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decommercialise, criminalisation**Social needs of informal street vendors in Barcelona**

Carlos Delclós

Grupo de Investigación en Desigualdades en Salud-Employment Conditions Network (GREDS-EMCONET)

Dept. de Ciències Polítiques y Sociales (UPF)

**Street vending is a typical phenomenon of large cities with a strong presence in the tourism sector. Despite this, from the summer of 2015, there has been an increasing problematization of the phenomenon in the city of Barcelona. This article describes some of the characteristics of street vendors in Barcelona, starting from a study that combines documentary analysis with structured interviews with focal groups and key informants. Based on this analysis, the main barriers to the full participation in the city of the group are identified, which include the administrative situation, the penalization of their activity and the lack of access to the formal labor market, among other factors.**

**Introduction**

Street vending is not a new phenomenon for Barcelona, nor for the world's other big cities, especially those where the tourist sector has a strong presence. However, since the summer of 2015, we have witnessed a growing problematisation of this phenomenon in Barcelona. Among other things, this is due to its increased visibility in the media, a greater presence in the discourse of political parties, the changes in the geographical distribution of the vendors and the growing absence of work alternatives for people who find themselves in an irregular administrative situation following the outbreak of the economic crisis.

To judge by its presence in the media, most of the conflicts over street vending in recent years have occurred in the Ciutat Vella district. And according to the version most often repeated by the people interviewed for this article, it has been the presence of vendors in the area around La Rambla that has sparked a qualitative change in the degree of conflict perceived by all those involved. Another key moment occurred in August 2015 with the death of Mor Sylla, a man of Senegalese origin who worked as a street vendor, following an intervention by the Mossos d'Esquadra – Catalan police officers – in Salou. His death led to disturbances in the town and increased mobilisation of Catalonia's Senegalese community. That was the context in which Barcelona's informal street vendors decided to form a union.

If we understand that resorting to this type of economic activity, and the intensity of the resulting conflicts and lack of contact with municipal services at their disposal are attributable to the difficulties some sectors of the population face trying to meet their basic needs, any assessment of those difficulties has to indicate the barriers preventing the groups concerned from fully participating in the city. In this regard, the appearance of the street vendors' union, the Sindicato Popular de Vendedores Ambulantes, shows the willingness of many members of a group in a very

precarious situation to establish a body to speak for them, and strengthen it with the legitimacy required to articulate their collective demands.

This article presents the results of fieldwork carried out between November 2015 and May 2016. After this brief introduction there is an explanation of the methodology used in the study.

The following section presents the results of the documentary analysis, reviewing existing literature on street vending in Barcelona and other parts of the world. The main findings of the study are outlined in the fourth section before the article concludes with a discussion on their implications.

## 1. Methodology

We start with a bibliographical review of original scientific reviews and *grey literature* (reports, articles and interviews published in the press, working papers and presentations at conferences). While the first phase of the review focussed on street vending and informality (non-formal selling) in the various regions of the world, the second phase concentrated on the work and economic implications of informality and how these have been tackled by the local public authority.

In addition to the review, structured interviews were carried out between November 2015 and May 2016 with focus groups comprising a total of 58 workers from the street vending sector. A further six interviews were also conducted with experts and key informants. These individual interviews were conducted with three social workers, two experts who specialise in informality and a town planner who specialises in issues related with public space. In the case of the focus groups, nine groups of three to eight people were interviewed between January and March, using a study design based on the participatory informal economy appraisal (PIEA) applied by Mkhize, Dube and Skinner in their study on street vending in Durban, South Africa (2013). This is an adapted methodology, as it does not separate the individual interviews from the focus groups and incorporates the individual questionnaire in the group discussion. Three of the interviews took place in the home of one of the interviewees, three in a public place and three in bars or cafés.

