketplaces which are shifting their traditional role: gentrification of inner city neighbourhoods and displacement of marketplaces to the suburbs, global movement of people reconfiguring traditional migrant spaces, the privatisation of public spaces, state deregulation and heightened migration controls. Along these lines Rivlin and González (2018) and Adami (2017) have analysed Leeds Kirkgate as a superdiverse space in transformation. This sociability is of course not limited to marketplaces in the city and it extends to other retail spaces such as bookshops (O'Brien, 2017), charity shops (Paget and Birdwell, 2013) , shopping centres (Stillerman and Salcedo, 2012) or cafes (Jones et al., 2015).

But beyond this already well researched function of marketplaces as spaces for social interaction, there has been less attention paid to marketplaces as alternative spaces to the increasingly corporatised relationships of production and consumption in cities. In particular, marketplaces can be spaces for solidarity and economic inclusion for the most vulnerable groups in society such as ethnic minorities, migrants and refugees, the elderly, single mothers, young people, and people with health problems (Morales, 2009; Project for Public Spaces, 2003; Watson and Studdert, 2006). Marketplaces can become a safe haven for marginalised groups of people.

For example, research shows how market traders often care for customers, assisting those with difficulties due to old age or disabilities or interacting with those who feel lonely. Stillerman and Sundt (2007) argue that 'personal networks and acts of reciprocity are significant in relationships among vendors and between vendors and customers' (2007, p. 192). For them, these relationships are facilitated by the unregulated nature of the street markets in Santiago de Chile where their research focuses But recent research on indoor and regulated markers show similar interactions. Schlack et al. (2018) also in Santiago de Chile but in the case of the biggest indoor and formal market of the city, La Vega, observed that traders offer free food to homeless people. The market is also a space of solidarity and integration for migrants from other Latin American countries and ex-convicts. In a completely different space and part of the world, another market is also offering a place for comfort, job opportunities and solidarity for Latin American migrants. Seven Sisters or Pueblito Paisa indoor market in North London has become almost a second home for many people; much more than a shopping centre, it is a place where children play after school, an advice centre for new migrants and the hub of a community (Save Latin Village website). A poignant example of this is how traders adapt their prices to the low incomes and precarious jobs of their Latin American clientele (London Intelligence, 2017).

These forms of solidarity and social relations are also evident in the case of San Roque Market in Quito, which has become a place for the reproduction of indigenous forms of communitarian relationships, expressed in helping each other in the daily trade but also in the maintenance of religious cultural activities and childcare (Kingman Garcés and Bedón, 2018). In Leeds, traders of Kirkgate Market have been found to practice an ethic of care towards other traders and customers (Rivlin and González, 2018). Traders enquire about the well-being of customers that have not frequented the market for a while, watch each other's stalls while they take a break and offer free or discounted produce to customers in need. Therefore, although marketplaces by definition are spaces for economic exchange, there are plenty of extra-economic interaction and what Gibson-Graham (2008) would call 'diverse economies'; practices not driven by capitalist profit but by reciprocal care, solidarity or cooperativism that benefit traders themselves but also users that gather around them. Marketplaces therefore can become a sort of 'socio-economic infrastructures of care' in the face of state withdrawal social support, as identified by Hall et al. (2017) in their study of streets of migrants businesses. This kind of solidarity and ethics are qualities that have often been associated with informal economies in cities in the global south but are also apparent in indoor and formal marketplaces in the global north and even in some shopping centres surviving at the edge of the formal, regulated and marketised city (King et al., 2018). It is this condition of occupying marginal space, where marketplaces have often been out of the view or simply tolerated by the state and private capital, which has fostered this particular ecology of affordable rents, softly regulated space, openness, low income and vulnerable users. However as we have pointed out this ecology is very fragile and in many cases at risk of disappearing.

Another very different form of diverse economy practice taking place in marketplaces is that of alternative and ethical forms of production and consumption, particularly in food, from the farmers' markets so popular in the US and UK (Bubinas, 2011), to the traditional subsistence markets of small towns and settlements across the world. It is however contested that the kind of farmers' markets that have sprung up in the UK or US in the last decades amount to fairer forms of production and consumption. Although they have been shown to be tools for social mobility and community cohesion (Project for Public Spaces, 2003) they can also create exclusionary spaces for the white middle class (Alkon and McCullen, 2011). Moreover, increasingly, farmer and craft markets are deployed as a tool for street animation and to increase footfall in high streets as part of retail gentrification processes (Hubbard, 2017).

