

The Scramble for the City: Street Vending, Politics, and the Governance of Public Space in Mexico
City and San Francisco

by

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Professor Carolina Reid

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Abstract

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The dynamics of street vending have not garnered enough attention within the realm of urban planning despite their implications for public space utilization, economic activity, and city governance. With cities experiencing population growth and changes in forms of employment, the competition and significance of public spaces have and will become increasingly pronounced. This dissertation places street vending at the forefront of public space research. I use street vending as a lens through which to understand the complexities of the use of public space and city management, offering insights into the governance structures that shape urban landscapes.

In this dissertation, I scrutinize how the social, political, legal, and spatial relationships among multiple actors (different levels of government, bureaucrats, leaders of street vending associations, and vendors) impact governments' incentives and capacity to control public space. I pay particular attention to competition between and among different forms of political intermediation (brokerage) including street vending associations and state employees who function as brokers. I also emphasize that politicians use brokers not only for electoral gains, but also to exercise power, which is crucial for urban planning research. By examining street vending patterns in both global south and global north urban contexts, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse at the intersection of urban politics, public space management, and workers' livelihoods.

In the introduction, I briefly review bodies of literature in urban planning and political science relevant to the study of street vending in Mexico City and San Francisco. I then present the main goals of the dissertation, addressing the overlooked role of street vending in the political economy – and more specifically – the competition over public space from the perspectives of vendors, street vending associations, bureaucrats, and politicians. Next, I present the research questions and the methods I employed to answer those questions.

In chapter 1, I introduce Mexico City's street vending background. First, I present street vending's administrative and bureaucratic structure. Then, I describe the diversity of street vendors that exist within the city and explain their main differences, which has relevance for their governance. Next, I provide a statistical snapshot of the number of street vendors from 2005 to 2023. Lastly, I briefly mention two of the main legal instruments used by local officials and leaders of street vending associations to regulate street vending: the Regulation of 1951 and the 11/98 Agreement.

In chapter 2, I illustrate the variation in street vending associations' political influence through a multi-method approach. By building a geospatial dataset of street market associations in Mexico

City, I identify differences in associations according to their size and spatial presence across the city, creating a typology of local, district, and city-wide associations. Then, through in-depth interviews with street vending leaders, politicians, state employees, and street vendors, I illustrate through case studies how vending associations relate to neighborhood residents and politicians. In turn, I show how these relationships affect associations' ability to form alliances with other associations and their incentives to control public space. Associations' alliances and their relationship both with neighbors and politicians have relevant consequences for associations' ability to lobby and secure regulations which are beneficial for street vendors more generally.

In chapter 3, I analyze how political and bureaucratic structures shape street vendors' use of public space, such as parks, sidewalks, and public squares, in Mexico City. By bridging literature on clientelism, street-level bureaucrats, and public space, I argue that partisan political alignment between intra-city local governments and the city government determines the levels of competition between inspectors and street vending associations, and the local governments' ability to control public space. Through a comparative case study, I examine these mechanisms in three boroughs (intra-city local governments) in Mexico City which differ in terms of their political alignment with the city government. By direct observation, examining city documents, and in-depth interviews with politicians, bureaucrats, leaders of street vending associations, and street vendors, I analyze street vending associations and inspectors acting as brokers between elected officials and vendors and articulate the administrative, economic, political, and spatial consequences of these relationships across different local governments in Mexico City. I find that politically aligned governments rely more on street vending associations, while unaligned governments rely more on loyal inspectors-brokers for the control of public space and the extraction of economic and political favors. Aligned boroughs benefit from vending associations for two key reasons. First, these associations tend to support the city-wide ruling political party, delegating street vending enforcement to associations in exchange of political support. Second, aligned boroughs have a greater enforcement capacity from the city-wide government, enabling them to remove vendors for whenever they need to use public space for infrastructure projects or reallocating space for other groups of vendors. In contrast, unaligned boroughs rely on loyal bureaucrats to extract votes and money from vendors within the borough's jurisdiction, resulting in less control over public space and heightened tensions with vending associations.

In chapter 4, I trace the implementation of a street vending ordinance in San Francisco to examine the misalignment between legal instruments and everyday activities. Drawing on data from interviews with vendors, community organizations, and local officials (i.e., district supervisors, public works officials, and police officers), I analyze a case study in the Mission District to understand who legitimizes street vending and the mechanisms through which vendors are legitimized. Through this spatiotemporal study, I find that heterogeneity of vendors influences compliance, enforcement, and the legal structure of the ordinance, shedding light on the dynamic challenges to legitimize street vendors' use of public space. Consequently, I show that city ordinances only govern the governable, creating distinctions between vendors that are willing to be regulated and others actively skirting the law.

Finally, I conclude by providing a summary of the findings and the key contributions of this study. My dissertation makes two key contributions. First, I reveal a new frontier for planning theory and practice, by moving beyond stylized descriptions of the state as a monolithic entity that is either pro or anti-poor. By bringing in literature from political science into planning, I expose the inherent tensions between different levels of government and the complexity of enforcing regulatory frameworks. Thus, beyond electoral strategies, I find that the relationship between politicians and associations impacts governments' ability to control public space and exercise power. Second, I examine the competition within and among street vending associations to understand how

associations mobilize and increase their bargaining power to remain in place. While most research has shown the relationship between vending associations and the state, I show how varying levels of political influence affect associations' ability to lobby and secure regulations which will ultimately improve street vendors' livelihoods. Then, I suggest recommendations for future scholarship and practice to improve the regulation of public space for street vendors and other potential populations that use public space such as sex workers, waste-pickers, day laborers, and people living in homeless encampments. Lastly, I present ideas for future research that derive from this dissertation.

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Acronyms

ADIP –Digital Agency for Public Innovation (*Agencia Digital de Innovación Pública*)
CNOP – National Confederation of Popular Organizations (*Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares*)
ENIGH - National Income and Expenditure Survey (*Encuesta Nacional de Ingreso y Gasto en los Hogares*)
ENOE - National Survey of Occupation and Employment (*Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo*)
IEBA - Informal Economy Budget Analysis
IRB – Institutional Review Board
JUD – Department Unit Chief (*Jefe de Unidad de Departamento*)
LBS - Location-Based Services
MORENA – National Regeneration Movement (*Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional*)
MUP – Urban Popular Movement (*Movimiento Urbano Popular*)
PAN – National Action Party (*Partido de Acción Nacional*)
PMT – Mexican Workers’ Party (*Partido Mexicano de Trabajadores*)
PRD – Party of the Democratic Revolution (*Partido de la Revolución Democrática*)
PRI – Institutional Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*)
SECOFI - Secretary of Commerce and Industry (*Secretaría de Comercio y Fomento Industrial*)
SEDECO – Ministry of Economic Development (*Secretaría de Desarrollo Económico de la Ciudad de México*)
SISCOVIP –Public Way Street Vending System (*Sistema de Comercio en Vía Pública*)
WIEGO - Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing

Introduction

As I embarked on the PhD program, I was determined to study obesity as a result of poor employment conditions using street vendors in Mexico City as a case study. But as I carried out preliminary interviews, I realized that the scramble for public space is conventionally considered unimportant or is often misconstrued. When a veteran street vending leader narrated her life story and described how her husband was killed when she did not cede a working area to another street vending leader, I decided to further examine why that competition is so fierce. Why it is worth killing for. As another leader explained: “There are two main reasons why people kill: when their housing is jeopardized or when their source of income is threatened.” Therefore, to enrich urban planning discussions, in this study, I examine the overlooked role of street vending in the political economy – and more specifically – the competition over public space from the perspectives of vendors, street vending associations, state bureaucrats, and politicians.

The dynamics of street vending have not garnered enough attention within the realm of urban planning despite their implications for public space utilization, economic activity, and city governance. With cities experiencing population growth and changes in the forms of employment, the competition and significance of public spaces have and will become increasingly pronounced. Therefore, this dissertation places street vending at the forefront of public space research. I use street vending as a lens through which to understand the complexities of the use of public space and city management, offering insights into the governance structures that shape urban landscapes. In short, I examine how governments’ toleration or exclusion of street vendors in public space alters the urban form and management of cities.

I claim that it is imperative for planners to recognize the importance of regulating public spaces in a socially inclusive, economically viable, and politically sustainable manner. By examining street vending patterns in both global south and global north urban contexts, this research contributes valuable perspectives to ongoing discussions at the intersection of urban politics, public space management, and workers’ livelihoods. This research adds to planning’s understanding of various other conflicts happening over public space such as the presence of sex workers, waste-pickers, day laborers, or homeless encampments, to name a few.

I also pay close attention to diversity within the category of street vending, and its implications for their governance. Street vendors are a highly heterogeneous group, ranging from self-employed workers to microentrepreneurs, selling legal or illegal products or services, and having from highly organized to highly improvised organizational structures (Crossa, 2018; Huang et al., 2018). Street vendors’ working conditions and their relationship with authority also varies greatly depending on the type of vendor they are, their type of stand, the goods and services they offer, their location within cities, their social networks with organized groups of vendors and local governments, the political influence of vending leaders, and the way vendors are organized.

Since the presence of street vendors is unavoidable – particularly in cities where it has been prevalent for centuries – my goal is to elucidate the opposing perspectives around street vending to improve the coexistence between vendors and city dwellers in public space. Although street vending has historically been viewed by government authorities across the world as representations of underdevelopment and corruption, previous studies have identified the benefits it brings to cities. First, street vending is essential for the distribution of goods and services, supplying cities with products from other countries and playing a central role in the economy (Alba, 2015; Matthews & Alba, 2015; Skinner et al., 2018) In particular, street vending is a key component of urban food security, offering greater availability and accessibility of food to the working class (Farah et al., 2022; Hayden, 2021). Second, street vending serves as a primary activity or alternative source of income for many residents (Bhowmik, 2005; Cross, 1998b; Roever & Skinner, 2016; Skinner, 2008; Skinner & Watson,

2017). Similarly, street vending provides a safety net for populations at risk of unemployment and facilitates flexible work for people with domestic and caregiving responsibilities. Other scholars even argue that street vendors enliven cities, becoming “eyes on the street” and help improve neighborhoods’ safety (Duneier, 1999; Rosales, 2020), and “democratize” central spaces within cities (Kim, 2015).

In contrast, other perspectives illustrate how street vending often leads to conflict over public space (Loukaitou-Sideris & Ehrenfeucht, 2009; Mukhija & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2014). Major complaints stem from increasing neighborhood insecurity since vendors might collude with criminals (Davis & Luna, 2007; Leal Martínez, 2020), the impediment the free movement of people and vehicles, and the pollution of public spaces (Bromley, 2000). They are also seen as unfair competition for brick-and-mortar businesses since they do not officially pay taxes and are considered law evaders, often involved in illicit exchanges (Bromley, 2000). As a result, cities have attempted to relocate and remove street vendors (Becker & Müller, 2013; Crossa, 2016; Giglia, 2018; Silva-Londoño, 2010; Stamm, 2005; Swanson, 2007). Previous scholars have argued that cities often seek to modernize urban spaces, with governments attracting private capital for urban image improvement, privatizing spaces in the city for greater economic growth (Lindell, 2019; Ong, 2011). Street vending serves as a reminder of disorder, corruption, and illegality that go beyond the activity itself, portraying a “deteriorating” society that is unwanted for politicians who want to remain in positions of power.

As these two views coexist, the following questions arise: How can governments regulate street vending and public space harmonizing these perspectives? Who are the power players invested in regulating public space? Who are the multiple actors legitimizing street vending and what are the mechanisms through which vendors are legitimized? Why do these actors compete over public space, and are what are the political implications of these turf wars? Lastly, why is it so difficult for governments to regulate street vending?

Urban Planning and Politics Scholarship on Street Vending

To begin answering these questions, my main objective is to identify the main actors involved in negotiations over public space and their incentives to tolerate or dislodge street vendors from public space. Scholarship in urban planning acknowledges the competition over public space among multiple actors. In particular, previous research has focused on the use of policies to govern street vending (Bénil-Gbaffou, 2018a, 2018b; Devlin, 2011; Dunn, 2017; Fadaee & Schindler, 2016; Huang et al., 2019; Martin, 2014; Tucker, 2017; Tucker & Devlin, 2019; Vallianatos, 2014), and the resistance to exclusionary policies (Crossa, 2009; Huang et al., 2014; Mackie et al., 2014; Ojeda & Pino, 2019; Schindler, 2014a; Swanson, 2007; te Lintelo, 2017) and their use of the law to contest those policies (Meneses-Reyes & Caballero-Juárez, 2014). Other scholars have drawn attention to the existence of multiple interest groups within the state with competing goals (Bénil-Gbaffou, 2016, 2018b; Schindler, 2014b) and the interactions between middle classes and street vendors (Nogueira, 2020; Schindler, 2017).

Urban planning scholars have shed light on the existence of various power players and have hinted at the importance of creating a broader perspective on how the state interacts with street vendors, moving beyond viewing the state as a singular, uniform entity. However, research on how the relationships between different actors within multiple tiers of government impact the use of public space is still missing. Moreover, little is known about how multiple levels of the state interact with organized groups of vendors and how that impacts public spaces. As a result, the existing research in urban planning is inadequate for scrutinizing the complexity of street vending governance. While planners place spatial dynamics at the center of their analysis, they often overlook the web of social and political relationships that effectively regulate public space.

In this dissertation, I focus on the conflicts and tensions within the state and the role of organized groups of vendors (street vending associations). Although I extensively interviewed, surveyed, and observed street vendors, in this dissertation I incorporate their perspective but do not carry out an analysis of how social and political relationships with the state and vending associations ultimately impact vendors' livelihoods. In future work, I will incorporate how the interweaving of vertical and horizontal power dynamics and competition over space affect street vendors and how they resist to these political dynamics.

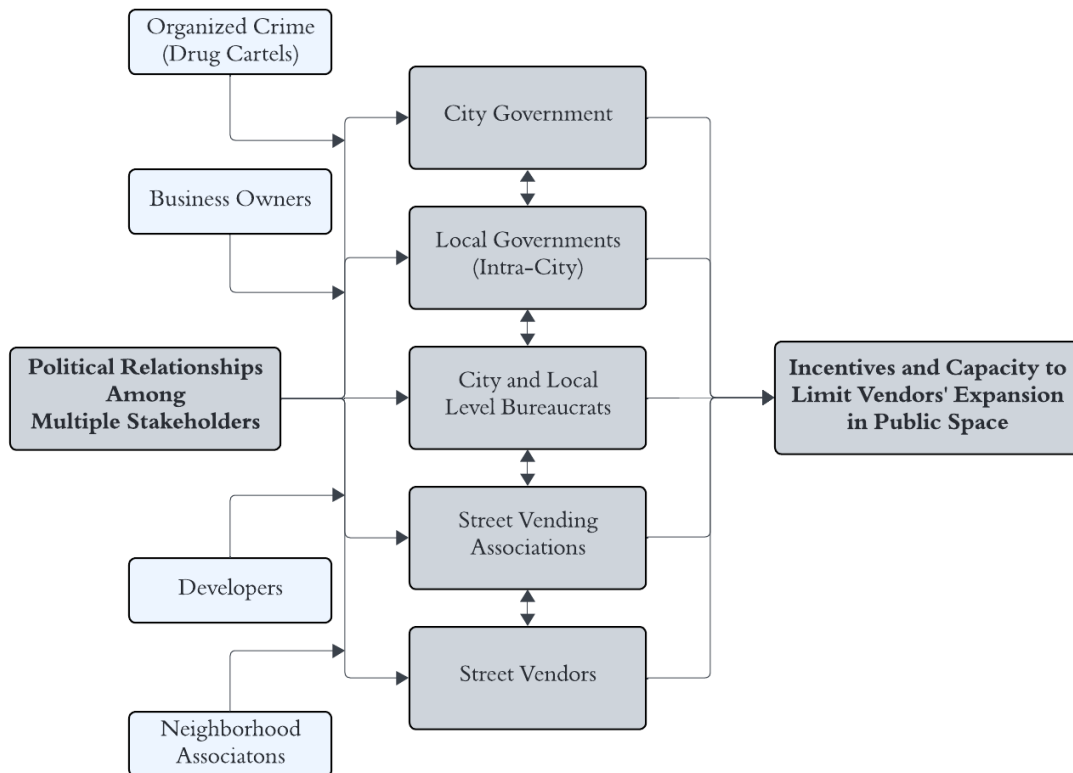
To explore the interactions of street vending associations with different levels of the state, I rely on literature from political science. Scholarship in political science has mainly focused on the reciprocal (clientelistic) relationships between street vendors and politicians. Most research has analyzed how political parties benefit street vendors in exchange for political support either through votes or attending political rallies. Recent scholarship has incorporated the role of political intermediaries (brokerage) in this relationship, depicting a wide range of brokers (Holland & Palmer-Rubin, 2015; Langston & Castro Cornejo, 2023), their roles in enforcing regulations (Holland, 2017), promoting economic growth (Grossman, 2021), their social networks (Aliaga Linares, 2002, 2012), the ways they organize to increase compliance of regulations (Hummel, 2022), and their competition over state resources (Fuchs, 2023). Adding to research on political intermediation are scholars studying the role of street-level state bureaucrats as political intermediaries that supply a more efficient provision of goods in exchange for political favors that are not necessarily electoral (Alonso Ferreira, 2023; Rizzo, 2015; Toral, 2023).

This dissertation places street vending politics at the forefront of the analysis of public space management. By bridging the literatures on clientelism and public space, this study focuses on two cases of street vending in Mexico City and one case in San Francisco that provided me with the opportunity to trace the implementation of a street vending ordinance from its inception. Mexico City today is a city where multiple power players scramble for the use of public space. Mexico City, with one of the largest population of street vendors¹, represents a canonical case of street vending politics, depicting how the state has historically supported street vending associations in exchange for political and economic favors (Cross, 1998b). I expand this literature by comparing street vending within different sub-metropolitan local governments, analyzing how political relationships between different actors impact the capacity and incentives to regulate public space to regulate public space (See Figure 1).