Because a convenience sampling method was used, the study has certain limitations. It is not a representative study of all the street vendors working in Barcelona. The two sales areas most represented by the interviewees were La Rambla and Plaça de Catalunya (62% between the two), followed by Passeig de Gràcia (14%) and the port (14%). The conclusions can, therefore, only be extrapolated to vendors in the centre, especially in the Ciutat Vella district, and not to all street sellers. Furthermore, because the study deals with particularly vulnerable groups, it was decided to deal with the data in an aggregate fashion to protect the anonymity of the interviewees. Consequently, it is not possible to cross variables when creating tabulations. Finally, the fact that the interviews were carried out in the first quarter of 2016 presents certain limitations, as the intensity of the conflict and the repression increased during and after the study period, and this increase was accompanied by a visible sharpening of the distress suffered by the vendors.

## 2. Literature review

We start our documentary analysis with a look at the European context. It should be stressed that there is very little scientific literature dealing specifically with street vending from a comparative perspective, and as far as empirical studies are concerned, according to our review, these appear to be non-existent. For this reason we begin this section with a theoretical introduction to informality, which, ultimately, provides the framework for the incompatibility between street vending and the formal institutional structure of cities.

The concept of informal economy was coined by the anthropologist Keith Hart in 1971 whilst he was studying low-paid work in Accra, Ghana (1973). Between half and three quarters of non-agricultural work in poor countries falls into this category, according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) maintains that half the world's workers were informal workers in 2009, and that, by 2020, that

figure will grow to two thirds of the total. In other words, *informal work* refers to most of the work done in the world.

The sociologist Saskia Sassen (1997) attributes the growth of informal work in rich countries to two basic processes. First, the growth in inequality and the resulting changes in the consumer habits of rich and poor from the 1980s onwards. Second, the inability of workers to compete for necessary resources in urban contexts, as big companies tend to increase the prices of those resources. This is particularly noticeable in the price of commercial space but also in the inequality resulting from the differentiation and hierarchy of administrative situations imposed by the application of immigration laws.

In his study “Evaluating cross-national variations in the extent and nature of informal employment in the European Union”, Colin C. Williams (2013) analyses the differences between EU countries with regard to the weight of informal employment and its characteristics. Using Eurobarometer data from the 2007, he shows that informal employment is less prevalent in countries with higher levels of wealth, equality, intervention in the labour market, social protection and wealth redistribution through social expenditure, and a lower degree of corruption. In those countries with higher rates of informal work, the main reason people resort to this kind of employment is that they are excluded from the formal labour market, which suggests that exclusion contributes to the presence of informality through some form of feedback mechanism.

Williams highlights three perspectives when it comes to tackling the informal economy:

1. Modernisation, which contends that, as economies modernise and develop, the formal economy comes to dominate the global economic landscape, and informal employment – a remnant of a “pre-modern” era according to this theory – disappears.
2. Neoliberal, which attributes the growth in informal employment to a populist response to corrupt states with excessive taxation that are characterised by interference in labour and welfare matters. According to this theory, informality is a rational-economic decision to voluntarily opt out of the formal economy in order to avoid the cost, time and effort associated with formal work.
3. Structuralist, which suggests that informality is the result of too little intervention in work and welfare. From this perspective, informal employment is regarded as an inherent component of late capitalism, as well as a key tool for facilitating the redundancies, outsourcing and subcontracting that characterise deregulation in global capitalism, as this type of work provides a flexible mode of production that enables companies to reduce costs and increase their profits.

In contrast to a large part of earlier literature on informality, which focuses on deterrent measures or policies designed to ease the transition from the informal to the formal economy, Williams’ study highlights the importance of work and welfare institutions when it comes to reducing informality. In line with the structuralist perspective, it shows there is a correlation between welfare provision, more state intervention in the labour market and a low level of informal employment, so an increase in social expenditure is related to a decline in the weight of the informal economy. According to Williams, in contexts of this type, resorting to informal employment is more a matter of personal choice than social exclusion. In turn, the results of his study discount the neoliberal thesis that deregulation and lower taxes help to reduce informality and suggests instead that paying more attention to the quality of state bureaucracy and reducing corruption, i.e. the modernisation theory, could contribute to a reduction in informality in line with the structuralist hypothesis.