Leaving farmers' markets aside, marketplaces can nurture the kinds of politicised consumption and production practices that challenge the existing industrialised and globalised agri-food and other commodity system (Soler Montiel et al., 2010) and thus can turn marketplaces into spaces of resistance and contestation. In Argentina, for example, 'free fairs' (ferias francas) led by farmers and labour, agricultural and rural developments organisations emerged from the 1990s to directly oppose neoliberal policies which were decimating small and medium producers (Habermehl et al., 2018) These have been incorporated into state policy and offer reduced prices of food in itinerant markets in cities, although it is questionable to what extent they reproduce existing neoliberal forms of exploitations (Leslie, 2017). In parallel to this, in Buenos Aires, a former municipal indoor market has become a hub for the exchange of agroecological products and an outlet for worker-run factories and cooperatives. It was set up by a neighbourhood assembly that emerged in the wake of the 2001 national crisis after the market had been abandoned for decades (Habermehl et al., 2018). In Madrid, linked to the Indignados

movements, autonomous food networks have emerged that have set up radical farmers' markets as a place for exchange, encounter and socialisation framed by prefigurative politics (Morales Bernardos et al., 2016). Beyond food, Conill et al. (2012) identified the emergence and rise of exchange markets in Barcelona's neighbourhoods where people would engage in the barter of goods and services as a mechanism to survive after 2008 crisis.

Street and informal vending, including the sale of counterfeit products in informal or illegal markets, has also been conceptualised as alternative practice of work and consumption and as micro-acts of resistance; a form of 'subaltern urbanisms' (Roy, 2005; Roy, 2011). In this sense, Seale and Evers (2015: 14) argue that informal urban markets can 'de-frame canonical knowledge of cities', as they challenge the normalising and regularising force of private developers and public city authorities. They are also a form of popular and grassroots economy, often functioning in parallel, as an alternative or as 'shadow circuits' (Schmoll and Semi, 2013) to the mainstream forms of production and consumption. As with other forms of informal economy, street markets can also be regarded as part of popular and grassroots economy providing autonomy and empowerment to millions of marginalised urban poor. Cervantes Corazzina (2014) uses the concept of 'urban hacker' to refer to street vendors' abilities to break into the formal urban landscape and economy and adapt it. For example, recently informal street vendors in Barcelona have organised themselves in a workers union to defend their rights and denounce racism and have started to sell their own brand of clothes ('top manta') (Iborra, 2017). Some of these characteristics can also apply to formal and even indoor public marketplaces as we have seen throughout this paper.

However, popular economies should not be romanticised either. Gago (2015), in her analysis of La Salada market—an enormous informal market selling mainly counterfeit clothing—in the outskirts of Buenos Aires shows how the Bolivian migrants who work for and in the market develop collective forms of work and solidarity which in fact make them more exploitable, developing what she calls a 'neoliberalism from below'. On this same market, Montero Bressán (2017) dissects the highly unjust and hierarchical production chain that La Salada reproduces which ultimately feeds the same logics of capitalism. In a similar way, Turner and Schoenberger (2012) show that street traders in Hanoi while developing strategies of resistance against authorities, do not necessarily build 'diverse economies' and remain embedded in the increasingly neoliberal capitalist framework. In a different context, Simone (2011) also discusses the collectivist strategies of the informal poor in Jakarta to survive which are precarious and ultimately do not change the structural inequalities in their city. Marketplaces therefore can be spaces where the global logics of capitalist production and consumption can be arrested to create temporary commons. However these are always ultimately marginal and situated within wider circuits of capital accumulation and exploitation, which brings us back to the first lens of analysis.

Conclusions

In this paper I have located marketplaces within a wider global constellation of urban spaces where contestation takes place between actors with divergent interests; as such I have framed marketplaces as objects of study and action for critical urban researchers and activists. Departing from the literature on marketplaces across various disciplines and geographical locations I have proposed three lenses through which to look at these retail spaces as sites of

contestation: marketplaces as frontier spaces for processes of gentrification, dispossession and displacement; marketplaces as spaces for mobilisation, contestation and debate over public space and the city; and marketplaces as spaces for building alternative and counter practices of production and consumption. As already mentioned, these three lenses are not mutually-exclusive and can clearly take place at the same time, interact or only appear partly or temporarily in one market. For example, some alternative forms of consumption that take place in marketplaces, such as the sale or agroecological products organised by grassroots movements, can precede the gentrification of a market which can in turn lead to a mobilisation and campaigns to resist this gentrification.

The three analytical lenses that I have proposed are not exclusive to marketplaces either and can be fruitful angles for the study of other urban spaces, such as other typologies of traditional retail like small and independent shops, charity and second-hand shops; social, cultural and community centres; leisure spaces such as gyms, open green space, parks; libraries, museums and more generally public spaces and streets. Residential spaces, in particular social or public housing, could also studied along these lines. Overall, many urban spaces that lay at the margins—between what are cast as the public and the private, the formal and the informal—and where diverse stakeholders interact in uneven power networks can be studied as contested spaces.