I analyze this comparison in three ways. First, I explore how the spatial location of vending associations shapes their capacity to create social and political networks to lobby with governments, impacting their incentives to expand in public space and increasing their political influence to secure their place in public space. Second, I study how vending associations' relationship with governments and their bureaucracies impacts the state's capacity to regulate street vending and limit its expansion in public space. Third, I examine how in a context of high state capacity, officials and different types of vendors respond to the implementation of a street vending regulation, shedding light on how vendors are legitimized or excluded through legal mechanisms.

¹ See Figure 11 below comparing cities with the highest number of street vendors in the world.

Figure 1. Political Relationships Impact the Capacity and Incentives to Regulate Public Space



Note: Even though I consider neighborhood associations and organized crime as actors influencing street vending and public space regulations, I focus on the relationship between city and intra-city local politicians, bureaucrats, leaders of vending associations, and vendors (shaded in the figure). All actors within this figure interact with each other.

Methods

To answer the questions stated above, I collected data through a variety of forms²: surveys, in-depth interviews, focus groups, participant and direct observations, information requests, and archival sources. I spent 15 months in Mexico City from May to August of 2021 and from January to December of 2023. During the summer of 2021, I carried out in-depth interviews with vendors and vending leaders to understand how street vending is regulated. Then, from May to December of 2022, I performed a survey in two stages in San Francisco (before and after the implementation). During this time, I also interviewed vendors, community organizations, and local officials. I continued with followed-up with interviews online and in-person until February of 2024. After setting up a research plan, I went back to Mexico City from January to December of 2023 where I conducted the bulk of the interviews with vending leaders, bureaucrats, and politicians. From March of 2022 to August of 2023, I collected data for street markets through information requests to build a geospatial data set that I complemented through a survey of vendors (n=154) in the borough of *Coyoacán* from May and June of 2023.

Moving between Mexico City and San Francisco offered clarity in my position as a researcher in both places, allowing me to make connections between both cities as I traveled and lived in them. As a Mexican researcher living in the Mission District in San Francisco, my positionality provided unique insights into the experiences and challenges faced by street vendors in the neighborhood. In contrast to the interviews I conducted in Mexico City, the interviews with vendors in San Francisco

² I received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval through the protocol # 2021-04-14258.

did not seem to be mediated by social class. Exposing my position as a foreigner trying to fit into academia the United States made it easier to build trust and rapport with vendors in San Francisco. By living in the Mission District, I observed the daily lives of vendors and my “embeddedness” in the neighborhood reduced the power dynamic that usually shapes the relationship between researchers and research participants (Moss, 1995). This allowed me to navigate the cultural nuances of vendors’ background and their present local context. Thus, it was easy to approach vendors and ask them for interviews, as well as sending direct emails to community organizations and local officials.

Being back in the city where I grew up allowed me to imbue myself in its city streets, its lingo, and its violence. During the first months of fieldwork in 2023, I had to readapt to my life in Mexico City. My entrenched position within the city simultaneously complicated and eased my way “into the field”. While my social class distanced myself from street vendors, my deep knowledge of Mexican mannerisms and phrases allowed me to read what my interlocutors were trying to express and the moments that I was in danger. I collected interviews through three main entry points. First, I contacted a nonprofit organization that supports street vending associations, introducing me to leaders of associations. Second, I sent emails to former and present politicians and many of them agreed to be interviewed anonymously. Third, after requesting public information, I went to government offices to ask for more information on street vending regulation. All entry points connected me with other actors, expanding my network of vendors, leaders, bureaucrats, and politicians through snowball sampling techniques.

Research Questions and Structure of Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into four chapters. In chapter 1, I introduce street vending’s administrative, bureaucratic, and legal structures in Mexico City. In chapters 2, 3, and 4, I present my argument through the following studies.

In chapter 2, I examine how street vending associations relate to each other, forming alliances or competing over vendors and public space. In this chapter, I illustrate the variation in street vending associations’ political influence through an analysis of social networks. By building a geospatial dataset of street market associations in Mexico City, I identify differences in associations according to their size and spatial presence across the city, creating a typology of local, district, and city-wide associations. Then, through in-depth interviews with street vending leaders, politicians, state employees, and street vendors, I illustrate how associations’ social networks with neighborhoods and politicians impact their ability to form alliances with other street vending associations and their incentives to limit their market expansion in public space. I claim that these outcomes have consequences for associations’ ability to lobby and secure regulations which are beneficial for street vendors more generally.

In chapter 3, I describe how clientelistic brokerage networks impact the negotiation of public space in Mexico City. I analyze how political and bureaucratic structures shape street vendors’ use of public space, such as parks, sidewalks, and public squares. By bridging literature on clientelism, street-level bureaucrats, and public space, I argue that politicians reorganize bureaucratic structures to have greater electoral gains and governance control. I claim that partisan political alignment between intra-city local governments and the city government mediates the levels of competition between inspectors and street vending associations, and the local governments’ ability to control public space. I examine these mechanisms in three intra-city local governments (boroughs³) in Mexico City which differ in terms of their political alignment with the city government. Through direct observation, examining city documents, and in-depth interviews with politicians, bureaucrats, leaders vending associations, and street vendors, I analyze vending associations and inspectors acting as brokers and articulate the

³ Mexico City is composed of 16 boroughs which are equivalent to municipalities in the rest of the country. Each borough elects a mayor every 3 years with the possibility of running for re-election once.

administrative, economic, political, and spatial consequences of these relationships across different intra-city local governments in Mexico City.

In chapter 4, I use the case of San Francisco to explore who legitimizes street vending and the mechanisms through which vendors are legitimized within a context of high state capacity. Through the study of a street vending policy implementation in San Francisco, I shed light on the dynamism of local officials' enforcement and vendors' compliance. Existing literature on street vending regulation often emphasizes the challenges in enforcing legal frameworks due to unclear laws or insufficient state capacity. However, I argue that this literature overlooks the diversity among vendors and how this diversity prompts diverse responses to regulations. Drawing on data from interviews with vendors, community organizations, and local officials (i.e., district supervisors, public works officials, and police officers), I trace the implementation of a street vending ordinance in the Mission District to examine the misalignment between legal instruments and everyday activities.

Lastly, I present the conclusion of the dissertation by summarizing the main findings and contributions of this research. I also provide a section with recommendations for future scholarship and practice that might be helpful for urban planners in academia and policymakers interested in conflicts over the use of public space. Finally, I suggest questions and analyses for future projects derived from this dissertation.

Terminology

Street vending research most commonly falls within conceptual discussions on informality. However, in this text, I avoid using the term “informality” because it obscures the underlying mechanisms of street vending politics. In the field of urban planning, generally, the term informality is used to refer to how people use and shape urban spaces in ways that are not always recognized or sanctioned by law and law enforcers.

The concept of informality is so ambiguous, complex, and heterogeneous that different schools of thought and disciplinary emphases have emerged to explain the origins, causes, and political implications of the informal economy (Chen, 2012)⁴. Over the last fifty years, there has been extensive debate on the concept without a consensus on its meaning, the processes it represents, the issues it involves, and the necessary policies to address them (Kanbur, 2012). In general, studies on the informal economy have attempted to understand the processes that occur outside the sociopolitical and legal structures of the state and the market economy, and how these processes are linked to formal institutions. According to Cathy Rakowski (1994), the term “informality” has created a common language among governments, international financial institutions, and private foundations; however, the term has failed to integrate approaches or provide analytical utility.

Furthermore, although street vending is commonly characterized as informal, it is challenging to make distinctions when analyzing governance processes between “formal” and “informal” politics in everyday life. The politics of informality are complex because they oscillate between spaces of legality and illegality. The ambiguity of regulation creates gray areas in the implementation of norms, opening up space for discretionary practices. As a result, policies exercised by state authority become informal as they temporarily suspend the law at discretion (Agamben, 1998), depending on the negotiation achieved between the local state and vendors. Thus, I avoid the concept of informality⁵ because it misleads researchers to think that street vending is unregulated when in fact it is strictly controlled through written and unwritten laws under constant negotiation by multiple power players of cities.

⁴ For an analysis of the different schools of thought related to street vending see Cross (1998b) and Crossa (2018).

⁵ In Mexico, the term “*comercio popular*” is commonly used, referring to an economic activity that is socially and culturally accepted by the population.

Chapter 1. Street Vending in Mexico City

In this chapter, my goal is to introduce Mexico City's street vending background. First, I present street vending's administrative and bureaucratic structure. Then, I exhibit the diversity of street vendors that exist within the city and their main differences. Next, I provide a statistical snapshot of the number of street vendors from 2005 to 2023. Lastly, I briefly mention two of the main legal instruments used by local officials and leaders of street vending associations to regulate street vending.

Street Vending's Administrative and Bureaucratic Structure

Mexico City's political structure is composed of the head of government (the governor of the city) and 16 boroughs (intra-city local governments). Mexico City has held elections for the head of government since 1997 and for boroughs⁶ since 2000. The head of government is a very powerful entity because it follows political directives directly from the president – especially if they belong to the same political party. As has been often the case, the head of government becomes the next in line within the governing party for Mexico's presidency. This allows the head of government to exercise discretionary measures within the city government, with state officials within the city complying to the policies she is inclined to implement. The city government typically oversees and manages large-scale infrastructural projects, such as roads, parks, and public transportation systems. Meanwhile, boroughs often handle more localized services and maintenance tasks, such as street cleaning, waste management, and parks upkeep, tailored to the specific needs of their respective neighborhoods.

As shown in Figure 2, the Director of Government – a highly politicized position – works directly under the head of government and is responsible for the governance of the city. Below this entity, lies the Subsecretary of Boroughs⁷ which is the interface between the city government and the borough governments. This agency ensures the development of boroughs, enforces regulations of public space, and keeps a strict control of street vending licenses. One of the main duties of the Subsecretary of Boroughs is to resolve disputes over public space that have not been able to be resolved locally. Since many of the street vending associations are present across different boroughs of the city, the Subsecretary of Boroughs negotiates with vending leaders and reaches political agreements to distribute public space. These agreements might be in benefit or in detriment to the borough, depending on the political relationship they maintain with the borough's incumbent. Both the Director of Government and the Subsecretary of Boroughs are temporary political positions that are last for a period of 3 years. This temporality matters since the negotiation agreements that they make for assigning public space are short-termed and constantly changing with every political cycle.

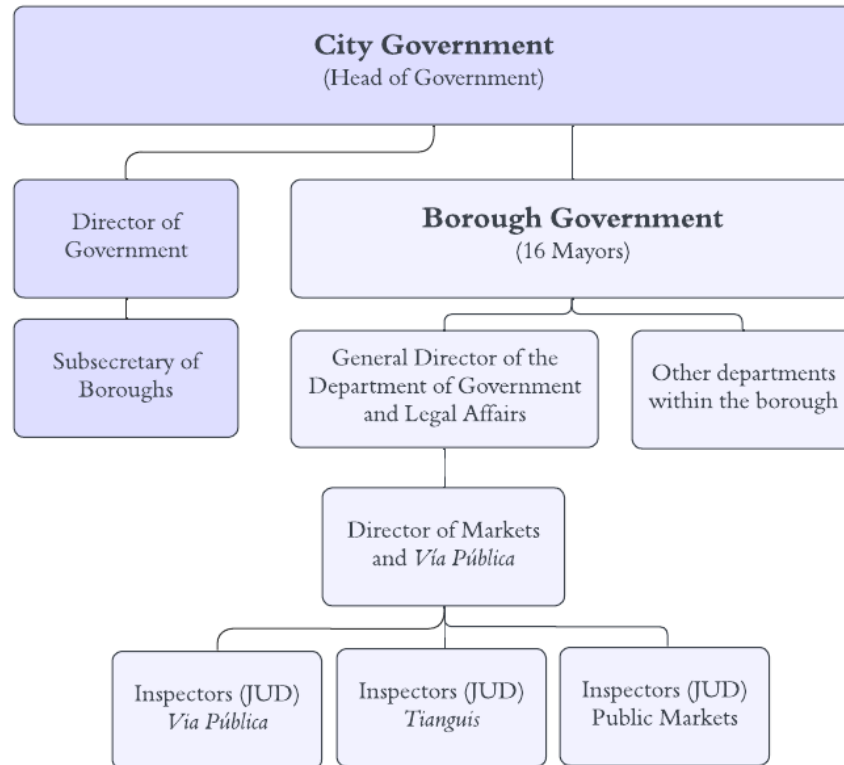
At the local level, 16 mayors across the different borough governments, and they may or may not belong to the same political party as the city government. The political structure of boroughs is similar to the city government's structure (see Figure 2), having the Departments of Government, Legal affairs, Public Works, Urban Services, Economic Development, and Social Development. Street vending regulation falls within the Department of Government and Legal Affairs of the borough. The director holds a close relationship with the mayor, but also maintains close ties with street operators, vending associations, and the neighbors within the borough. Working under the Department of Government and Legal Affairs is the Director of Markets and *Vía Pública* (public way) which functions as the administrative operator for coordinating and managing street vending operators and inspectors.

⁶ Since 1997, districts (*delegaciones*) were created as the political and administrative division of Mexico City. Until 2017, the city changed from being the Federal District to Mexico City and the local governments shifted from districts (*delegaciones*) to boroughs (*alcaldías*), which are the equivalent to municipalities in the rest of the Mexican territory. There are sixteen boroughs in Mexico City. Local elections for the executive (mayors) began in 2000.

⁷ In Spanish, *Subsecretaría de programas de alcaldías y reordenamiento de la vía pública*.

Within the borough's structure, at the bottom of the organizational chart and in direct contact with streets and street vendors are three different departments in each borough, each known in Spanish as the JUD (*jefe de departamento*) of the borough, which is mostly composed of street vending inspectors. Since inspectors have direct contact with what is happening on the streets, these positions are prone to discretion and corrupt practices. Moreover, given their on-the-ground knowledge, directors of *vía pública* and markets can achieve upward mobility within the bureaucratic structure, even obtaining the seat as mayors in a given moment.

Figure 2. Mexico City's Street Vending Bureaucratic Structure



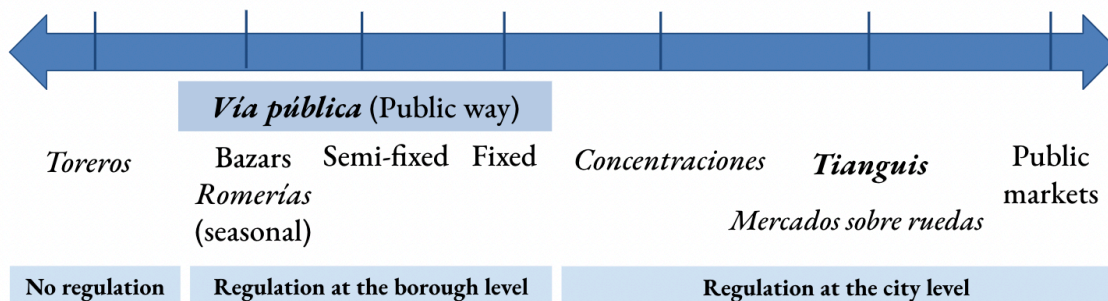
Diversity of Street Vendors

Boroughs divide street vending under three main subsectors: 1) *vía pública* (public way), 2) *tianguis* (street markets), and 3) public markets. These categories are regulated by different government officials and have varying degrees of social, political, and legal recognition⁸ (see Figure 3). The legal status of these vending categories is in constant flux, determined by the daily negotiations between vendors, street vending associations, state employees, and politicians at local and city governments. For example, public markets are managed directly by the city government, with boroughs playing a minor role in their supervision. *Toreros* (bullfighters) do not have any regulation, “dodging” the authorities that persecute them by selling their merchandise on a piece of cloth and running away as they see authorities, as if they were bullfighters. Vendors of *vía pública* range from bazars and *romerías* - having seasonal agreements - to “fixed” vendors, who have stalls attached to the ground. All vendors

⁸ Since there are myriad legal frameworks, see studies from Barbosa (2008), Cross (1998), and Meneses-Reyes (2011) for a historical description of street vending regulations and further details about the different types of vendors (Cross, 1998, p. 89-101).

of *vía pública* are regulated at the borough level⁹. *Tianguis* and *mercados sobre ruedas* (markets on wheels)¹⁰ are installed daily and are regulated at the city level. *Concentraciones* are agglomerations of vendors which function as pre-cursors of public markets and are regulated at the city level.

Figure 3. Universe of Street Vendors in Mexico City and Their Range of Legal Certainty



In this dissertation, I study *vía pública* and *tianguis* street vending. I focus on *vía pública* vending since it is the most politicized and most conspicuous type of street vending in the city. *Vía pública* vendors commonly set up with fixed or semi-fixed stalls¹¹ on sidewalks, parks, or plazas across the city. Due to their semi-permanent condition, *vía pública* vendors (both fixed and semi-fixed) are subject to clientelism, extortion, and eviction. I also study *tianguis* vending because government permits are given more easily to *tianguis* associations than to other street vendors working in public space. Moreover, they have better social acceptance (Gayosso Ramírez, 2009; Gómez, 2012) since they are integral to Mexico City’s food system (See Figure 19 in Appendix) selling mostly healthy foods at accessible prices. Lastly, *tianguis* are critical sites to study since they can cover up to ten kilometers of city streets, revealing the importance of street vending’s urban management of public space.

Statistical Profile

The urban governance of street vending in Mexico City is crucial to understand how economic and social development can be promoted in the city, improving the city’s use of public space and its population’s livelihoods. Street vending in Mexico City extends to every corner of the city, with approximately 900 thousand vendors in the Metropolitan Area of Mexico City (Luján Salazar & Vanek, 2020). Despite its palpable presence in the city, public policies regulating vending have not been effective in fostering a harmonious coexistence between state authorities and street vendors.

⁹ There are exceptions in these legal frameworks. As an example, *vía pública* vendors selling on primary streets are technically regulated by the city, while secondary and tertiary streets should strictly be regulated by the borough. However, this legal differentiation is seldom or discretionally applied.