In order to tackle the informal economy in European countries, Williams therefore puts forward a neo-modernisation theory which recognises that an increase in GDP (gross domestic product), the quality of government bureaucracy, market intervention, welfare and redistribution policies, and a reduction in state corruption are correlated with the variations between countries as regards the prevalence and nature of informal employment. Williams’ neo-modernisation theory would

therefore explain the high levels of informality, especially informality due to socio-economic exclusion in the countries of southern and central-eastern Europe, where inequality co-exists with little wealth redistribution through social transfers and, in general, low investment in social protection.

More than the macro-economic nature of informality, the conflicts associated with street vending in Barcelona have a lot to do with the legal framework of trade in public spaces. As Meneses and Caballero Juárez explain in their study “The right to work on the street: public space and constitutional rights” (2013), social practices commonly labelled as illegal or informal tend to be

tackled from three perspectives. Firstly, from a *legalistic* perspective, which “uses legal language to condemn these practices and put the Law above all other considerations” (Azuela, 2006). This approach favours the use of criminality to deter anyone from resorting to undesired urban practices. Secondly, the *regulatory* perspective emphasises regulations and legal techniques which can enable these practices to take place on the streets, and opts for minimising their supposedly negative effects (Delaney, 2010). Thirdly, the *critical* perspective understands informality as a management and control device which reduces the Law to a series of regulations that are confused, complicated, often contradictory and difficult to enforce (Devlin, 2011).

According to Meneses Reyes and Caballero Juárez, street vending is something to which these three perspectives could be applied. However, Devlin (2011) demonstrates that the urban landscape drawn by street vending is not so much a question of exercising rights – including the right to work – as a reflection of the power relations between the different stakeholders who meet in the public space when exercising their rights on the streets. In cases such as this, judicial decisions can promote a particular socio-spatial order, where the right of poor urban workers to carry out their work in the street is protected by appealing to constitutional law and stipulating that access to this kind of activity can only benefit those who lack the capacity to invest enough money to set up a business.

When it comes to exercising rights in public spaces, unequal power relations are evident even where constitutions claim to guarantee those rights. Kate Swanson (2007) demonstrates this in her study on indigenous beggars and street vendors in two Ecuadorian cities where, according to Article 35 of the Constitution in force at the time of the study (the 1998 one): Work is a right and a social duty. It shall enjoy the protection of the State, which shall guarantee respect for the dignity of working persons, a decent life and fair pay that will cover their needs and those of their family.

Despite that, according to Swanson, the growing presence of the tourist sector in Quito and Guayaquil has been accompanied by the forced removal of street vendors, who had been an important part of the local commercial fabric for centuries. Swanson attributes their removal to social hygienics and the process of “whitewashing” the public space with the aim of adapting the city’s image to that seen in its tourist publicity. In this regard, it is striking that, in 2002, the local authority in Guayaquil contracted William Bratton to help draw up its urban regeneration strategy. Bratton is New York’s former police commissioner who, together with the city’s former mayor Rudolph Giuliani, was the co-author of New York city’s Police Strategy N° 5, described by the geographer Neil Smith as the founding document of US urban revanchism. However, while in most European and North American cities the forced removals caused by urban revanchism were to open up spaces for the construction of first-class condominiums, in Ecuador they served to boost the tourist sector.

Like other authors, Swanson concluded that the main effect of the repression against street vendors has not been the elimination of this practice but an increase in the considerable difficulties experienced by this group. Solomon-Ayeh, King and Decardi-Nelson (2011) reach a similar conclusion in their study on the spacial characteristics of street vending in Kumasi, Ghana. Both persuasion and the use of force were tried, but failed to achieve the desired result. Despite being

moved on and continuously harassed by the Kumasi police, the vendors always returned to the streets after a relatively short period of time. When the local authority passed a directive to relocate the sellers to other city markets, it was not complied with. The reason for this is that street vending is driven by impulse buying. When the vendors interviewed for this study were asked what their main considerations were when choosing a place to sell, two out of three said the concurrence, convenience and comfort of customers, while municipal authorisation was the last.