Hence, this paper contributes to the wider study urban spaces at the margins whether in the global north or south. In marketplaces, as explained in the paper, this marginality has arisen from complex processes of global restructuring that cities as well as retail have gone through. Marketplaces, cities and their inter-relationship have always been in flux but in recent decades the international spread of shopping malls, touristification, retail chains, gentrified boutiques and online shopping has pushed traditional forms of retail to a peripheral zone even if they often occupy central areas in cities. These transformations have not extinguished them, as some modernist narratives would have predicted. On the contrary, across the world, marketplaces and in particular street trade still provide millions of goods, services and jobs for people. They have been, in many cities relegated to a marginal position, neglected by state actors and private capital, often on the edge of legality. This marginal position creates a particular ecology of low rents, disinvestment and opaque regulation which can lead to the development of practices of sociability, solidarity and inclusion amongst traders and market users. But this marginality is entangled with processes of vulnerability and precarity, such as low labour rights, rent hikes or even self-exploitation for traders. At the same time, this marginality pushes them to the frontier of real estate investment cycles which leads to redevelopment and associated threats of displacement and gentrification. Marketplaces, as well as many other urban spaces at the margins, find themselves at the centre of these contradictory processes. Highlighting the importance of these urban margins can help transcend fixed disciplinary and epistemological notions that have prevailed in Urban Studies (formal/informal; north/south). It is this complex marginality that leads to marketplaces, as well as other similar collective infrastructures, becoming spaces of contestation. As we have seen, this contestation takes variegated forms, depending on the institutional assemblages where marketplaces find themselves in (types of rents, leases, property configurations, access to public space etc.) as well as wider processes of retail and urban transformation. This paper has acknowledged the contribution that research on street vendors, informality and marketplaces can have beyond the global south. This reflects wider efforts in Urban Studies to disentangle informality studies from the double bind of

west/non-west and urban theory/development studies (Marx and Kelling, 2019). If we understand urban informality not simply as a condition or a way to depict a place, but as a 'site for critical analysis' (Banks et al., 2019) then it can be deployed as a tool to 'bring into focus the winners and losers of urban development' (p.1) whether in the global north or south. Research on marketplaces can be part of that.

A further contribution of this paper is to position retail geographies as key sites for the study of urban transformations and contestation. This idea revives the call launched in the 1990s by Wrigley and Lowe (1996) for a 'new retail geography' that should take up critical research issues such as the international restructuring of retail or geographies of retail exclusion seriously. Relatedly, Ducatel and Blomley (1990) highlighted the importance of retail capital to understand the overall workings of capital accumulation. Since these calls, the relationship between cities and retail has only become more relevant and complicated with further retail restructuring, the rise of online shopping, gentrification and the resilience of traditional forms of retail and informal vending. However, (urban) critical geography has not paid enough attention to retail spaces and processes which are generally studied by more mainstream branches of geography and social and economic disciplines. However, as shown in this paper, retail spaces are at the centre of contested urban trends. As recently argued by Miles (2015) retail can be a 'lens through which the contradictions and paradoxes of social change are played out' (p. 144). Marketplaces find themselves at the centre of these contradictions and pressures. This paper both suggests marketplaces as key sites in the study of urban transformations and contestation, and provides analytical lenses through which this research agenda might productively be advanced.

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Notes

1 I have decided to use the term ‘marketplaces’ after feedback from reviewers and recognising that this is the term more used internationally but I am aware of the diversity of terminology used internationally to refer to this kind of retail formats.

2 CONTESTED CITIES is the name of an international mobility network funded by the EU (Grant reference FP7-PEOPLE-PIRSES-GA-2012-318944) between 2012 and 2016, with around 40 researchers from Spain, UK, Chile, Brazil, Mexico and Argentina. For more information see (http://contested-cities.net/)

3 This section relies heavily on my own campaigner experience and primary research. Between 2010 and 2015 I was an active and core member of Friends of Leeds Kirkgate Market, a campaign group that emerged in Leeds due to the neglect of the market by the local authority and in support of traders. In 2015 I undertook an action-research project with the aim of researching and networking existing market campaigns in the UK which culminated in a public report and a networking meeting between several campaigns. Additionally, since July 2017, I have been part of a campaign to save a market in North London from demolition, which amongst other activities has involved providing evidence at a public planning inquiry and an internal scrutiny inquiry of the local authority involving analysis of many documents, campaign materials and engagement with traders and other campaigners.

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