¹⁰ Oftentimes, *tianguis* and *mercados sobre ruedas* are mixed-up since they seem similar in appearance. However, these markets present important differences in terms of their regulation and organization. *Tianguis* have been traditionally itinerant markets that set up in different parts of the city. Instead, *mercados sobre ruedas*, originated as a result of Mexico City’s food and economic crisis at the end of the 1960s and as an attempt to reduce the power of intermediaries in the supply of food. As such, *mercados sobre ruedas* were created to supply the city with basic needs by creating a direct link between peasants and consumers, regulated at the city’s Secretary of Commerce and Industry (SECOFI) (Castro Sánchez, 2018). However, the initial goal of these markets failed, since most farmers did not intend to become vendors, delegating this process to vendors that were mediated through associations affiliated with the CNOP (Interview with former mayor, June 2023; interview with street vendor at *tianguis*, May 2023).

¹¹ The main difference between fixed and semi-fixed vendors on *vía pública* is that fixed stalls stay permanently in the same location, having a metallic stall that is drilled to the ground while semi-fixed stalls have to install and uninstall their stalls daily.

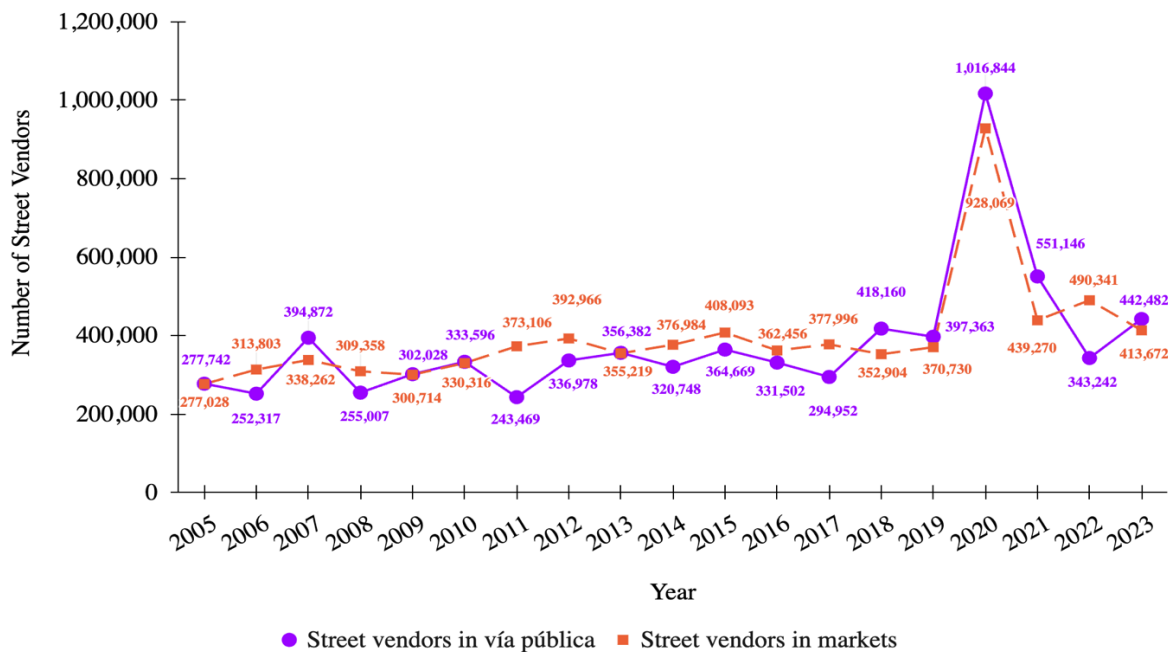
Governments face the dual task of enforcing regulations, while respecting vendors’ human rights, activities that often appear in contradiction with each other. Evicting and relocating street vendors has been a recurring practice in Mexico City since the 20th century (Barbosa, 2008). Despite multiple efforts to control street vending¹², the number of vendors has consistently increased. Before delving into the intricacies of street vending, I present a statistical profile of their presence in the city.

The enumeration of street vendors is a complex methodological challenge due to the diversity of vendors and their constant movement (Skinner et al., 2018; Vanek et al., 2014). Some vendors only work for seasons, while others are in constant motion and relocation, holding multiple jobs in a single day. Despite the imprecision of enumerations, scholars at WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing) estimate the number of street vendors in Mexico City using data from the National Survey of Occupation and Employment (ENOE) (Luján Salazar & Vanek, 2020). The authors distinguish between vendors in markets and street vendors. According to their definition, market vendors are those who sell wholesale or retail in fixed locations. Street vendors are those who sell wholesale, retail, and provide food and beverage preparation services but work outside their residence, in improvised stalls or as mobile vendors.

To have a better understanding of the evolution of street vending, I replicate the estimation by Luján Salazar and Vanek using data from 2005 to 2023.

Figure 4 distinguishes between vendors working on the streets (closely related to *vía pública* vendors) and market vendors, showing a more gradual and smaller growth of market vendors in contrast to street vendors, who have nearly doubled from 2005 to 2023, going from half a million, to almost a million vendors working in the city.

Figure 4. Number of Street Vendors by Type of Vendor, 2005 – 2023

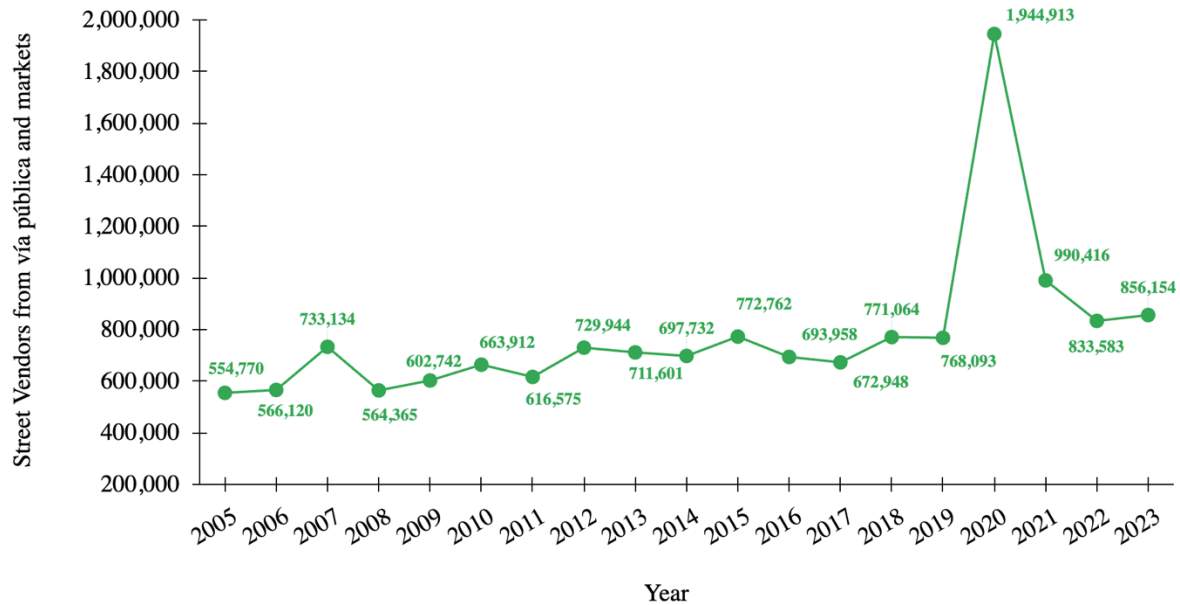


Source: Data from ENOE (2005-2023) using the methodology outlined by Luján Salazar & Vanek (2020).

¹² See Barbosa (2008 and Meneses-Reyes (2011) for a historical account, and Silva-Londoño (2010, 2011) and Stamm (2005) for the relocation projects carried out in the Historic Center in 1993 and 2007.

Due to the difficulty of distinguishing between different types of vendors with these data, I combine both categories, as shown in Figure 5. Figure 5 depicts an increase of vendors by 50% from 2005 to 2023, with a relatively constant growth since 2017, peaking at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic but with declines during the crisis of 2008, 2011, 2016, and 2022.

Figure 5. Number of Street Vendors in Mexico City, 2005 - 2023



Source:: Data from ENOE (2005-2023) using the methodology outlined by Luján Salazar & Vanek (2020).

In addition to the methodological challenges to define and measure street vendors, street vending enumeration has generated tensions between vendors and different levels of government. In 2019, Mexico City’s government launched an open-data portal to promote accountability and transparency in the city, through the Digital Agency for Public Innovation (ADIP). However, the historical persecution of street vendors (Cross, 1998b) created tensions with the street vending community when attempting to integrate a registry of vendors through the Street Vending System (SISCOVIP) and make the information public. This shows that enumerating street vendors can increase their visibility and recognition to continue working in public spaces. Yet, without adequate legal frameworks and prior consent to provide public data, making street vendors’ data public can create unintended conflicts. Multiple actors might use vendors’ data to displace them from their worksites or harass them by knowing their place of work.

Brief Historical and Legal Context

City and borough governments, as well as street vendor associations, fiercely scramble for the use and distribution of public space among multiple actors (See Figure 1). Although many street vending associations are registered as civil associations, the legal ambiguous framework through which they mediate between street vendors and public officials for controlling public space is one of the main sources of tension between different levels of the state and civil society (Hayden, 2017; Meneses-

Reyes, 2011; Roever, 2005)¹³. As happens with street vending regulation across the world, overlapping government agencies and legal hierarchies complicate the enforcement of legal instruments (Blomley, 2011; Cross, 1998b; Meneses-Reyes, 2018; Nogueira, 2019; Tucker & Devlin, 2019). Previous studies have revealed the ways through which laws are constantly interpreted, negotiated, and contested (Brown et al., 2010; Crossa, 2018; Devlin, 2011; Meneses-Reyes & Caballero-Juárez, 2014; Roever & Skinner, 2016; Schindler, 2014b; te Lintelo, 2017), depicting how the law often functions under unpredictable logics (Azuela & Meneses-Reyes, 2014; Valverde, 2011).

In practice, there are written and unwritten rules that govern street vending and the use of public space (Mattews & Alba, 2015). Thus, the regulation of public space depends on how street vendors, leaders of street vending associations, bureaucrats, and politicians use these rules at their convenience (Holland, 2017). Other common efforts to regulate public space have been relocating street vendors to plazas, but these are often unsuccessfully since street vendors seek areas with heavy pedestrian traffic, such as subway stations, commercial malls, hospitals, and schools¹⁴.

Since 1917, the Mexican Constitution recognizes social rights of its population, mandating that everyone has the right to work in public space. However, it also mandates that everyone has the right to access and move across public space freely. These two rights contradict each other, complicating the regulation and enforcement of public space (Blomley, 2011; Meneses-Reyes & Caballero-Juárez, 2014). More recently, there are two main documents that are used both by the state and street vending associations: the Regulation of 1951 and the 11/98 Agreement (See Table 1 in Appendix for a more comprehensive account of all the street vending regulations).

The Market Law of 1951 (Reglamento de Mercados Para El Distrito Federal, 1951) allowed street vendors to work in designated locations outside of the downtown area as long as they organized and registered under street vending associations (Meneses-Reyes, 2011). Any vendor who worked outside of the designated areas was fiercely persecuted and criminalized (Cross, 1998b; Meneses-Reyes, 2011), leading to an entrenched fear and hatred towards authority that still prevails today (Alba & Braig, 2022). Ironically, through this law, leaders of street vending associations strengthened and controlled public space (Cross, 1998b), leaving a historic legacy of high levels of organization¹⁵. Ever since, street vending associations have had the political recognition from state authorities (Cross, 1998b; Meneses-Reyes, 2011), which is of great relevance for dealing with issues of collective action and for understanding existing clientelist relationships.

Before the fall of the autocratic regime of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in 1997, two street vending associations concentrated most of the street vendors' membership and had the authorization to distribute among vendors the use of public space in Mexico City (Silva-Londoño, 2015). For most of the 20th century, public space was controlled mainly by two families led by two

¹³ These legal ambiguities need to be addressed through more precise legal documents. Although Article 16 of the Constitution of Mexico City (Constitución Política de La Ciudad de México, 2017) recognizes that the city government along with the boroughs is responsible for managing and overseeing commercial activities and that, with citizen participation, they must establish the use, maintenance, and expansion of public space, there still exists legal ambiguity in regulating street vending. This difficulty arises from a complex hierarchy of laws and programs in Mexico City, with multiple urban planning instruments, various programs in boroughs, and different timelines that make it challenging to have a comprehensive understanding of the authority's powers and citizens' rights. For an excellent historic overview on the relationship between law and street vending in Mexico City from 1930-2010, see Meneses-Reyes, 2011.

¹⁴ For years, efforts have been made to relocate vendors to markets or squares away from public spaces (with relocation programs in 1993 and 2007 in the downtown Historic Center as notable examples) (Cross, 1997; Crossa, 2018; Meneses-Reyes, 2011; Silva-Londoño, 2010). However, reorganization programs do not necessarily imply relocation but rather renegotiation between both politicians and street vending associations.

¹⁵ Through his fieldwork at the beginning of the 1990s, John Cross (1998a) found that 90% of the vendors belonged to a street vending association. However, Meneses (2018) found (in the case of La Merced) that even though most pay fees to street vending associations, only 40% vendors actually belong to the street vending association.

powerful women: Alejandra Barrios and Guillermina Rico. However, once the PRI lost the city election and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) came into power democratically, the PRD stimulated the competition among associations and the associations formerly controlled by the PRI began to fragment into smaller associations (Alba & Braig, 2022; Cross, 1998a; Meneses-Reyes, 2011; Serna-Luna, 2020; Zaremborg, 2011). While these two families still have their family members controlling space across the city, the atomization of associations has made street vending associations to significantly lose political influence and their authorization to assign public space (Alba & Braig, 2022; Cross, 1998a; Meneses-Reyes, 2011; Zaremborg, 2011).

During the transition to democracy, in order to regain government control over public space, the central government headed by Cuauhtémoc Cardenas published the Agreement 11/98 (Acuerdo 11/98, 1998) in the Official Gazette of the Federal District. The agreement established the Street Vending Reorganization Program and an official licensing system¹⁶. This document highlighted the inadequacy of the city's legal framework, the lack of planning for the city's economic and social life, and the problems arising from having myriad regulations governing street vending. The agreement defined the duration and renewal of permits with a maximum duration of three months, extendable, and allowing them to be renewed 15 days before their expiration. However, in everyday practice, boroughs seldom issue or renew permits. Instead, boroughs provide vendors with an *ad hoc* document allowing them to pay fees for working in public space. Thus, for vendors to work in public space, they must pay fees for which they receive a payment receipt. This payment receipt does not protect them, as the authority does not recognize it as a legitimate document. In this manner, vendors can be removed from their work area at the discretion of inspectors¹⁷. Despite its lack of legal legitimacy, vendors file their payment receipts (quarterly or semi-annually) to prove their seniority to authorities, gaining greater negotiating power to maintain their work.

Given this legal vacuum, street vending associations issue identifications to vendors, accrediting them as members of the association, recognizing their seniority and the type of product they sell. However, despite “owning” the stall and being able to receive it as an inheritance from their families, vendors can be evicted whenever there are changes in governments' political power. Thus, their lack of legal stability exposes them to abusive inspectors, police, organized crime, or the presence of new constructions (such as malls) if association leaders fail to re-negotiate the vendors' permanence in that work area.

Historically, street vending associations in Mexico City have had great political and spatial control over public space. Since vendors were forced to organize under street vending associations as a mechanism from the state to coopt street vendors, leaders of street vending associations have had the control over assigning public space. For most of the 20th century, public space was controlled mainly by two families led by two powerful women: Alejandra Barrios and Guillermina Rico. However, once the PRI lost the city election and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) came into power democratically, as part of the 11/98 Agreement, the PRD stimulated the competition among associations and the associations formerly controlled by the PRI began to fragment into smaller associations (Alba & Braig, 2022; Cross, 1998a; Meneses-Reyes, 2011; Serna-Luna, 2020; Zaremborg, 2011). While these two families still have their family members controlling space across the city, the atomization of associations has made street vending associations to significantly lose political influence and their authorization to assign public space (Alba & Braig, 2022; Cross, 1998a; Meneses-Reyes, 2011; Zaremborg, 2011).

¹⁶ SISCOVIP (*Sistema de Comercio en Vía Pública*).

¹⁷ The Civic Law of 2004 (*Ley de Cultura Cívica*, 2004) is the most used legal instrument by inspectors to evict street vendors. This law is open to interpretation in terms of who and who cannot be in public space and is applied according to the inspectors' discretion (Interview with street vending inspector, July 18, 2023).

Since I laid out Mexico City's street vending background in these sections, I can now focus on street vending's governance mechanisms by examining closely different types of vending arrangements: *tianguis*, *vía pública*, and street vending regulation in San Francisco.

Chapter 2. Networks of Influence: Mapping Alliances and Competition among Street Vending Associations in Mexico City

Introduction

Street vending encompasses myriad dimensions of public and political life, with multiple power players competing over public space in cities. While some might view street vending as a consequence of an employment crisis, others might see it as a form of political control as a vote buying practice, while others might see it as a cultural and social tradition. All these assertions most likely hold when studying street vending in Mexico City given the wide diversity of street vendors ranging from vendors selling as a survival activity, vendors having multiple stalls across the city operating as a chain business, or vendors selling as an activity that has been part of their families' heritage for generations.

Among other actors, street vending associations are key, acting as intermediaries between street vendors using public space and politicians providing access to those spaces. However, street vending associations vary significantly in terms of their power to negotiate over public space, mediated by the ties they keep with both street vendors and with politicians. In this chapter, I explore how the social networks of street market associations with neighborhoods and politicians affects their political influence, which in turn impacts their ability to form alliances and their incentives to regulate public space. The variation in political influence across street vending associations offers insights into the overall governance and management strategies employed by street vending associations and their relationship with borough and city governments.

For a sense of this variation, consider two sketches of street vending associations in Mexico City. First, consider a leader from an association which mediates between its membership base and politicians at the city-wide scale. These leaders often seek to create alliances with other street vending leaders to push forward street vending regulations in Congress. These leaders often control several street markets in different sections of the city. They have a hierarchical and highly structured association, with local-level operatives coordinating and collecting the membership fees for the association. These leaders can control street markets both in low and high-income neighborhoods of the city. Street markets in high-income neighborhoods are exclusively controlled by these associations, where all the products have to be neatly displayed and of the highest quality. In these locations, the street market itself has to be in order, so that it only blocks a portion of the street and cars can pass by, without excessive disruption to the neighbors.