It is for that reason that the authors of this study recommend incorporating not only the needs of street vendors but also those of pedestrians and traders with permanent spots in the designs and plans for urban spaces, as those aspects that tend to be of most concern (e.g. density or hygiene) can easily be tackled by urban planning. Like other authors (Roy, 2005; Anjaria, 2006), they also stress the fact that street vending, far from posing a threat to public safety, has helped to produce safe places and contributed to the quality of life in the neighbourhoods where it takes place in cities such as New York and Bombay. In this regard, they describe the appearance of street vendors' associations as something very positive, because it helps to reduce confrontation between their members and the police through mediation and the application of their own penalties for infringing municipal byelaws and regulations (e.g. applying suspensions, periods when those who have broken an agreement are not allowed to sell).

Solomon-Ayeh, King and Decardi-Nelson (2011) support a comprehensive view of trade in public space, such as that applied in places like Singapore, Mexico, Kenya, Burkina Faso or South Africa. A complementary vision is offered by Kyoto Kusakabe (2006). After studying the cases of Thailand, Cambodia and Mongolia, he recommends managing urban spaces and markets according to the principles of participatory governance, making street sellers part of the self-governing processes in urban spaces. He particularly emphasises the case of Thailand, where local authorities opted to listen to the street sellers' associations instead of trying to control them. In the case of Mongolia, he stresses how the presence of vendors' associations had a similar effect to the one described in the study on Kumasi. In order to bolster those kinds of processes, the authors recommend granting vendors a clear legal status so they can demand their right to work and the use of public space, because it is the legal and administrative vacuum that street vending finds itself in which gives rise to extortion, exploitation and rentierism, which are among the most perverse practices associated with informality.

Despite the variety of countries in which the phenomenon of street vending occurs, and the diversity in the social composition of those who practise it in those different contexts, this does not alter the fact that the vendors themselves share a series of common features, regardless of the country they work in. In their study on the characteristics of street vendors in Dacca, Bangladesh, Husain, Yasmin and Islam (2015) highlight some of these. The vendors interviewed were mainly migrants from rural areas with little schooling who were immersed in a dynamic of structural unemployment and had relatively large families.

In line with Sassen's hypothesis, their main sources of funding trade were scant personal savings, selling personal belongings and, in some cases, small loans between private individuals, all insufficient for competing in the formal labour market. This explains the importance of social capital in this type of work, characterised by long hours and the consequent lack of opportunities in the formal labour market. Solomon-Ayeh, King and Decardi-Nelson (2011) cite the latter aspects as the main cause of the relatively young age structure of street sellers in Kumasi, where the vast majority of workers interviewed were under 35 years old.

Taking this review of street vending in its global context as our starting point, we now move onto a brief description of street selling in Barcelona. As we will see, here too it is the result of an interaction between the lack of formal employment and migration, although in this case it is the result of international migrations whose hierarchy of administrative situations plays a decisive role when it comes to deciding who participates in this work.

Barcelona City Council presented its proposal for a social approach to street vending in 2015. The report presented to the municipal party groups proposed the need for: A new, broader focus based on a social and work-oriented intervention with the involvement of the collective concerned in finding a sustainable solution that will enable the fundamental rights of those people forced to survive by means of street vending to be guaranteed.

Before presenting the report, and with the intention of learning more about the situation of people involved in this economic activity, the Council drew up another report which outlines their main characteristics. The analysis identifies various groups involved in street vending, including (1) people of Indian or Asian origin who sell souvenirs to tourists; (2) people of Indian or Asian origin who sell cans of beer in night-time leisure spots; (3) people from the sub-Saharan region who sell imitation or counterfeit products; (4) people who sell products recovered from recycling bins or leftovers from the Fira de Bellcaire auction lots.

However, despite the various kinds of street vending identified, the conflict generated around it has focused specifically on “top manta”, or blanket selling, which, as the report recognises, is mainly carried out by people of African origin.

The City Council’s diagnosis is particularly useful for identifying the social, demographic and economic characteristics of street vendors. It also points out that they have little contact with municipal services and resources when they arrive in the city, as only 9% use Social Services centres and 38% access the Catalan health service and emergency service when they need to. Instead of using these resource, the people involved in this kind of work resort to very unstable internal information networks, presumably because they are better suited to specific needs, although this reticence could also be due to a fear of contacting the public administration. To supplement this information, we will now proceed to present the results of the focus groups and individual interviews.

### **3. Results**

We start this section with the results of the individual interviews before moving onto the focus groups. While the latter deal with the conditions in which street vendors live and work, the interviews with experts and key informants focus on issues of a more general nature. The interviews with academics specialising in informality were conducted for guidance purposes to support the literature review, to inform the design of the study and to identify best practices both in terms of research and the approach of public policies. The interview with the person who specialises in architecture and urban planning dealt with the spatial and architectural aspects of street vending, while those with the social workers focused on the relations between the street vendors and social and public institutions.

The latter interviews emphasised that street vending began to increase at the start of 2015. There was a confrontation between police and sellers on the metro in February, following which the municipal government asked Social Services to carry out a study of street vending. That study identified the main sales points and the characteristics of the various collectives involved in this activity. In the summer of 2015, coinciding with the new municipal government taking office, a noticeable increase began to be detected in the presence of street vendors in the vicinity of La Rambla and round the Columbus Monument, along with a change in some of the characteristics of the sellers (more Pakistanis and Bangladeshis) and more conflict in police interventions.

A qualitative leap in this unrest occurred in August 2015 and is attributed to the death of Mor Sylla, a street vendor in Salou, during a Catalan police operation. Various disturbances took place in Salou over several days and a demonstration was organised in Barcelona. According to the interviewees, that was when various Barcelona associations approached the street vendors in the city, their presence in public debate increased and the conflict became more visible.

All the social workers said that was the moment when their relationship with the street sellers changed. Until then they had focused on individual plans, with the support of immigrant associations, in response to individual requests. But from August 2015, they began to demand solutions to a collective situation as street sellers, a long-term solution and discussions with the public institutions. This turn, which culminated in the setting up of an informal union, is attributed to the combination of the media spotlight, which presents the sellers as a problem for the city, and the relationship between the sellers and more informal and assertive associations.

Despite working on individual plans, the social workers point to various common traits, which they attribute to migratory projects with the same origin, route and perspectives. Two of the workers refer to the vendors' expectations at the start of their migratory journeys, which they regard as very high and not very realistic. According to them, their main goal is to reach Europe, quickly find a job and send money back to their families in their country of origin. They say this applies regardless of the country of origin. The issue of the street sellers' expectations also arouses some concern among the social workers as regards the prospect of a long-term solution. They have noticed a certain willingness to accept the idea of involving the community and association network, as well as municipal social services and other providers, which they view positively as part of the *social solution* proposed by the municipal government. Nevertheless, the three people interviewed raised a number of doubts in relation to what that implies. One person said they wanted to believe that *social solution* means adopting a broad view in tackling street vending, instead of saying to one particular person there is a shelter where they can stay or a social worker that can deal with their case, as that would be "very micro" for an issue which is much broader. The same person also wonders what it expects to achieve: an end to street vending, its regulation, moving it to specific locations or controlling the products? They argue that knowing this would enable them to work on the basis of that objective, especially if they are clear that street vending is not going to go away.

A common concern is observed in these interviews regarding the reason behind the intervention against street vending, as it is not clear what impact this activity has or what harm can be attributed to it. As possible explanations they suggest the occupation of public space associated with street vending slows down pedestrian circulation, the increased density implies a safety risk and this activity could affect somebody's profit margin.

Another topic raised in the interview with social workers is the role of the police. They all pointed out the relationship between the police and vendors is the most conflictive and expressed their frustration at the fact that an activity whose negative impact is, at best, residual should generate such unpleasant scenes. Two of the interviewees highlighted counterfeit products as the most difficult problem to deal with, as it is the most criminalised activity of all those carried out in street vending. The discussions on this aspect always led to the same conclusion: the importance of the tag (the logo which, when it is attached to the products, makes it counterfeit). According to one interviewee, the stance of both the vendors and the police on this question is very rigid.

One of the people interviewed had previously worked with the neighbourhood units of the city police force, the Guardia Urbana de Barcelona (GUB), which, according to her, deal and collaborate with the institutions in a very different way to the regular police, for example, the Security and Administrative Police Unit (UPAS). According to the interviewee, many police officers do not want to be involved in these kinds of interventions because there is a very high rate of recidivism, it involves exposing yourself to a series of risks and they know every action in this case will be perceived as violent. Despite that, the same interviewee said they do it because they are under pressure to get these people to conform to a series of rules that can only be changed by amending the municipal byelaws.