In contrast, consider a leader from an association where neighbors are the main clients of the street market. In this case, the number of vendors varies on a weekly basis, with the stalls of the market extending a couple of meters beyond what was initially established with state authorities, sometimes expanding to other streets of the neighborhood. This type of leader usually does not engage with politics at a city-wide scale and does not seek to form alliances with other street vending associations. However, the association has strong ties with street-level inspectors, police, and criminal groups, to make sure that the market runs smoothly without violent events.

The examples display stark differences. The leader will have the capacity to be involved in city politics and form alliances with other groups in the former case, but not necessarily in the latter. The leader will have more leverage to avoid bribing local government inspectors and police in the former case, but the leader will have more incentives to bribe local inspectors in the latter. The leader will be more distant from neighbors where the market is located in the former case but will be more socially involved with neighbors in the latter. Lastly, the leader will have more incentives to control public space in the former case to avoid negotiating with multiple tiers of government, but not necessarily in the latter case, where the leader will bribe officials locally.

To explore these differences, I use *tianguis* as a case study.¹⁸ *Tianguis* are pre-colonial open-air street markets that set up at least once a week across different residential areas of the city. Since *tianguis* set up all across the city, they are also accessible to the majority of the population, and they can range from closing off one block to ten kilometers of streets as shown in Figure 6. *Tianguis* are particularly important because they represent the largest proportion of healthy food provision for the Mexican population (Domínguez et al., 2023). Beyond playing a crucial role in ensuring the healthy provision of food in cities, *tianguis* also provide a source of employment and generate weekly spaces for social and cultural gathering across different neighborhoods of the city (Gómez, 2012). However, there are also complaints against *tianguis* which often stem from middle- and higher-income groups. Common complaints include traffic congestion due to the closing of streets, increasing levels of dirtiness or noise, and the sale of illegal products in these spaces (Gayosso Ramírez, 2009; Gómez, 2012; Mete et al., 2013). Despite their importance in the city, little is known about how *tianguis* are governed and to what extent differences in their associational leadership shape their regulation and competition over space.

Figure 6. Aerial View of *Tianguis* in Mexico City



Note: The pink tents along the street depict the length of the *tianguis* from above.
Source: Alex González (Arellano, 2021)

The neglect of spatializing these power dynamics has important social, economic, and political consequences. The spatiality of associations has implications to understand at which scale the

¹⁸ The word *tianguis* derives from náhuatl, *tianquiztli*, which means a public space market for buying, selling, or bartering products and services.

associations are negotiating with the state. By analyzing the size and the spatial location of associations, I classify local, district, and city-wide *tianguis* associations. I argue that associations with stronger relationships at a city-wide scale will have greater bargaining power to negotiate with the state, but at the expense of weaker ties with the neighborhoods where the markets are located. In contrast, I argue that local associations will lack the political clout to offset concentrated elite power but are usually responsive to vendors' needs. Incorporating size and spatiality into the analysis allows me to study the competition of associations over space and their incentives to control the use of public space.

Through more than 70 in-depth interviews with street vending leaders, politicians, state employees, and street vendors, and descriptive statistics of a geospatial dataset of *tianguis* that I constructed, I examine associations' social networks and how their location impacts their capacity to form alliances and their incentives to control the expansion of the *tianguis* in public space. Specific accounts from *tianguis* in diverging contexts help illustrate the variation among street vending associations and their role in managing space.

This chapter adds to existing literature in two main ways. First, it contributes to the literature on the governance of street vending associations. To my knowledge, this study is the first city-wide analysis of the geography of street vending associations. Whereas the role of associations is seldom studied due to the lack of data collected on them and because they are not often visible (Gómez, 2012; Grossman, 2021), I constructed a dataset of *tianguis* associations in Mexico City to provide a snapshot of the associational dynamics. Second, I also contribute to the literature on political intermediation, shedding light on the social networks of leaders across different socioeconomic contexts, expanding research on political intermediation that solely studies these relationships within poor urban neighborhoods.

The chapter unfolds as follows. I first situate the puzzle using geospatial data of *tianguis* for the entire city, followed by a section positioning the analysis within the literature on the governance of street vending associations. Next, building off previous work on social networks, I develop the theory to explain the relationship between neighborhoods and associations' political influence and how that relationship impacts their capacity to form alliances and their incentives to control the use of public space. Then, I introduce the research setting of Mexico City's *tianguis* and the research design of the study. Next, through in-depth interviews and descriptive statistics of *tianguis* in Mexico City, I present the results and the conclusion of the study.

Puzzle: Diversity of Street Vending Associations

Research on collective organizing has paid particular attention to the urban politics of associations and their interactions with the state. Yet, there are critical aspects often overlooked: the diversity of associations, their competitive dynamics, the alliances they form, and their engagement with multiple levels of government. Understanding these dynamics is essential for gaining insights into how associations exert political influence within urban contexts. Using public records act requests, I created the first database of *tianguis* (street markets) associations across Mexico City. In this manner, I examine the street vending associations' variation in terms of their size and spatial extent (i.e., presence across different locations in the city).

Size

The majority of vendors in Mexico City belong to street vending associations, despite the high costs to organize that vendors face (e.g., attending meeting, paying fees) (Aliaga Linares, 2012; Cross, 1998b). Previous research has found that associations that amass a large number of members have greater mobilization power and monetary support (Aliaga Linares, 2002; Cross, 1998b; Hummel, 2017; Lindell, 2010; Roever & Skinner, 2016; Swilling & Russell, 2002). In South Africa, Swilling and Russel

(2002) estimate the size and profile of non-profits to have a better understanding of state-society relationships and the diversity of actors within the nonprofit sector. By analyzing the role of different nonprofits, they find that larger associations are able to lobby more successfully and form alliances and networks for achieving their goals. I assume that having more markets and expanding their membership base, associations can also have more monetary resources to carry out their projects or lobby with other associations or government officials. Thus, the size of street vending associations will improve associations' political influence and negotiating power with city and local governments.

Spatial Location

In the context of India's slums, Auerbach (2019) finds that the political organization of settlements and their relationship with political party workers impacts the extent to which they can organize and demand public services from the state. Rains (2021) adds that neighborhood characteristics of slums shape the political strategies of the neighbors to organize and negotiate with the state. Through her research on street vending associations in Mexico City, Gómez (2012) finds that during the 1960s leaders of *tianguis* associations and neighborhood associations played dual roles, serving as leaders in processes of auto-construction in peripheral neighborhood and in establishing *tianguis* that would supply neighbors with basic needs. Since *tianguis* are in residential areas across the socioeconomic spectrum, I argue that the spatial location of *tianguis* associations will also have direct implications for their political influence.

Moreover, a street vending association can control multiple *tianguis* across different locations of the city. Thus, I argue that an association which has many markets across different locations of the city will most likely have greater political influence. In the case that an association has *tianguis* across different boroughs, the association will have to negotiate its use of public space with different borough governments (despite laws limiting their involvement to a supervisory role) and with the city-wide government. Consequently, associations with a wider spatial extent will most likely have political connections at a larger scale but will lack strong community ties with the neighborhoods where the *tianguis* sets up.

Using size and spatial extent as conceptual dimensions, I propose a typology of associations (see Figure 7). The size of the associations is based on the number of *tianguis* regulated by each association. In turn, the spatial extent of associations is determined by the number of distinct boroughs each association operates *tianguis* in. As a result, I categorize associations as local, district, and city-wide associations. Local associations have only one *tianguis* within one borough, district associations can have multiple *tianguis* within one borough, and city-wide associations can have many *tianguis* across more than one borough.

Figure 7. Typology of *Tianguis* Associations by Size and Spatial Extent

		Spatial extent (Number of boroughs)	
		One	Multiple
Size (Number of <i>tianguis</i>)	One	Local (n _{assoc} = 84)	-
	Multiple	District (n _{assoc} = 64)	City-wide (n _{assoc} = 57)

After constructing the *tianguis* geospatial dataset, I find that there are 960 *tianguis* across the city and 205 unique *tianguis* associations. From the 205 associations, I identify 84 local, 64 district, and 57 city-wide associations (for the spatial distribution of associations, see Figure 20 in the Appendix). Contrary to findings of organizational density of public markets in Mexico City (Fuchs, 2023), most *tianguis* (91%) are controlled by one association and the remaining (9%) are controlled by multiple associations.

To further show the differences across associations, Table 1 shows that, on average, associations oversee five *tianguis*, but some associations can regulate up to 68 different *tianguis*, illustrating the number of members an association can amass. Also, on average, associations regulate *tianguis* in 2 different boroughs, but at least one association regulates *tianguis* across 11 different boroughs, showing how some associations¹⁹ have extensive political influence across most of the city. At the city scale, these results show that some associations have more *tianguis*, representing vendors in different parts of the city, while others are only local associations.

Table 1. Summary Statistics of *Tianguis* Associations

<i>Tianguis</i> Association	N	Number of <i>Tianguis</i>				Number of Different Boroughs				
		N	Mean	Median	Min	Max	Mean	Median	Min	Max
Local	84	59	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
District	64	219	4	3	2	12	1	1	1	1
City-wide	57	682	12	8	2	68	3	3	2	11
All Associations	205	960	5	2	1	68	2	1	1	11

These results do not show the mechanisms through which these different associations relate to the neighborhoods where markets are embedded, their relationship with local and city-wide governments, and the implications that these relationships have on associations' capacity to form alliances with other associations or regulate their use of public space. I hypothesize that city-wide associations most likely have political connections at the city scale, while local associations only have political influence within their neighborhoods. Although these results hint at street vending association's potential variation in their political influence despite having similar levels of state capacity, the results do not offer answers about the mechanisms through which associations wield their political influence in the city. Thus, in the following sections I will examine how the associations' social networks impact their ability to form alliances or compete with other associations and their incentives to control public space.

Literature: Governance of Street Vending Associations

Street vending politics involve multiple actors, experiencing constantly changing power dynamics with the state and other dominant powers (Roever & Skinner, 2016). Street vending associations that mediate between street vendors and the state are an important means of political participation for street vendors in various cities worldwide (Bhowmik, 2010; Fernández-Kelly & Shefner, 2006). Previous studies have emphasized the electoral relevance of street vending associations, with studies showcasing instances where tolerance towards vendors can be a strategic move tied to electoral goals, indicating complex motivations for local authorities' street vending enforcement (Bromley, 1978; Holland, 2017). Notwithstanding the relevance of street vending on elections, there has been growing interest in studying street vending beyond electoral strategies, analyzing street vendor's governance

¹⁹ Only a dozen associations have control of *tianguis* in more than five different boroughs.

outside of election seasons (Alba, 2015; Alba & Braig, 2022; Crossa, 2018; Hayden, 2019; Meneses-Reyes, 2011; Serna-Luna, 2020)²⁰.

Scholars have examined street vending associations and their relationship with state officials (Cross, 1998b; Hummel, 2017, 2018), the way they organize (Gómez, 2012; Hummel, 2022), their incentives to promote economic growth (Grossman, 2021), their alignment with political parties (Holland & Palmer-Rubin, 2015), their social networks (Aliaga Linares, 2002, 2012), and their competition over state resources (Fuchs, 2023). In order to study the different degrees of political influence of street vending associations, I explore this literature to frame the analysis.

Despite depicting different degrees of political influence, the literature on street vending governance often overlooks competition among street vending associations. Thus, I examine how the literature has examined the role of competition, mostly analyzing competition within associations, but seldom analyzing the barriers that prevent street vending associations to form larger confederations.

Competition within associations is crucial to examine since street vending associations will find it difficult to mobilize street vendors if there is too much animosity within a street vending worksite. It is likely that established vendors impede the entrance of newcomers in order to avoid competition and displacement (Bromley, 2000; Vargas Falla & Valencia Mosquera, 2019). The presence of unregistered vendors threatens the stability of the worksite, increasing competition among vendors. In the Nigerian context, Grossman (2021) makes within-group competition central to her argument, showing that in presence of greater competition between vendors, leaders of vending associations have a harder time promoting pro-trade policies in street markets in Lagos. In the Colombian case, Donovan (2002) argues that competition between unregistered and unionized vendors prevented mobilization in Bogotá, further decreasing the vending associations' bargaining power. In the Peruvian context, Roeber (2005) brings to our attention that fixed vendors have incentives to comply with state regulations to defend their space from potential competitors in Lima. In the case of New Delhi, India, Schindler (2014) mentions competition among vendors to point out how vending associations use legal instruments when there is disagreement with other vending associations. These examples show how associations prevent conflicts among street vendors, incentivizing vendors to join associations. However, little is known about the competition between associations for political influence.

Studies within political science have carried out rich, in-depth analyses of the relationship between state officials and street vending associations, often placing state capacity as the main driver of associations' political influence. Holland (2017), for example, argues that street vending associations that are strong in Bogotá might be vulnerable to enforcement since they may be seen as mafias instead of poor constituencies trying to negotiate deals with politicians. As another example, Hummel (2022) argues that state officials have considerable influence over street vendors, finding that enforcement capacity explains the size and power of street vending associations. For the case of La Paz, Hummel finds that state officials readily placate or divide associations as a mechanism of control. Through "divide and conquer" strategies, officials fracture confederations into competing associations "buying-off" leaders of street vending associations as a mechanism to maintain a governable and compliant street vending sector (p. 166). However, these studies focus on vertical relationships of power instead of examining the competition between associations. Hummel does not explore how and when alliances between associations emerge to obtain significant political power over governments and does not account for legacies of previous political regimes that might explain associational power. Moreover, Hummel argues that in a context of similar state capacity, we should observe little variation

²⁰ Similarly, recent studies have found how the relationship between politicians and neighborhood intermediaries goes beyond the pursuit of votes (Rizzo, 2015; Zarazaga, 2014).

in associations' political influence; but as I delineated above, there are important variations in street vending associations despite similar levels of state capacity within a metropolitan area like Mexico City.

To my knowledge, the only study that examines competition between associations at a city-wide scale is Cross's (1998) study of street vending associations in Mexico City in the 1990s. In this study, he examines the strategies that vending associations use to gain political influence and compete with other street vending associations. Rivalry between associations often leads to physical altercations, sometimes ending in death of leaders or vendors. Leaders seek alliances with other leaders or poach street vendors from other associations to gain political influence. They also invade working spaces of other leaders or set up stalls nearby to undercut their rivals' sales. However, the most successful strategy is to have connections with local city officials that act as sponsors of associations who provide them access to the political administrative structure while remaining independent from the control of the administrative apparatus of the state. Cross shows that in order to secure a powerful sponsor, leaders have incentives to increase the number of vendors to improve their bargaining power with state officials, securing them in exchange with job security or promotion within the bureaucratic ranks. I build off Cross's work and explore if these dynamics persist and how these dynamics change across different neighborhoods, political scales, and types of street vending associations.

These insights are relevant to examine how associations compete with each other and over space because they shed light on the multiplicity of actors involved in street vending regulations. Beyond electoral strategies, previous literature has shown how competition within and among associations is essential to understand if associations can mobilize and increase their bargaining power to remain in place. While most research has shown the relationship between associations and the state, it is crucial to study how the different levels of political influence can influence associations' ability to lobby and secure regulations which will ultimately improve street vendors' livelihoods.

Theory: Social Networks and Competition of Street Vending Associations

Mexico City has been a prime example of street vending associational activity through the study of corporatism and clientelism (Cross, 1998b). Thus, I build on this canonical case of street vending politics to study how associations' social networks with state officials and neighborhoods foster or hinder *tianguis* associations' capacity to form alliances and control public space. Leaders of street vendor associations are central figures to the analysis of street vending governance in Mexico City. Leaders have not only been the main actors regulating the use of public space through negotiations with state officials, but have also been part of the state by holding positions in the local and federal Congress and act as social and spiritual leaders (Alba & Braig, 2022; Crossa, 2018; Silva-Londoño, 2011). Thus, the relationship between the association and the neighborhood is vital so that the integration between vendors and people that live near the *tianguis* enable vendors to sell in that neighborhood.

Scholars have long studied the critical role of social networks in economic and political behavior (Granovetter, 1985; Putnam, 1994). In the context of Lima, Aliaga-Linares (2002) utilizes social networks to examine the multiplicity of links that street vendors create in the neighborhood they work in. Building on work from Lomnitz (1977) that explores norms reciprocity and trust in a low-income neighborhood in Mexico City, Aliaga-Linares finds that daily interactions among vendors and neighbors explains less tensions between these actors. I build on social networks' theory to explore how street vending associations' multiple levels of engagement with neighborhoods and governments affect their ability to create more extensive social networks, forming confederations of associations. In sum, how multilevel networks beget more extensive networks. My claim is not that alliances are always preferable and to encourage monopolistic behavior of associations, but rather that forming more long-lasting alliances and appealing to larger scales of politics could provide some advantages to

street vendors and street vending associations to minimize bribing lower-level street officials. Forming alliances can grant associations with the ability to lobby and secure regulations, which are beneficial for vendors more generally.

I start by proposing variation among street vending associations depending on their size and their spatial location. I argue that spatial location is crucial to consider due to the social networks that leaders of associations can tap into. Concepts of embeddedness and trust, attributed to Granovetter (1985), are helpful to describe how individuals prefer to engage with people they know rather than rely on institutions. I use embeddedness as a concept to describe the role of street vending associations in different neighborhoods, particularly to compare leaders belonging to neighborhoods they work in with leaders that are unknown to vendors of the association. In contrast to previous studies examining the role of neighborhood associations in politics (Auerbach, 2019; Auyero, 2001; Rizzo, 2015; Zarazaga, 2014), *tianguis* are not “geographically bound” associations, as shown in the previous chapter. Since street markets set up once a week in different parts of the city, they do not have to necessarily build community ties in bounded places. Theoretically, this has implications for the ties that leaders can build with the neighborhoods and the implications that it might have for their credibility as political intermediaries (Auyero, 2001; Rizzo, 2015; Zarazaga, 2014).