The interview with the town planner who specialises in issues relating to public space offers a few clues in that regard. On the one hand, he regards the suggestion of decommercialising public space as problematic. He says that public space is many things, ranging from a home for homeless people to an economic opportunity for those with no access to the labour market. It

always generates value in the market, as the price of land and property in neighbouring areas tends to rise or fall depending on its characteristics. Since it is busy space, occupied by many people involved in some kind of activity (leisure, work, consumption, tourism), it gives rise to various types of demand. In his view, it is not a question of decommercialising public space but one of democratising and regulating the market.

As regards the factors that determine the spatial distribution of street vending, he stressed that it mainly depends on the density of possible customers. A high density can also act as a deterrent to police interventions, as it runs the risk of sparking off a pitched battle. Using the Plaça de Catalunya metro space as a meeting, gathering and sales point is inspired by a similar logic.

During the course of the interview he reiterated the idea that street vending is a natural phenomenon in global cities that arises from a demand for it. Most city markets, such as the Mercat de la Boqueria, for example, have their origins in a public space occupied by people selling their wares. Repressing this activity represents an attempt to prevent similar new markets springing up. When asked about possible alternatives to repression, he began with the example of La Rambla: In Las Ramblas we can see what the problems of Barcelona are, not those of Las Ramblas. Therefore, responding to the problems we see there does not mean taking action on Las Ramblas because it calls for more general interventions.

Then he pointed out the importance of fostering the idea that accessing public space to take part in trade should be a right for people who have no other option. Part of the work done in public spaces should even be subsidised if it is to discourage people from choosing to undertake undesired economic activities.

In that regard, it is important to understand the needs of those street vendors who took part in the focus groups, starting with their living conditions and their work. The average age of the people interviewed was 30.5, the youngest being 22 and the oldest 45. Nearly all of them were men (94.9%) and only 5.2% women. As for their place of birth, 79.3% were born in Senegal and the rest mainly in Bangladesh (12.1%) or Pakistan (5.2%) It is worth pointing out that, despite the relatively small sample, the profile of street vendors from Bangladesh and Pakistan was noticeably more precarious than the rest, with less command of Spanish or Catalan, fewer years at school and less knowledge of the municipal services available to them.

As regards education, 34% of those interviewed had finished secondary school. Most, however, spoke several languages, the main ones being Wolof, French, Spanish, English, Hindi and Bengali. Their most frequent previous occupations were routine jobs and manual work. A total of 37.9% had only worked in street vending since arriving in Spain.

With regard to their administrative situation, approximately three quarters were registered residents. But only three out of ten had the requisite official documents. Most of the interviewees had never had them. The vast majority (81%) arrived after 2007, i.e. after the economic crisis broke out, and 79.4% had been working as street vendors for less than three years at the time of the interview. Their main way of getting to Spain was by open boat (*patera*), followed by plane or on foot.

When asked about their future aspirations, three quarters replied that they would prefer to stay in Barcelona and bring their families. Over 80% sent money to their families in the country they came from, generally on a sporadic basis. Three quarters of their income went on basic necessities, buying goods to sell, incidentals and remittances.

Nearly three quarters (74.1%) of the people interviewed lived in the Besòs area, while 20.1% lived in Raval. The rest lived in Poblenou, apart from one person who was a resident of Granollers. All the people interviewed rented their accommodation. The average number of people they lived with

was 5.4. A fifth (20.7%) lived with two people or fewer, while 19% said they lived with between 8 and 10 people. Nearly three quarters (74.1%) lived with other street vendors.

All those who had looked for a flat (53.4% of the people interviewed) said they had suffered severe cases of discrimination more than once. Asked about their relationship with the owners of their flats, 60.3% said it was good, while nearly all the others said it was indifferent. Only 3.4% said their relationship with the owner was normal or bad.