I also use the concept of “upward embeddedness” developed by Toral (2023) in the context of Brazil to depict the relationship between leaders of street vending associations and governments. In the context of Mexico City, Cross (1998) finds that state officials often mediate between associations’ rivalries, supporting one association over the other to gain their political and economic loyalty. Hence, the level at which street vending associations are embedded in will determine their ability to negotiate with state officials and their relationship with other street vending associations.

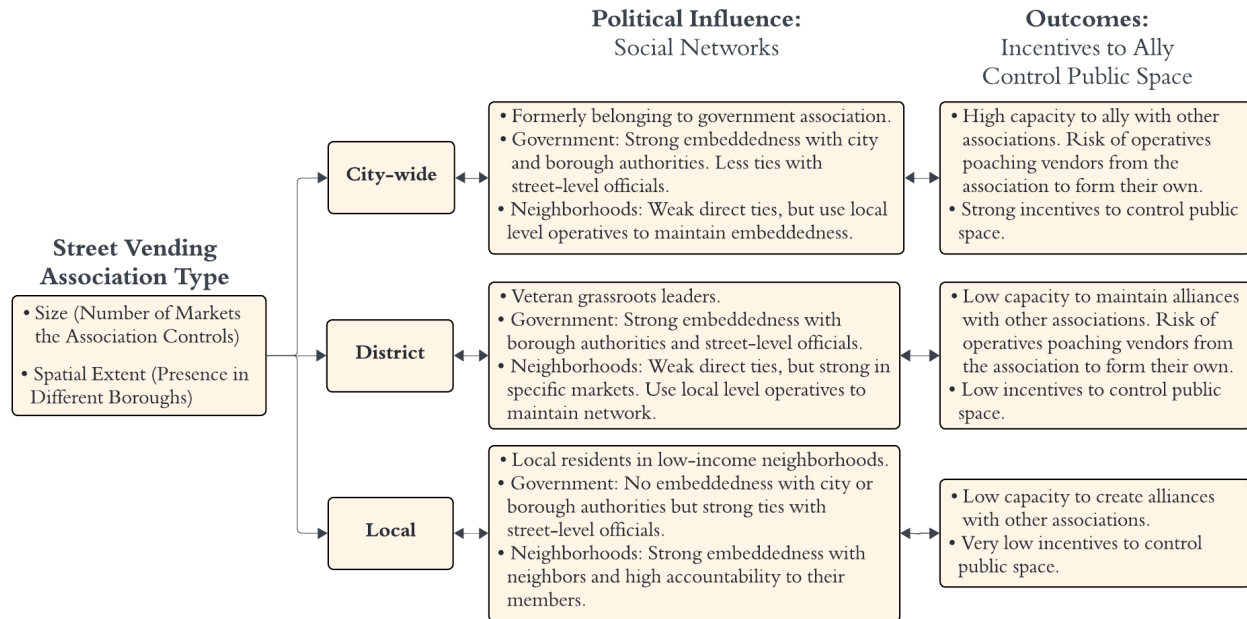
Figure 8 depicts the mechanism through which I explore how the associations’ networks map onto differences in policymaking and regulatory power. Although there is some circularity in the relationship between the type of street vending associations and social networks, I argue that these characteristics determine the associations’ inclinations for forming alliances and controlling public space.

Derived from this framework, I expect that the embeddedness with neighborhoods and governments stems from the way street vending associations originated. Leaders of local associations will have closer ties with the neighbors living close to the *tianguis* in contrast to leaders of larger, city-wide associations who will have local level operatives managing different *tianguis*. I expect that local associations created the market they control in conjunction with neighborhood associations, while city-wide associations most likely were formed as associations formerly belonging to the PRI. I expect that district associations share similar origins with local associations, but are probably older, stemming as local grassroots movements in the 1980s and then deepening their political networks throughout time.

Moreover, I expect that leaders of city-wide associations will have more political connections with the city government than local associations because they have more *tianguis* across different boroughs of the city. District associations will retain social embeddedness with neighbors, but their political ties will be less strong at the city-wide scale and will be particularly strong with borough governments. City-wide and strong district associations will have local level operatives within their organizational structure that work directly with vendors and neighbors to manage the *tianguis* locally. Thus, leaders of city-wide and district associations will have weak direct neighborhood ties in comparison to leaders of local associations, but their operatives will have strong neighborhood ties. Too much power delegated to operatives, however, endangers the political influence of city-wide and district associations. Whenever operatives gain greater control over the *tianguis*, the associations are at

risk of having their vendors poached by their operatives, fracturing from their association to form their own.

Figure 8. Drivers That Impact Associations’ Competition and Incentives to Control Over Public Space



In terms of associations’ capacity to form alliances, previous scholarship has found that street vending associations successfully form alliances whenever there is a threat from the government to intervene in their worksites, but these alliances do not last long (Aliaga Linares, 2002; Cross, 1998b). In spite of their short duration, I expect that the political loyalties of local and district associations with borough political parties will hinder alliances with city-wide associations. Since *tianguis* have a uniform regulatory framework at the city scale, local associations will have less incentives to contain vendors within the delimited space allocated for the markets, while city-wide associations will have incentives to contain that space, so they negotiate their use of space at the city scale, avoiding the negotiation and extortion of borough officials.

Context and Research Design: *Tianguis* in Mexico City

Context

Why Mexico City?

As in other cities such as Lagos, Nigeria (Grossman, 2021), and La Paz, Bolivia (Hummel, 2022), the organization among street vendors in Mexico City is ubiquitous (Cross, 1998b; Fuchs, 2023; Gómez, 2012; Sarmiento et al., 2016; Zaremborg, 2011). Mexico City also has a history of street vending associations organizing since 1951, when the government forced vendors to organize to keep a stricter vending control across the city. Historically, associations have derived political capital from their network of vendors, who vote and attend political rallies on behalf of their leadership, giving street vending associations a central role in political negotiations (Azuela & Meneses-Reyes, 2014; Bleynt, 2021; Cross, 1998b; Meneses-Reyes, 2011). However, since the democratization and decentralization of Mexico City, street vending associations have weakened and fragmented (Alba & Braig, 2022; Zaremborg, 2011), presenting the opportunity to study the different configurations of street vending

associations, their role in managing the use of public space, and at which government scale they negotiate over the use of public space.

Since the early 1930s, street vendors needed to obtain their licenses through associations affiliated to political parties (Azuela & Meneses-Reyes, 2014). Azuela and Meneses-Reyes (2014) explain that post-revolutionary Mexico City (in the 1930s) underwent profound legal and spatial transformations exerted by the urban poor, challenging the authority and demanding their right to work and access to public space as a place of livelihood. Since the post-revolutionary government needed to legitimate their power through its commitment to social justice, it established the *Reglamento de Mercados para el Distrito Federal* in 1951, creating public markets in designated locations and in low-income neighborhoods to keep the urban poor outside of the downtown area. However, the migration from rural areas to the city dramatically increased by the 1950s, exceeding the city's capacity to sustain the growing population in terms of housing and employment. Therefore, during the mandate of Mexico City's mayor Ernesto Uruchurtu from 1958 to 1966, strategies for "modernizing" and "cleaning-up" the city intensified when he sought to regularize street vendors through the creation of enclosed public markets and enforcing strict participation of vendors in associations conformed by at least 100 members and coopted through the PRI's National Confederation of Popular Organizations (CNOP) (Cross, 1998b). Vendors who would not comply with these regulations would be extremely persecuted and harassed, creating a historical legacy of fear and repression (Meneses-Reyes, 2011).

Why tianguis?

Within Mexico City, I examine *tianguis* at the city-wide scale since these markets are not easily relocated or removed by governmental authorities even though they are using public space²¹. Although in this chapter I only focus on *tianguis*, there are different types of street vendors in Mexico City, with different levels of legal certainty, as shown in Figure 3 in chapter 1. As I mentioned above, *tianguis* are installed daily and are regulated at the city level. In particular, I focus on *tianguis* because government permits are given more easily to *tianguis* associations than other street vendors working in public space. The permits provide them with greater legal certainty than other types of street vendors and increases the accuracy of the geospatial dataset I constructed. Moreover, they have better social acceptance (Gayosso Ramírez, 2009; Gómez, 2012) since they are integral to Mexico City's food system selling mostly healthy foods at accessible prices (Domínguez et al., 2023). Lastly, *tianguis* are critical sites to study "as cities that are built and dismantled every day" (Leader, July 17, 2023), being able to host up to 30,000 vendors within one market, revealing the political economy of street vending, the power dynamics, and the use of public space across a wide spectrum of socioeconomic areas within the city.

Tianguis Regulations

For the last forty years, *tianguis* leaders have been fighting for a regulatory framework that allows them to sell in public space with official recognition, using unified regulatory criteria across the city to avoid discretionary abuses from borough governments (Leader, June 20, 2023). The enactment of the *tianguis* guidelines of 2019 bestows the city with the legal responsibility to regulate *tianguis*. Thus, *tianguis* associations updated their permits and achieved greater legitimacy at the city-level (Leader, June 20, 2023). Previously, boroughs were in charge of intervening in what was sold in each stall, the hours of operation of the *tianguis*, and the issuance of the permit to sell in public space. Each borough incumbent would generate their own regulation as they saw fit, without any incentive to create clear regulations (Leaders, February, 24, 2023; July 17, 2023). As a result, *tianguis* leaders would instill fear

²¹ They are removed or relocated when criminal networks within the *tianguis* sell stolen and illicit goods or becomes a hotspot for kidnapping (Leader, July 29, 2023).

through massive demonstrations with the arrival of a new incumbent, signaling political leverage for future negotiations over space (Leader, July 17, 2023).

Since the spirit of the guidelines is to homogenize the regulatory framework, borough governments contested the validity of these guidelines and even presented legal disputes against the city government to repeal them. These guidelines stripped away state control from boroughs, forcing boroughs to inform associations in advance if they need to relocate *tianguis* for public works (Guidelines, 2019) or political rallies (Leader, June 20, 2023). Hence, the boroughs' responsibility has been limited to a role of supervision, only allowing local state officials to sanction and temporarily suspend the activities of the *tianguis*. Moreover, the guidelines facilitate negotiation for associations that have *tianguis* in different boroughs since they can now negotiate directly with the city government instead of negotiating with a local mayor (Leader, June 20, 2023). However, this does not necessarily happen in practice, with boroughs resisting the 2019 guidelines (Leaders, February 24, June 20, July 17, 2023). Leaders detailed that borough state officials do not count with a checklist by which *tianguis* can comply with (June 20, 2023; July 17, 2023). As such, borough state officials use any excuse to argue for the *tianguis* noncompliance in exchange for a monetary bribe.

Empirical Strategy

I carried out a multi-method approach to assess how the variation of political influence across street vending associations affects their ability to form alliances and their incentives to control public space. Through geospatial analysis, I constructed a dataset of *tianguis* across the city. I gathered the latitude and longitude for all *tianguis* (n = 960) through Mexico City's data portal and crossed it with public records' requests of *tianguis* associations. The data cleaning was extremely artisanal and time consuming, to say the least. Although the open data portal of the city has a dataset with all the *tianguis* of Mexico City with its location and day of the week it is set up, it did not provide information about the associations in charge of each *tianguis* and the size of the market. The Ministry of Economic Development (SEDECO) has a list of *tianguis* and associations by boroughs, but it did not contain the size of the *tianguis*. Thus, I submitted the public records' requests of the *tianguis* associations in charge of governing each *tianguis*. While some boroughs provided detailed and updated information some did not provide data.²² I then cross-checked the *tianguis* from the open-data portal, the Ministry of Economic Development, and the data provided by each borough.²³

Despite its great value, the geospatial analysis did not allow me to understand the relationships between *tianguis* leaders, vendors, and government officials. Thus, I drew from a combined year of qualitative fieldwork (2021-2023) carrying out more than 70 in-depth interviews and focus groups with street vending leaders, former and current politicians, state employees, and street vendors in Mexico

²² Although public servants are obliged to respond through INAI (National Institute of Transparency) mandates, there is variation across agency responses, with certain agencies often denying informational requested on the basis of data inexistence, inadequacy since the request falls under the jurisdiction of another agency or disseminating opaque data that often becomes unreliable (Fox et al., 2011). All the boroughs provided the information through hard-to-read pdfs, making it tedious to translate the data into an Excel file. Some were so unreadable, that I had to submit the requests multiple times. Despite having open data on *tianguis*, the quality of the data is only an approximation of reality and a lot of time had to be spent on making the data clean and meaningful.

²³ Based on the latitude and longitude of *tianguis*, I surveyed vendors in 99 *tianguis* that were not included in the public records to obtain the names of the associations in charge of the *tianguis* and to estimate how many vendors worked at each *tianguis*. This served as a ground-truthing effort, finding that from the missing values of *Coyoacán*, which was the borough with the greatest missing values (52 *tianguis*), 40% do not seem to exist anymore. Based on the dataset containing the latitude and longitude of *tianguis*, *Coyoacán* was missing 67.3% of the data on organizations of *tianguis*, *Venustiano Carranza* 27.6%, *Xochimilco* 13.5%, *Alvaro Obregón* 7.5%, *Iztapalapa* 7.2%, *Iztacalco* 7.1%, *Tlalpan* 7.1%, *Magdalena Contreras* 6.3%, *Gustavo A Madero* 6.2%, *Miguel Hidalgo* 3.3, *Cuauhtémoc* 3.2%, *Tláhuac* 2.9%, *Benito Juárez* 1.7%, and *Azcapotzalco*, *Cuajimalpa* and *Milpa Alta* having no missing values.

City. Moreover, I spent three weeks working in a *tianguis* to familiarize myself with being a vendor and the entry barriers that vendors may face. During my fieldwork, I also carried out direct observation in five *tianguis* based on the categories created with the geospatial data two belonging to city-wide street vending associations (one in a lower-income neighborhood and another in a higher-income neighborhood), two belonging to a district street vending association, and three controlled by a local street vending association.

Evidence: Local, District, and City-Wide *Tianguis* Associations

In this section, I examine the implications derived from my theoretical account across four *tianguis* differentiated by the association type (i.e., local, district, or city-wide). Since most of the *tianguis* are controlled at the city-wide level, I further explore this case and examine two *tianguis* controlled by a city-wide association: one located within a high-income neighborhood, and a second one located within a lower-income neighborhood. I expect local associations to have strong neighborhood embeddedness, but low upward embeddedness, limiting their ability to create alliances with other associations and undermining their incentives to control the expansion of the *tianguis*. I expect district associations to have relatively weak neighborhood embeddedness, with weak city-wide connections, but strong connections with the borough governments, allowing them to create short-term alliances. Lastly, I expect city-wide associations to have low neighborhood embeddedness, but high upward embeddedness with borough and city governments, allowing them lobby with other associations and providing incentives to control the expansion of the *tianguis*. By comparing city-wide associations in high and low-income neighborhoods, I expect to find more neighborhood embeddedness in low-income neighborhoods, but greater control of space in high-income neighborhoods.

Case 1: Local *Tianguis* Association

Jesús²⁴ is a *tianguis* leader of a local street vending association. He is in his early forties and despite having had the opportunity to go to university to study engineering, he had to interrupt his education due to his father's alcoholism. He started selling as a street vendor outside a subway station until he became the fee collector for a street vending association²⁵. Being close to the leader, he learned how to structure and lead an association. Living in a neighborhood where 34-50% of people live in poverty (CONEVAL, 2020) and having had learned leadership skills, neighbors asked him if he could create and lead a *tianguis* in their neighborhood. Neighbors were already selling in that location for many years back; but in recent years, the number of people selling had increased and they wanted to convert it into a *tianguis* so they could expand their business and attract customers from neighboring communities (Street vendors 1, 3, 4, 5, July 3, 2021). As a vendor explained:

“Before (Jesús), state officials would occasionally pass through the neighborhood, see us selling and confiscate our things. As this became more frequent, a neighbor suggested that we needed someone that dealt with the borough government to avoid being removed. So we collected money and suggested (Jesús) to go talk to the borough's office since he already knew how to negotiate with state officials. That's how we started, and that's how he started as a leader.” (July 3, 2021)

²⁴ I changed leaders' names for anonymity purposes.

²⁵ He became part of the administrative structure of a *via pública* street vending association, which is different to *tianguis* street vending associations, but it provided him with the political connections and the administrative knowledge to create his own association.

The *tianguis* is located in the north of the city, almost at the border with *Ecatepec*, in the state of Mexico. Differences between *tianguis* become clear as soon as you walk through them. The most obvious differences are the quality of the products, the orderliness and cleanliness of the stalls, and the demeanor of the vendors. For safety reasons, the leader of the association had to personally pick me up from the closest subway station and drive me into the neighborhood where the *tianguis* is located so I could interview vendors. If it were not for his contact, I would have never walked into this neighborhood or area of the city (or I could have, but at a higher risk). However, once I was inside the *tianguis*, the most important differences became apparent as I interviewed street vendors.

Vendors selling in this *tianguis* emphasized their gratitude towards their neighborhood and highlighted that their closely-knit community actively supports the *tianguis*. The strong ties between Jesús and the vendors hold him accountable. As a street vendor explained:

“There is a lot of support from the neighbors. During COVID, sales were low, and some neighbors gave me used toys to sell. Here, we all help each other. (Jesús) also helped us during COVID. We weren’t paying any fees to the association. It’s not that we were rebelling against him, but we couldn’t pay for the membership and (Jesús) understood. [...] In other neighborhoods, they don’t allow vendors if they don’t pay, but here they know me and support me.” (Street vendor 2, my translation, July 3, 2021).

Here, the vendor depicts the differences between *tianguis* in this neighborhood in contrast to others. The safety net that neighbors have in this community and their economic reliance on the *tianguis* is apparent. Another vendor described how she got involved in the *tianguis* when her small business got broken into and she could no longer afford the rents: “I had just lost my small business and talking to a neighbor, she told me to talk to the *tianguis* leader so he could provide a space for me to sell. It does not provide as much money as I used to earn, but I have to re-adjust myself to this way of life. I have a 19-year old daughter and a 1 year-old granddaughter, and at least I can support and feed them both.” (Street vendor 3, my translation, July 3, 2021).

Leaders of local associations like Jesús do not hold political positions in local or citywide governments, but their close relationship with neighbors provides them with relevant political leverage as observed in clientelistic structures of neighborhood leaders (Auyero, 2001; Rizzo, 2015; Zarazaga, 2014). In line with the literature on neighborhood leaders, this embeddedness makes them accountable with neighbors, guaranteeing political support to politicians and political parties in exchange for greater tolerance to use of public space and neighborhood improvements to neighbors (Leader, July 3, 2021).

Moreover, the embeddedness of Jesús in the neighborhood provides him with rich spatial and localized knowledge of the local officials monitoring the *tianguis*. He is well acquainted with the police surveilling the area to the extent that he pays two members of the police to patrol the *tianguis* during the day it sets up (Street vendor 4 and Leader, July 3, 2021). He also has a close working relationship with *tianguis* inspectors working for the local government, paying them a fee for allowing him to set his own rules within the *tianguis*. In fact, inspectors do not even enter the market (Leader, August 3, 2021). Although the role of *tianguis* inspectors is to monitor the conditions of the *tianguis*²⁶, giving them

²⁶ *Tianguis* inspectors (state officials) are required to perform daily inspections using a checklist to identify non-compliance, so that they can impose penalties in case that we don’t comply with regulations. However, they purposefully fail to fulfill this duty. Instead, they arbitrarily decide on violations and request money to avoid disruptions. At times, they don’t even walk the market and some leaders provide inspectors with a food basket. As a result, leaders must implement inspection protocols to establish their own checks and balances, allowing leaders to self-regulate during inspections without resorting to bribery (Leader, July 17, 2024).

a bribe allows Jesús to maximize the number of vendors selling in the *tianguis* and spatially extend beyond the permitted limits of the *tianguis*.

Furthermore, the connections that Jesús has with other associations allows him to form political alliances whenever the *tianguis* is at risk of being displaced due to construction work or when new politicians want to use their power to extract excessive money out of the *tianguis*. Thus, whenever there is a threat, Jesús creates alliances with other associations, but these occasions are rare since he has already established long-term relationships with the local government and the neighbors, even knowing the criminal groups that are present in the neighborhood (Leader, June 21, 2021).

In terms of controlling public space, Jesús does not reveal strong incentives to cap the number of vendors selling in the *tianguis*. Throughout one morning, I interviewed street vendors and walked with him from one stall to another. While we were walking, multiple people approached him, asking for a space to sell. He asked them to come back later in the morning so he could accommodate them if a vendor belonging to the association by any chance did not arrive on time. However, even if all the spots were filled by vendors of the association, he allowed vendors to set up in the middle of the “hallway” of the *tianguis*, creating a third row of vendors to maximize the number of people selling on a *tianguis* day (as shown in Figure 9).

Figure 9. Third Row of Vendors Accommodated in the “Hallway” of the *Tianguis*



Source: GoogleMaps, 2022

Throughout the day, the number of vendors within the *tianguis* increased. By the end of the day, he explained: “During the day, I have to accommodate people in the *tianguis*. They are not usually *tianguistas* or members of the association, but everyone has to eat. That’s why you can barely walk through the *tianguis*. I fill it twice as much as its capacity.” (My translation, August 3, 2021). His lack of interest to restrict the number of vendors depicts how little incentives he has to control public

space. Quite the contrary, Jesús is incentivized to provide people with spaces to sell²⁷, allowing outside vendors to sell at his own discretion, maximizing on the rents he obtains from the vendors²⁸. Moreover, having the *tianguis* expand beyond its limits is not a big problem in this neighborhood, where most vendors are neighbors, unlike the other district and city-wide cases. In *tianguis* controlled by local associations, neighbors are benefitted by the *tianguis*; hence, blocking more streets will not be a source of conflict for the *tianguis*.

This section shows the case of a local association and its relationship with the neighborhood where it is embedded. This type of leader behaves like neighborhood leaders known in the clientelism literature. In a similar way to neighborhood leaders, the *tianguis* leader's close relationship with neighbors provides him with political leverage with street-level state officials since he can exchange political favors (mostly through the promise of votes) in exchange for neighborhood improvements. This local association has limited connections with the borough's government and no connection with the city government, seldom forming alliances with other street vending associations. By paying street-level officials with bribes, he assures that the *tianguis* functions smoothly, maximizing the number of vendors selling in the *tianguis* and neglecting the control of public space beyond the permitted limits of the *tianguis*.

Case 2: District Tianguis Association

A former mayor introduced me to Alberto, a leader of a district *tianguis* association. Alberto currently oversees six *tianguis* within one borough, leading the association since 1989. All of the *tianguis* that he regulates are located in neighborhoods with 18-34% people living in poverty (CONEVAL, 2020). In the 1980s, Alberto was a member of the Mexican Workers' Party (*Partido Mexicano de Trabajadores*, PMT), which was part of the National Democratic Front led by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas²⁹. This political party split from the PRI and actively opposed the hegemonic power of the PRI and its street vending leaders (Silva-Londoño, 2010). During the time, Alberto made many political acquaintances that further along would help him in his career as a leader. Moreover, in two occasions (1997 and in 2018) he worked within the borough's bureaucracy in the department of *tianguis* and markets³⁰, attaining relevant experience on how state officials enforce street vending regulations.

“During my time working in the local government (in 2018), I successfully increased the revenue collected from *tianguis* to levels never achieved before. Other state employees suggested that I should have taken a personal cut and allocated only a portion to the borough. But by adhering to regulations and generating income for the borough, I found that effective governance can be achieved. However, most politicians do not like that, and I was deposed. There's too much money involved.” (Leader, my translation, July 29, 2023).

²⁷ I can imagine some vendors wanting to restrict the number of vendors allowed in the *tianguis*. Particularly when those vendors sell the same products as them, creating competition. However, in this *tianguis*, as it is not as big, I did not interview anyone complaining about the number of vendors within the *tianguis*.

²⁸ There is a thin line between attracting or rejecting vendors to sell inside the *tianguis*. Greater concentration of vendors attracts more customers, but too many vendors create too much competition among them.

²⁹ Cárdenas has been the most prominent figure in Mexico's left-wing politics and an advocate for Mexico's transition to a democratic system. He emerged as the runner-up to the PRI in the 1988 presidential elections but lost to Carlos Salinas de Gortari due to electoral fraud. Subsequently, Cárdenas took on the role of Mexico City's head of government in 1997.

³⁰ In Spanish it is the *Jefe de Unidad Departamental (JUD) de Mercados, Tianguis y Concentraciones* (as shown in Figure 2 in chapter 1).

Through these bureaucratic positions, Alberto was able to strengthen his “upward embeddedness” within the borough, allowing him to implement policies more effectively. Despite being deposed, he was able to have *tianguis* inspectors under his command and know the implementation of regulations first-handedly. In sum, his involvement with social movements and these positions within the borough’s bureaucracy provided rich political networks within the borough government to help him leverage the space he occupies with his *tianguis* and avoid being extorted by abusive borough authorities.

However, in spite of Alberto’s rich political connections within the borough, his political influence at the city-wide level has been more limited. Thus, he has sought to create alliances with city-wide *tianguis* associations to push forward laws that regulate *tianguis* more clearly. At first blush, Alberto’s association does not compete over vendors with other associations, and he can choose with whom to ally. In fact, I was part of recurring meetings with *tianguis* leaders that sought to create an alliance where vendors established a common goal to fight for their rights as vendors working in public space. However, the group of leaders explained the difficulty in maintaining alliances since every leader has different goals (e.g., electoral, political, or social goals). Moreover, as months have passed by, I have observed (through constant communication in Whatsapp) that it has become increasingly difficult for the leaders to meet, since some of them have political favors that they have to fulfill within their different boroughs. As Alberto explained, these alliances last “until money do us part” (My translation, July 29, 2023). Yet, I found that the difficulty in creating alliances goes beyond differences in money extractive practices.

In the case of *tianguis* associations³¹ unity is difficult to achieve in presence of decentralized governance, where each association politically responds to their own borough governments, complicating coordination in this competitive context. For instance, another leader negotiating with Alberto explained that they were all supposed to attend a political rally, supporting a candidate at the city-wide level. However, some associations did not attend the rally to avoid straining their ties with the borough government where their *tianguis* are located, despite the 2019 guidelines that designate the city as the primary regulator of *tianguis*. Thus, alliances with other associations may be successful as long as the boroughs where associations are located are consistently ruled by the same political party.

District leaders like Alberto vary in their degrees of social embeddedness with the communities where the *tianguis* are located. Some of these leaders control up to 12 *tianguis*, making it impossible to have a personal relationship with vendors across all markets. Even more, some of the vendors working at Alberto’s *tianguis* do not even belong to the neighborhood and come from outside of the city. He added that the composition of *tianguis* vendors has shifted significantly due to the demographic explosion and people seeking supplementary income. He estimates that currently, 20% of *tianguis* vendors are neighbors, compared to less than 5% when he first started, changing the dynamics of *tianguis* which have become more socially embedded with the neighborhoods. He further explained

³¹ In the case of *vía pública* street vendors, Silva-Londoño (2010) discusses the challenges associations face in forming alliances. She explains that while some associations can gain political influence by aligning with stronger associations, they also seek alliances with smaller associations to increase their support base. Silva-Londoño claims that these alliances are not long lasting due to competition among associations for limited resources and the authorities’ discretionary enforcement of legal frameworks. Difficulty in forming successful alliances might also arise when leaders of associations improve their negotiating positions. For example, Ramírez Sáiz (2006) observes how the leaders of the Popular Urban Movement (MUP) remained autonomous for twenty years until they forged alliances with candidates of different political parties in the 1980s, creating divisions within the grassroots movements and having to adjust their behavior to meet the demands of state bureaucracies. So even when an association is successful in attaining resources, the capacity of successfully organizing might be limited when forming alliances.

that the economic spillover of the *tianguis* allows people in the neighborhood to benefit from the *tianguis* since neighbors are involved in the economic activity of the markets.

Moreover, in several interviews with Alberto, the presence of organized crime in neighborhoods was a constant topic of conversation that involved his embeddedness within the neighborhood. He described how he has been contacted by these groups:

“Many times, leaders of criminal groups do not even how you look, but in two occasions they have identified me. One day, one of the vendors started talking to me by my first name and put her arms around my shoulders in a friendly way, which she never does. She told me to go for a walk in the *tianguis* with her when two men started yelling my name and she told me: ‘don’t look back’ and we scurried into the crowd. She knew that they were around, and she was protecting me. That’s when you know who you can count on.” (My translation, September 8, 2023).

This quote not only depicts how leaders of street vending associations are prone to violence from criminal groups, but also the level of social embeddedness that someone like Alberto has among members belonging to his association. This *tianguis* is one that he often goes to since its close to the association’s headquarters. He then added that ever since these events happened, he prefers to keep away from *tianguis* since the pressure from government authorities and organized crime has been increasing in recent years: “I am really careful on where I go, I try not to go to the *tianguis* anymore because I would say that 30% of the leaders that I know of have been killed. Things are changing [because] both drug cartels and government inspectors constantly seek to extort you.” (My translation, July 29, 2023). He further started creating videos on YouTube, denouncing threats that he has been receiving recently, pushing him further away from the neighborhoods where *tianguis* are located, losing his connections with *tianguis* vendors. Furthermore, Alberto mentioned that it is also common that local level operatives poach vendors from associations, since they usually have strong ties with vendors (July 29, 2023). However, he mentioned that many of these new leaders that snatch vendors from larger associations do not have the skills or the knowledge to lead an association and are not interested in building a social movement, but instead only focus on enriching their pockets. Hence, he is careful with what he shares with his operatives and maintains only entrusted workers as liaisons between him and *tianguis* vendors.

I did not find consistent patterns across *tianguis* belonging to district associations in terms of their incentives to control public space. Their level of control seems to be contingent upon the leaders' political connections and the specific neighborhoods where the markets are situated. In the case of one of Alberto’s *tianguis*, the stalls where organized and did not extend spatially beyond the streets it should be on. As a leader with careerist aspirations as Alberto, containing the extension of the market, or what they call “the tails of the *tianguis*”³² is relevant to avoid paying bribes to borough inspectors. Alberto complained that usually the tenured position of borough inspectors allows them to extract

³² The main problem of *tianguis* are the so-called “tails of the *tianguis*” (*colas de los tianguis*). *Tianguis* are strictly allowed to sell within specific limits, from one assigned street to another. As such, borough governments agree to close a certain number of streets for a *tianguis*. However, it is common that when the number of vendors increases, allowing more vendors than those affiliated with the market for a daily fee, the market expands on the edges, to a point that exceeds the initially defined spatial extent of the market. These extensions are called the tails of the *tianguis*. Although the problem of the “tails” might seem innocuous, the spillover of vendors beyond the previously agreed limits changes the jurisdiction of the level of government. When the *tianguis* stays within its limits, it is the responsibility of the city government to regulate the *tianguis*, but when it expands beyond its limits, it becomes the jurisdiction of the borough, giving borough officials an excuse to intervene and ask for a money in exchange for that space (Leaders, June 20, 2023; July 17, 2023; July 14, 2021; Former mayor, June 14, 2023).

resources from the vendors since they work directly for the politician in power, and they do not have incentives to control public space. He argued that inspectors allow vendors from outside the association to set their stalls at the edges of the *tianguis*, creating the tails of the *tianguis* (July 29, 2023). He further explained that older inspectors respect *tianguis* associations and his position within the borough, but new inspectors seek to maximize the rent extraction from vendors and even act violently against leaders of *tianguis* associations (September 8, 2023).

This section shows the case of a district association and illustrates a leader's political influence at the borough level gained through political connections by working at the borough and his involvement in grassroots movements. The leader seeks to form alliances with city-wide *tianguis* associations to push forward laws regulating *tianguis* more clearly. However, maintaining alliances is challenging due to decentralized governance and borough governments' goals. Alliances with other associations may be successful as long as the associations belong to boroughs which are ruled by the same political parties. The district leader's social embeddedness with communities is limited, using local operatives to maintain a strong relationship between him and vendors. Yet, he has to be wary of operatives poaching vendors from his association and forming a new association, weakening the political influence of his association. Lastly, this case shows how containing the extension of the market is important to avoid paying bribes to borough inspectors.

Case 3: City-wide Tianguis Associations

From all the *tianguis* belonging to a city-wide association, 44% are located in neighborhoods with less than 18% of people living in poverty, 51% are in neighborhoods with 18-50% of people living in poverty, and 5% are located in neighborhoods with more than 50% of people living in poverty. This shows that city-wide associations tend to manage *tianguis* in neighborhoods with lower levels of poverty. I will now describe the dynamics of an association that manages a *tianguis* in a high-income neighborhood followed by an association that manages a *tianguis* in a low-income neighborhood.

Case 3.1: City-wide tianguis association in a higher-income neighborhoods

Armando is one of the most influential *tianguis* leaders in Mexico City. He oversees 19 *tianguis* in five different boroughs of which most are located in neighborhoods with less than 18% of people living in poverty (CONEVAL, 2020). Armando is in his seventies and describes his transition from working for a company when he was 18 years-old to working in a *tianguis*, where his father was the leader. He has basic schooling, getting through middle-school as an adult. He did not have ambitions to become a leader, but being close to his father, he learned how to become one and became part of the PRI's CNOP in the 1980s. In the 1990s, he then fought through the democratization period, when new leaderships attempted to take over his working spaces. In the early 2000s, he was invited to run for a seat in Congress at the federal level, but he declined to be in a position where he would have to obey orders from more powerful politicians. These details of Armando's trajectory shed light on his political connections and experience working as a city-wide leader.

Armando has been a *tianguis* leader for fifty years and has seen how associations have changed across time. As such, he explains the challenges within the street vending community, criticizing the abuse of power by street vending leaders and the competition among associations.

“The worst enemy of a vendor is another vendor, and the worst enemy of a leader is another leader. Leaders think that anyone who does not coincide with their way of representing vendors is their enemy. [...] It's a fierce competition and I've been a victim of conspiracies and it's difficult to know who to trust. Irene, all these alliances between associations are based on conditional interests. Leaders are only motivated by

quid pro quo. [...] I've said it many times. Our main problem is the abuse of street vending leaders.” (My translation, June 20, 2023).

By describing the competition among street vending associations, he emphasizes the prevalence of distrust among street vendors and how difficult it is to form alliances and a coherent unit to resist government abuses. He further explained that street vending leaders are wary of anyone interested in knowing about street vending management, since it is a common practice to learn how to lead and poach vendors from other associations.

Armando, as a seasoned leader, has developed monitoring strategies to make sure that the local level operatives in charge of controlling the *tianguis* (delegates) and collecting fees from vendors are not incurring in personal monetary kickbacks, particularly when he cannot go every day to all the *tianguis* he oversees³³. As such, he described how he knows how much money should be collected from each *tianguis* so when he gets together with the treasurer of the association and asks for the total revenues to each collector, he knows when the collectors are lying. He then proceeds to ask more incisive questions, “so they know they are being surveilled” (My translation, June 20, 2023). If they continue underreporting how much money is collected, he goes more frequently to that *tianguis* or removes them from their position. However, he added that these strategies were not enough to keep delegates from incurring in corrupt practices (Leader, June 20, 2023).

Armando tries to visit all the *tianguis* so his vendor base knows him and to ensure that his delegates adhere to the association's internal regulations and maintain clean, organized markets. Yet, he explained that it is challenging to maintain a strong presence across all markets. This became clear when I interviewed street vendors within a *tianguis* that he regulated. When I asked street vendors about their relationship with Armando (July 3, 2021), only a few knew who he was, but all of them knew the delegate. In fact, delegates share stronger social ties with vendors because they interact with them daily and solve any issues that arise within the *tianguis*. Armando explained that it is common that delegates poach vendors from within the associations (June 20, 2023). He expressed that it is difficult to deal with delegates because they collect the money and think it is theirs, but he clarified that the money is for the association and ultimately to help the vendors. However, he added that whenever delegates feel empowered or greedy, they seek to enrich themselves and form their own associations, fragmenting large associations.