At the time of the interview, 17.2% of the people in the focus groups suffered from an illness or had a chronic health problem, while 19% did not have a health card. When asked if they ate well, they all said yes apart from three. However, 51.7% said they ate somewhat irregularly. Nearly half (46.6%) knew about Social Services and 39.7% had heard of *Cáritas*, although it is worth repeating that the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities knew a lot less.

Approximately a third of the interviewees had used these services. While 42.1% had obtained some financial assistance, most said they had not. And although the consensus expressed by each group interviewed was they intended to get some help, the most widespread perspective among all of them was that neither municipal social services nor *Cáritas* could solve their collective situation.

Nearly half the people interviewed (48%) worked ten hours a day with long periods of waiting. Approximately 10% were working shorter days (five hours), while 13.7% would often work twelve-hour days. Six out of ten (60.3%) worked every day, while the rest said they worked between four and seven days, depending on whether it was the high or low tourist season.

All those interviewed said they had had some experience of racism. Most said they had been on the receiving end of racist insults from people in public places and 43.1% said they had been insulted by the police.

As regards the products they sold, just over half the interviewees sold fashion items (bags, T-shirts, sunglasses and accessories), 20.6% sold souvenirs (magnets and key rings) and 18.9% sold umbrellas (in many cases, these supplemented the sale of other items). All the interviewees claimed that most of their customers were tourists but pointed out that three or four times a day they were Spaniards, especially when there were fewer tourists about. In general they earn between 5 and 10 euros on a bad day and 40 to 50 euros on a good day, without taking into account goods seized, which they all said meant considerable losses. When asked what most influenced whether they had a good day or a bad day, the number of tourists came first, followed by the police presence.

However, when asked what was the main problem they faced on a day-to-day basis, they were unanimous in saying the police presence. Some people also mentioned the long day and the weight they had to carry. The police were also the main cause of anxiety among the group, followed by their administrative situation. A little over half those interviewed said they had been beaten by the police on at least one occasion and 86.2% had had their sales items seized. Some 44.8% had been in a cell and 17.2% said they had a criminal record, in every case related to street vending. Approximately 80% of the interviewees said they had been fined, but only half had paid a fine and, according to the vendors, they were always court fines, not municipal ones.

With regard to the local shopkeepers nearest their respective sales patches, the most common feeling among the people interviewed was one of indifference (65.5%). Another 21% said they had a good relationship with them, while the rest merely said they had no relationship. When asked whether they had many conflicts with them, the most common reply was there were some, occasionally, but you could not say they were particularly serious. Two groups pointed out that some shopkeepers had put up posters in the area with anti-street vending slogans but that attitude

could not be attributed to all shopkeepers. However, when asked if they had any interests in common with that group, more than two thirds of the interviewees said no or they doubted it.

Nearly three quarters of the participants in the focus groups had taken part in some demonstrations, mainly through the union, and over a third had participated in other demonstrations, in most cases with groups they had met through the union. This suggests the union has collectively empowered the street sellers, besides activating and strengthening links with other networks of social stakeholders, different to the ones they usually had contact with.

The main barriers to street vendors fully participating in the city include their administrative situation, the penalisation of their activity and the lack of access to the formal labour market. Added to those factors is the discrimination they face on a day-to-day basis which, besides impacting on other issues such as housing, makes it difficult for their situation to be integrated into public opinion. This discrimination generates their collective territorial and social isolation, which also undermines their capacity to fully participate in the city. The fact that the main way the people interviewed had of getting into the country was by *patera*, that the vast majority had never had official documents and many have been involved in street vending since their arrival in Spain confirms there is a feedback mechanism that not only makes it difficult for those workers to get out of street vending but also encourages them to take part in illegal economic activities.

In that regard, setting up the street vendors' union is a step forward. On the one hand, it makes people aware of the situation faced by a vulnerable group they knew nothing about and offers a way out of what appears to be a closed circuit separated from the city. On the other hand, it acts as an interlocutor with the necessary legitimacy for articulating collective demands, entering into dialogue and reaching agreements with those stakeholders that play an important role in the conflict that has arisen over their economic activity. However, stronger measures are required to break the vicious circle of illegality, such as not penalising street vending or decriminalising the counterfeiting of fashion products.

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