Despite his lack of connections with the vendors, city-wide associations like Armando's carry out events and parties to maintain close ties with their membership base. Many of these associations also have established headquarters where all vendors can go if they have personal issues. Vendors typically queue up to speak with Armando, fostering personal relationships despite him not residing in the same neighborhood as the vendors. But interviewing street vendors from the *tianguis* he is from, it became clear that *tianguis* vendors from the same neighborhood as Armando have stronger bonds with him than those from distant areas, developing trust that allows them to rely on him and seek personal favors more frequently. However, his relationship with neighbors from the high-income neighborhood is almost nonexistent.

When I asked about his relationship with the high-income neighborhood, he said that it is almost always through the borough's government. During an interview, he explained that associations working in *tianguis* located in high-income neighborhoods have strict incentives to control public

³³ Street vending associations are highly structured. They are usually composed of a steering committee, a treasurer, and delegates in charge of different working areas. There is an important hierarchy of workers within the associations, and while some of them carry out elections to change the leadership, most of them appoint the next leader in an authoritarian manner. Some of these associations also create official articles of incorporation to have internal regulations that delegates follow. However, many of them have not even registered as a formal civil association and neglect creating internal regulations to have more organized and cleaner *tianguis* (Leader, July 17, 2023).

space, since neighbors complain immediately if a street is blocked, if the stalls are not in order, or if the vendors leave trash when they dismantle the *tianguis*. He reminisced that on one occasion, a neighborhood association complained about his *tianguis* because some vendors had placed stools to sit. He immediately told them to file their complaint with the borough. When the Director of the Market's Office complained with Armando, he responded: "Who will monitor me? You? Or the neighborhood association? With whom should I do book-keeping? If it's you, then please tell them to file their complaint through you instead of yelling at me in the middle of the day." (My translation, July 3, 2021). He further explained that he respected neighborhood associations, but that associations in higher-income neighborhoods treated him poorly because he was from a different social class.

Similar to district leaders, city-wide leaders have stories of leaders being killed across the city. However, Armando argued that *tianguis* in coveted areas like downtown or higher-income neighborhoods are being more aggressively attacked by narcos. He said, "We're the ham of the sandwich. Either we disappear or we are hit by organized crime." (July 3, 2021). He explained that crime's impact on associations severely affects their political influence, both in spatial and monetary terms. Spatially, organized crime is also taking over the central areas of the city, displacing leaders that are unwilling to negotiate with the *narcos* or killing them if they compete over space. In monetary terms, *narcos* are asking for weekly fees to associations and threaten to kill leaders if they do not pay the fees they request.

This section shows the case of a city-wide association within a high-income neighborhood. This seasoned leader, has multiple *tianguis* across the city, with limited presence across the markets. However, he has developed strategies to maintain his association's political influence. First, he maintains presence with his membership base through events and parties. Second, he monitors local level operatives to prevent corruption and poaching of his membership base. In the case of a *tianguis* in a high-income neighborhood, his relationship with the neighbors is non-existent and deals directly with the borough's government whenever the neighbors have a problem with the *tianguis*. Since public space in high-income neighborhoods is at a premium, this association has strict incentives to control public space, to avoid negotiations at the borough level and with neighborhood associations.

Case 3.2: City-wide tianguis association in a lower-income neighborhood

By selling in a city-wide³⁴ *tianguis* embedded in a lower-income neighborhood, I learned that the barriers of entry were lower in less trafficked *tianguis*, despite being controlled by city-wide leaders. In this *tianguis*, it did not matter where and how I set up and how much I extended. However, due to my inexperience, I was charged by the fee collector and by another operative who rented me a box where I could set up my products. Since it was clear that I had no idea of how to sell my Chinese-imported beauty products, a family of vendors invited me to their stall and explained the shortcuts for becoming a successful *tianguista*. They told me that my products were of high quality and that I had to choose another *tianguis*. These vendors called this market: "the *tianguis* of the poor". While spending the entire day with them, they explained that I had to adapt my products according to the neighborhood of the *tianguis*. They added that the fees for selling in higher quality *tianguis* were higher, but that the earnings would be much higher as well. Thus, I learned that the location of the *tianguis* mattered in terms of the organization of the market, the fees collected from it, and the earnings that vendors can get.

I then had the opportunity to interview Igor who controls one of the largest *tianguis* in the city, located in a neighborhood with 34-50% of the population living in poverty and is considered in the middle of *el barrio*³⁵. He became the leader of the association when a couple of years ago, unexpectedly,

³⁴ This association controls 22 *tianguis* in six different boroughs.

³⁵ Although *barrio* translates as "neighborhood", the concept of "*el barrio*" includes lower class undertones, closer to a concept of "the hood" or "ghetto". The distinction between "*el barrio*" – with many distinct *barrios* within the city – and

his father died, and he inherited the leadership of the association. Today, his association controls twenty *tianguis* in eight different boroughs. He is 42 years-old and he is one of the youngest street vending leaders in the city. He described how he was literally born inside the *tianguis*, explaining his closeness with the market. Igor belongs to a new generation of leaders that have higher levels of education and have achieved undergraduate degrees with a profession that helps them to improve their managerial skills as *tianguis* leaders. As such, he seeks to have all the administrative and legal paperwork in order, and he has been a strong supporter of the 2019 *tianguis* guidelines that clarify the regulation of *tianguis*.

In terms of negotiating the permanence of the market, he explained that with the 2019 guidelines, the government is divided, opening negotiation possibilities for associations to negotiate either at the city or at the local level. Igor explained that he negotiates with state officials both at the city and at the borough level. While he emphasized how the state has historically attempted to extract rents and political favors from street vendors, he argued that the ambiguity of street vending regulations can be used to his advantage:

“Usually, the city-wide government says something, and the borough says another. That benefits us because we demand legal certainty to establish ourselves as a *tianguis*. If the borough fails to provide this certainty, I approach the city government, and vice versa. We navigate between both levels of government. We have learned from them (the state) how to navigate these legal ambiguities in a fragmented power structure that benefits us.” (My translation, July 17, 2023).

Using this ambiguity, the city cannot control him because if one relationship breaks, Igor will have another state official that can support the existence of his *tianguis*. Yet, he has greater problems in creating alliances with other *tianguis* associations. The largest *tianguis* that he controls is managed by several associations. Thus, Igor aims to build coalitions to have a more homogenous regulation and a better image of the market. He argued that most of the associations are allied, but that a couple of district and local associations have different goals and create problems for the *tianguis*.

“Some leaders choose to negotiate individual agreements with authorities rather than forming alliances and reaching consensus among associations. These corrupt agreements harm all other associations, as they lead politicians to believe that we all prioritize maximizing monetary extraction, which is not true. This practice weakens our collective strength as associations and goes against our efforts to achieve formal recognition.” (My translation, July 17, 2023).

Igor further described the dangers of creating coalitions of street vending associations. While he argued that there is power in numbers, he explained how politicians in borough governments change every 3 years, oblivious of who are the leaders of vending associations and described an interaction with a director of government:

“Once, I was offered by a politician to keep the entire *tianguis* for myself. But I was not born yesterday. I know that they want to consolidate the power in one person, so it is easier for them to cut off my head. Quite the opposite, my intention is to strengthen other associations so that we become a coherent bloc can counterbalance

other neighborhoods is relevant since *barrios* each develop distinct cultures contained within their boundaries, with a long tradition of defying government authorities.

the power of the state in decisive moments when we are affected.” (My translation, July 17, 2023).

In terms of spatial expansion of the *tianguis*, Igor pointed out that despite his efforts to control public space, there is usually new vendors setting up additional stalls at the tails of the *tianguis*. In line with what Alberto said, Igor emphasized that it is not the associations, but rather the borough’s inspectors who add these stalls. His main concern is that these vendors disrupt the relationship that he maintains with his membership base, since these vendors do not pay any fees to the association and sell any product they want, creating competition over the products being sold with other vendors. Moreover, he argued that some of them sell alcohol within the *tianguis*, making deals with the inspector. Although selling alcohol is prohibited within the *tianguis*, having people drinking inside the *tianguis* usually attracts crime and problems to the *tianguis* leaders, which consequently create negative press for *tianguis* (July 17 2023).

Furthermore, Igor argued that the 2019 city-wide *tianguis* guidelines facilitate negotiation for associations that have *tianguis* in different boroughs since they negotiate directly with the city government instead of negotiating with a borough mayor, whereas before it depended on what each mayor said, changing every three years. Today, there is a regulation that comes from the city’s constitution, and even though it is not a law, it generates recognition for the street vendors. Thus, Igor tries to avoid dealing with borough governments, monitoring the *tianguis* so it does not extend beyond the delimited area which activates the borough’s jurisdiction to enforce street vending laws.

This section shows the case of a city-wide association within a low-income neighborhood. This case describes how the leader of the association uses the ambiguity of street vending regulations to his advantage, allowing him to negotiate with state officials and maintain legal certainty at the city and borough levels. He also describes challenges in creating alliances with other *tianguis* associations, as many have political commitments at the borough level. The leader also warns against creating coalitions of street vending associations, since governments might seek to coopt associations that monopolize the control of public space. In terms of controlling public space, the leader has strong incentives to contain the spatial expansion of *tianguis* to avoid dealing with borough governments.

Concluding Remarks

Street vending associations are key players in the organization of public space. In this chapter, I examine how street vending associations’ political influence and how it affects their ability to lobby with other associations, with the state, and their incentives to control public space. Through collecting geospatial data for *tianguis* (street markets) in Mexico City, I create a typology of street vending associations by analyzing the size and the spatial location of associations. I classify associations as local, district, and city-wide *tianguis* associations. Incorporating the spatiality of associations has relevant implications to understand at which scale the associations are negotiating with the state, which is often overlooked in analyses the relationships between street vending associations and the state.

Through in-depth interviews with street vending leaders, politicians, state employees, and street vendors, I analyze how different associations relate to the neighborhoods where markets are embedded and their relationship with local and city-wide governments. I find that local associations have stronger neighborhood connections, but weaker government connections in contrast to district and city-wide associations. These differences in association type map onto differences in how associations form alliances with other associations and their incentives to control public space. I find that local associations have little incentives to form alliances, cap the number of vendors, and limit the expansion of markets. In contrast, district and city-wide associations seek to form alliances to

increase their ability to lobby and secure regulations, complying with the previously agreed spatial extent of the market and maintaining a limited number of vendors within the market.

Beyond the associations' incentives to extract money from vendors, in a context of decentralized governance, I find that district associations have restricted political influence at the city-wide level. I argue that this limitation stems from their commitments and affiliations with borough governments. As a result, their ability to exert significant political power beyond the borough level is constrained. However, in their day-to-day operations, both district and city-wide associations have strong incentives to control the expansion of markets. By doing so, they actively avoid direct involvement with borough governments. I contend that instead, associations seek to leverage the legal uncertainties that exist between various levels of government to establish legal certainty in their use of public space.

Chapter 3. Street Vending Inspectors as Brokers: Public Administration and the Politics of Public Space in Mexico City

Introduction

Every morning, Tania³⁶ – a veteran quesadilla vendor on a highly competitive and crowded sidewalk in Mexico City – wakes up to a strenuous and challenging daily routine. She must begin by cleaning her designated stall space, a coveted asset she gained through negotiations with the local government and the street vending association of which she has been a member for thirty years. Despite this, conflicts abound. She contends with rival vendors, association regulations³⁷, government inspections, pedestrians who find it hard to navigate the crowded sidewalk, and even threats from organized crime. The rise of a new commercial mall in her vicinity also presents her with the looming threat of eviction, highlighting the complexity of her working environment.

In contrast, Gaby, another veteran quesadilla vendor, experiences a relatively less contentious work environment. Operating in an area with less congestion and fewer conflicts over public space, Gaby enjoys a greater degree of freedom – while her vending association membership, also spanning three decades, provides her with stability, minimal interference from authorities or rival vendors, and fewer external threats. The divergent experiences of vendors like Tania and Gaby point to the significant effects of location and regulatory dynamics on the experiences of street vendors. What makes these two cases different from each other and why does one street vendor suffer from greater conflicts over public space than the other?³⁸

As urban dwellers, we are often blind to the bustling economic and political dynamics – the scrambles of the everyday – unfolding within our public spaces. As urban growth intensifies, these spheres of seemingly common access are being increasingly transformed into coveted assets, fiercely contested and laden with significance. Far from mere idle realms, public spaces serve as vibrant hubs for economic exchange and accumulation, social interaction, creative expression, mobility, habitation, pivotal political engagement, and, often, structural and overt violence (Ramírez-Kuri, 2015).

Throughout large Latin American cities, street vending is a ubiquitous and visible practice of the everyday. The widespread presence of street vending highlights the opaque yet perpetual negotiations among state authorities, organized civil society groups (such as street vending associations), and individual street vendors in shaping the enforcement of regulatory policies aimed at the management of urban space. Beyond describing the relationship among politicians, street-level bureaucrats, and leaders of civil society associations, this chapter presents a theoretical framework to understand why different intra-city local governments adopt varying approaches to managing street vending in public spaces. Within decentralized cities, I argue that the relationship between local government executives and street-level bureaucrats involved with street vending is mediated by the political alignment between the local executive's political party and the city government's political party.

³⁶ Names are merely for illustrative purposes.

³⁷ Street vending associations often reprimand vendors for changing their products, expanding their stalls, or arriving late by prohibiting them from selling for a set number of days. This directly impacts vendors' income.

³⁸ Most academic literature considers street vendors as a monolithic and homogeneous group that chooses highly trafficked parts of cities to sell their products. However, this is not true in most cities (Crossa, 2016, p. 201; Fernández-Kelly & Shefner, 2006; Hayden et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2018; Roever, 2005), even when the number of street vendors are low and marginally politicized (see chapter 4). There are various factors that differentiate street vendors in Mexico City in terms of the products they sell (Alba, 2012), the legal frameworks that regulate them (Meneses-Reyes, 2011), the forms of resisting to exclusionary policies (Crossa, 2016), their alliances with street vending associations (Cross, 1998b), and their relationship with the state. For purposes of this chapter, I highlight these last two as the most relevant.

Previous literature has argued that governments with low state capacity encourage street vendors to form associations in order to avoid dealing with the resource-intensive enforcement of street vending regulations, thereby maintaining vendors confined to their assigned boundaries (Hummel, 2022). By focusing on the sub-metropolitan level however, I observe variation across local governments within a single city finding that certain public spaces are more contested between vending associations and borough governments' street-level bureaucrats³⁹. Since enforcement requires strong state capacity and resources, I ask why local governments choose to enforce street vending regulations themselves, why do some local governments actively regulate street vending while others delegate it to vending associations, and why do some compete with street vending associations over the enforcement of regulations?

I argue that street vending inspectors monitoring the agreements between vendors, vending associations, and politicians can either be “tenured” or “loyal” inspectors belonging to intra-city local governments. I define tenured inspectors as unionized workers with permanent jobs within local public administrations. I define loyal inspectors as party workers who are assigned by local government executives in exchange for political favors. My main claim is that these inspectors vary according to political party partisan alignment between city and local governments. Intra-city local governments that are not politically aligned with the city government change the bureaucratic structure of the local government, assigning their own group of loyal inspectors to control street vendors and thereby guarantee their political support and gain spatial control over their territory. The need for local government executives to have their own political base is crucial in a context where vending associations support the political party ruling at the city-wide scale. In contrast, local governments aligned with the city government leave tenured inspectors who have incentives in place to maximize rents from vendors to obtain monetary gains from their extraction and pass a portion of the gains up the bureaucratic structure. These governments, despite having political support (e.g., police power) from the city government to enforce street vending regulations⁴⁰, delegate the control of public space to street vending associations and secure their electoral gains by relying on street vending associations to turn out voters.

By comparing intra-city local governments of Mexico City, one belonging to the same political party as the city government and the other two belonging to the opposition, I show how street-level bureaucrats act as clientelistic brokers between vendors and politicians. I advance this argument through a comparative study of three central boroughs⁴¹ in Mexico City based on fieldwork conducted over 15 months from 2021 to 2023. My methodology involved three major components. First, I conducted more than 70 in-depth interviews with politicians and former politicians, leaders of street vending associations, borough street-level bureaucrats (inspectors), and street vendors. Second, I examined city and borough documents to understand how street vending is legally regulated. Finally, I carried out direct observations in working areas to trace how political dynamics impact the use of public space. While the site of my research is Mexico City, I believe that the findings of this study are relevant to other large metropolitan areas that have experienced the consequences of bureaucratic change in sub-metropolitan government due to partisan political misalignment with the city government and wish to understand its impact on the quality of local governance.

This chapter advances two major findings. First, I demonstrate that both tenured inspectors belonging to the local public administrations and leaders of vending associations share similar brokerage relationships with politicians, since politicians rearrange the bureaucracy at their whim.

³⁹ Public space is brutally contested across the city. However, I study how the relationship between street vending associations and local governments' inspectors varies across local governments and why they vary.

⁴⁰ See chapter 1 and Table 3 in the Appendix for a more comprehensive account of all the street vending regulations.

⁴¹ There are sixteen boroughs in Mexico City. Local elections for the executive (mayors) began in 2000.

Politicians use them for convenience as political intermediaries, allowing vendors to use public space in exchange for political support and monetary kickbacks. Second, I find that borough governments' partisan alignment with the city government determines what type of broker is preferable: aligned mayors prefer vending associations, while unaligned mayors prefer loyal inspectors. This, in turn, impacts vending associations' political influence and the degree to which local mayors have the ability to control public space within the borough, with aligned mayors demonstrating greater capacity to control public space than unaligned mayors. In sum, this study reveals that political alignment between elected leaders in nested hierarchies of government shape bureaucracies and, by extension, the control over public space, providing granular insight into the nature of state-society relationships and the governance of cities.

This chapter adds to the existing literature in three main ways. First, it contributes to the literature on clientelism, moving beyond the focus on how political parties employ clientelism to win elections to analyze the ways clientelistic intermediaries assist with everyday governance tasks such as maintaining order in public spaces. Within the same literature, this chapter contributes not only by studying two types of understudied brokers (state employees and civil society associations), but also uncovering circumstances under which governments might turn to one versus the other. I also contribute to the literature on the assignment, negotiation, and contestation of public space, shedding light on how the interplay and competition between organized civil society groups and different state actors might affect the regulation of public space.

The chapter unfolds as follows. In the first section, I examine previous scholarship on brokerage and street-level bureaucracy. In the second section, I offer a theoretical explanation for how political and bureaucratic structures impact the use of public space and why these structures vary across borough governments. In the third section, I describe Mexico City's regulatory context for street vending and present the empirical strategy. In the fourth section, I present the evidence from my research by showing how street vending inspectors impact street vending associations' political influence and the boroughs' ability to control public space mediated by the boroughs' partisan alignment with city government. Lastly, I present questions for future studies and concluding remarks.

Literature: Brokerage and Governance

This section discusses the literature on clientelism and bureaucratic politics relevant to the present case.

Diversity of Brokers

Scholarship on political intermediation (brokerage) analyzes both the relationship between politicians and brokers, and the relationship between brokers and voters to understand who brokers are and the power dynamics inherent in clientelistic exchanges (Mares & Young, 2016). Recent studies have focused extensively on the diversity of actors working as political intermediaries in electoral clientelism (Cornell & Grimes, 2023; Holland & Palmer-Rubin, 2015; Langston & Castro Cornejo, 2023; Mares & Young, 2016).

Mares and Young (2016) distinguish the following types of brokers based on previous scholarship: 1) partisan, 2) state employees, 3) civil society or religious organizations, 4) private actors (employers), 5) ethnic leaders, or 6) gangs and militias. They classify different types of clientelism based on brokers' positive and negative inducements in order to understand who brokers are and what incentives they respond to. Similarly, Holland and Palmer-Rubin (2015) argue that there are various types of brokers and highlight the importance of civil society in clientelism. They create a typology of brokers defined as: 1) party brokers, 2) organizational brokers, 3) hybrid brokers, and 4) independent brokers. They argue that party brokers are often loyal to a party machine, organizational brokers

represent civil society associations and renegotiate their ties with politicians every electoral cycle, and hybrid brokers split their loyalties between civil society associations and political parties. Lastly, independent brokers usually have ties to local elites to mobilize votes. They study these brokers as having rent-seeking, partisan, or societal interests. These distinctions are relevant to understand the heterogeneity of brokers and how their incentives shape clientelistic dynamics. As such, brokers are not necessarily solely driven by electoral incentives, but also by economic and social incentives that allow them to pursue different goals (Holland & Palmer-Rubin, 2015; Zaremborg, 2011). In this chapter, I build on their work to examine the case of organizational (vending associations) and state employee (inspectors) brokers who have not been as extensively studied as partisan brokers (e.g., Stokes et al., 2013) (Mares & Young, 2016).

Beyond Maintaining the Political Machine

Beyond electoral and rent-seeking roles, brokers perform diverse roles to support politicians (Hicken & Nathan, 2020) such as facilitating the distribution of local goods and services, providing favors, and improving the effectiveness of governance. Brokers, through their close ties with neighborhoods, can shorten the distance between politicians and voters, providing urban dwellers with access to goods and services (Alonso Ferreira, 2023; Auerbach, 2016, 2017, 2019; Auerbach & Thachil, 2018; Auyero, 2000; Oliveros, 2016; Post et al., 2017; Szwarcberg, 2015; Toral, 2023). Similarly, brokers usually maintain close ties with politicians, creating “upward embeddedness” (Toral, 2023) which preserves the loyalty of brokers with politicians (Langston & Castro Cornejo, 2023) and can help governments in implementing policies locally (Rizzo, 2015; Zarazaga, 2014).

Building on findings by Zarazaga in Argentina (2014) and Rizzo in Mexico (2015), I investigate the role of brokers in the governance of the city, looking beyond the electoral support that brokers provide to politicians. Along with these studies, this chapter examines brokerage dynamics out of the electoral season and explores the daily political support that these brokers provide to politicians and communities. Zarazaga argues that brokers multitask by mobilizing votes, political rallies, and providing goods to communities to maintain their credibility as brokers. But given their operational and local expertise within communities, politicians use brokers to effectively exercise power. Rizzo adds to this study by analyzing what motivates brokers and distinguishes between electorally motivated patrons and governmental patrons. As such, she differentiates between electoral brokerage and social brokerage and explains that not all politicians are motivated solely by rent-extraction and maximizing electoral payoffs, but also in gaining the trust of their constituencies during the electoral off-season. I add to this literature by analyzing the motivations of politicians to maintain order in public space. Given that politicians’ success is often judged by their constituents based on their actions, keeping the streets in “good order” is often a straightforward way for politicians to demonstrate their effectiveness as leaders of government.

Bureaucrats as Brokers

The role of intermediaries in governance is particularly significant when state employees within the bureaucracy act as brokers, as they can be more easily mobilized by politicians. This chapter contributes to the burgeoning literature on brokers within the bureaucracy (Alonso Ferreira, 2023; Brierley, 2020; Brierley et al., 2023; Cornell & Grimes, 2023; Larreguy et al., 2017; Oliveros, 2016, 2021; Peeters & Campos, 2023; Toral, 2023). Previous work has shown that bureaucrats participate in partisan efforts using government resources (Hicken & Nathan, 2020; Oliveros, 2021).

Patronage, or the act of politicians hiring employees for a public position in exchange for partisan loyalty, is a common practice in Latin America (Grindle, 2012). Recent literature examines how politicians develop monitoring strategies to ensure the compliance of employees hired through

clientelistic mechanisms. Some scholars argue that public employees keep their end of the contract due to reciprocity or threat of punishment (Gonzalez-Ocantos & Oliveros, 2019; Stokes et al., 2013). However, Oliveros (2021) argues that monitoring is not necessary and that patronage contracts are “self-sustaining” since workers believe that their fates are tied to the success of the incumbent who hired them, particularly in the presence of weak civil service systems. Accordingly, state employees will campaign, attend political rallies, mobilize voters, and monitor elections to keep their incumbents in power and maintain their jobs. In this chapter, I utilize these theories to understand politicians’ monitoring strategies with different types of brokers across different political contexts.

Street-level Bureaucrats

The literature on clientelism differentiates politicians, bureaucrats, brokers, and voters. However, as some have argued, greater differentiation among people within bureaucracies is needed (Pepinsky et al., 2017). In contrast to other bureaucrats, street-level employees (or frontline workers) have a closer relationship with citizens, fostering greater accountability and an efficient administration in the politicization of the bureaucracy (Alonso Ferreira, 2023; Toral, 2023). However, this proximity to “the street” might encourage predatory and corrupt behavior, depicting how street-level bureaucrats experience great variation in agency patterns depending on the context of study (Peeters & Campos, 2023).

In the Brazilian context, Alonso-Ferreira (2023) examines the relationship between street-level bureaucrats and neighborhood associations to obtain land titles in São Paulo. She finds that bureaucrats do not engage in predatory behavior, but instead leverage their political resources in favor of citizens. Even though the bureaucrats she describes are frontline workers, these employees are managers that have deep knowledge of legislation and administration for allocating land titles and legislation. Similarly, Toral (2023) describes how patronage can be mobilized to make public administration more effective when there are complex objectives to achieve in transaction-intensive services. In that sense, administrative bureaucrats will relate differently to politicians and constituents as will street-level bureaucrats. Therefore, it is imperative to distinguish between bureaucrats that are managerial and bureaucrats that are street-level operators, since their incentives and ways of using state resources as brokers will show great variation (Dahlström & Lapuente, 2022).

Variation among public sector employees also matters in terms of their contracts. Bureaucracies with a greater proportion of employees with temporary contracts will be more likely to engage in patronage politics and will have incentives to participate in brokerage as a means to secure promotions (Brierley, 2020). Employers with tenured contracts might also have similar incentives, even when they are not strongly tied to a party organization (Cornell & Grimes, 2023). However, it is important to differentiate between both mechanisms to illuminate the configuration of public administrations and how politicians work with them in a context of weak civil service. I extend this theory by studying tenured bureaucrats and their incentives to broker and compete over space with street vending associations despite having secure jobs.

Theory: Street Vending Inspectors as Brokers

To understand how public space, such as parks, sidewalks, and public squares are assigned, used, and contested, I focus on the political structures which regulate public space and the interaction of various actors involved in these dynamics. Past studies in political science have extensively explored the entrenched nature of clientelism in Latin American cities (Collier, 1976; Cornelius, 1975; Holland, 2017; Hummel, 2022). However, there has been limited research into how politicians influence the management of public space, particularly in terms of understanding how negotiations impact the competition for control over that space. In contrast, urban studies and sociology research has widely

examined the spatial arrangements derived from political agreements (Alba & Braig, 2022; Crossa, 2018; Duhau & Giglia, 2008; Moctezuma, 2021; Serna-Luna, 2020), but with scarce mention of the intricate mechanisms through which politicians and street vendors relate to each other and determine the use of public space.

I advance an alternative view of brokerage that examines how inspectors participate in the governance of street vending and the use of public space⁴². Across Latin America, street vendors have historically organized into vending associations that mediate with politicians, allowing vendors to sell in public space in exchange for votes or political support (Cross, 1998b; Gay, 2006; Holland, 2017; Hummel, 2022). With every new incumbent, associations negotiate over the space they can use and come to an agreement. Street vending inspectors are responsible for monitoring street vendors and ensuring vendors adhere to the agreements. In this chapter, I argue that street vending inspectors can either be tenured, unionized inspectors, or loyal inspectors who are party workers placed within the bureaucratic structure by political incumbents in exchange for political favors.

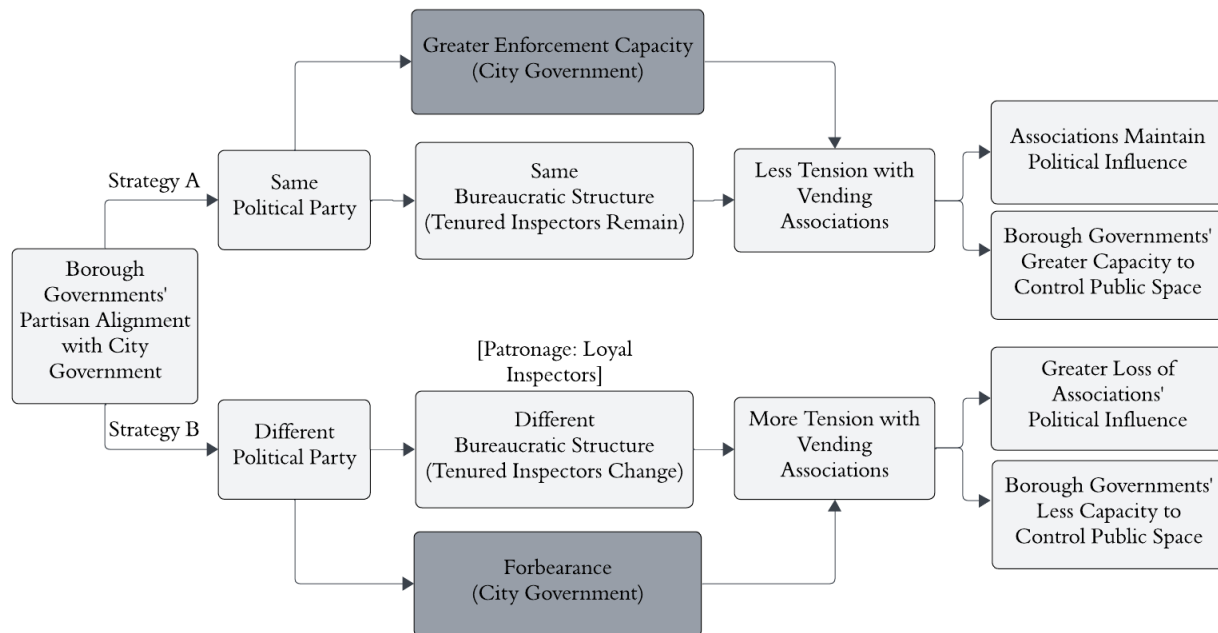
However, I argue that vending inspectors have their own rent-seeking and partisan incentives to displace organizational brokers from being the main intermediaries between politicians and street vendors in providing access to public space⁴³. In Cross's study of street vendors in Mexico City in the 1990s, he found how vending inspectors colluded with organizational brokers when vending associations were strong (Cross, 1998b). Hummel's (2022) work on Bolivia and Brazil also finds that local politicians successfully delegate the enforcement of street vending regulations to organizational brokers. Instead, I claim that despite the strength of street vending associations, local politicians encourage inspectors to serve as brokers between themselves and street vendors when they do not share partisan alignment with the city-wide government.

When local governments are politically aligned with the city-wide government, local executives have an incentive to rely on vending associations because, as Hummel (2022) demonstrates, the latter are likely to exchange political favors for access to public space. Local governments will also enjoy a greater capacity to control public space, given access to state resources and the ability to evict vendors if needed. In contrast, when local governments are unaligned, they have an incentive to create alternate brokers by shuffling the bureaucratic structure, placing loyal bureaucrats to serve as inspector-brokers. In this case, the competition for the use of space between existing vending associations and inspector-brokers will increase, with local governments having less ability to control public space. In sum, politicians encourage inspectors to broker through two main strategies (as shown in Figure 10). One (strategy A), whenever their political party is aligned with the city-wide government, and another (strategy B) whenever their political party is not aligned with the city-wide government.

⁴² Even though I do not test for the quality of public space (e.g., clean streets), I study the control of public space as a necessary but not sufficient condition that should exist in order to have the capacity to control the use of public space. However, politicians also have to be willing to enforce the existing regulations.

⁴³ Recent scholarship has found that public employees acting as brokers can be important allies for civil society to implement policies (Rich, 2019) and have effective provision of goods (Rizzo, 2015; Toral, 2023). However, I argue that inspectors might have their own incentives to broker and in fact, compete with civil society associations depending on what kind of goods or services are being provided in exchange for political support and the type of bureaucrat brokering the transaction.

Figure 10. Argument: Political Alignment, Bureaucratic Structures, Civil Society, and State Capacity to Control Public Space



Note: This argument holds regardless of which party is in control at the city-wide level.

Strategy A: Local Governments Are Politically Aligned with City-wide Government

If the local government’s party is aligned with the city-wide government’s party, the bureaucratic structure will most likely remain the same. Street vending associations have historically negotiated with the political party in power at the city-wide level without showing long-term partisan alliances (Alba & Braig, 2022; Cross, 1998b). Therefore, since street vendors use public space in exchange for political support, their presence in that territory will represent votes for the political party in power at the city-wide level. As such, local politicians will not have incentives to displace vending associations and will continue to delegate the provision of public space to them.

Tenured inspectors are not incentivized to capture votes, and they often seek instead to maximize rent-extraction. Insofar as the governments obtain rents in exchange for the use of public space, politicians in aligned governments will not exhibit strong preferences between organizational or bureaucratic brokers. Politicians will allow tenured inspectors to maintain their public appointments as long as they share the monetary kickbacks up the political structure. However, they might have slightly greater incentives to rely on vending associations given their capacity to evict street vendors whenever needed. With the support of the city-wide government, aligned local governments tend to have greater enforcement capacity (such as the use of police) when required to exercise their power over civil associations or over the unruly use of public space.

As a consequence, for the aligned case, I expect that politicians will rely more on street vending associations, despite politicians allowing tenured inspectors to have their own group of street vendors. This will allow associations to maintain their political influence even when the local government has the capacity to control public space itself.

Strategy B: Local Governments Are Not Politically Aligned with City-wide Government

If the local government’s party is not aligned with the city government, the local executive will opt to re-engineer local bureaucratic structures, placing their own loyal workers as inspectors. This is often

done not only to remain in power (Oliveros, 2021), but also to have a greater ability to govern and exercise control over their territory. As previously mentioned, vending associations have historically supported the political party in power at the city level. Thus, unaligned local governments will rely less on vending associations managing public space since they will most likely vote for the political party controlling the city-wide government⁴⁴. I argue that this will be true even in the case of a bureaucratic structure with a majority of unionized, tenured, public employees which privilege extractive rent-seeking strategies. Since the incumbent will not be able to fire these workers, politicians will reshuffle public employees, using patronage to replace tenured inspectors. By having their own employees that provide political support to maintain their jobs (Oliveros, 2021), politicians will not have to resort to resource-intensive monitoring strategies. Through this strategy, politicians will be able to maximize their votes as well as the rents that they extract from allowing street vendors to use public space.

Thus, for the unaligned case, I expect local politicians to have greater reliance on loyal inspectors than on vending associations. If politicians are successful in favoring loyal inspectors regulating public space over vending associations, they will also gain control over public space. However, I argue that the competition over public space will be greater with leaders of associations, since both types of brokers will want to maximize the number of voters using public space within a limited territory. This competition will weaken associations' political influence and most likely space will be used to its maximum capacity. Despite having greater capacity to control public space with their own loyal inspectors, local governments' capacity in this case will be diminished in the absence of city government police resources to enforce regulations.

When Unaligned Local Governments Do Not Change the Bureaucratic Structure

Displacing the tenured inspectors and replacing them with their own loyal workers would maximize the local governments' votes and rent extraction. It would also allow them the possibility to have greater control over public space. However, politicians will not always be capable of changing the bureaucratic structure. Some unaligned local governments might not have the capacity to fight with the state employees' union that allows them to remain in their tenured positions and they might prefer to maximize rents instead of maximizing votes. As a consequence, politicians will have to invest more resources on monitoring the behavior of inspectors who will want to maximize rent extraction and extortion from vendors.

Thus, for the unaligned case where politicians cannot change the bureaucratic structure, I expect politicians to favor either street vending associations or tenured inspectors on a case-by-case basis. Through street vending associations, politicians will be able to provide public space in exchange for political favors even when they do not have the state capacity to evict them from public space. However, they might need to use tenured inspectors to deter street vending associations from gaining too much control of public space.

Context and Research Design: Street Vending in Mexico City

Why Street Vending in Mexico City?

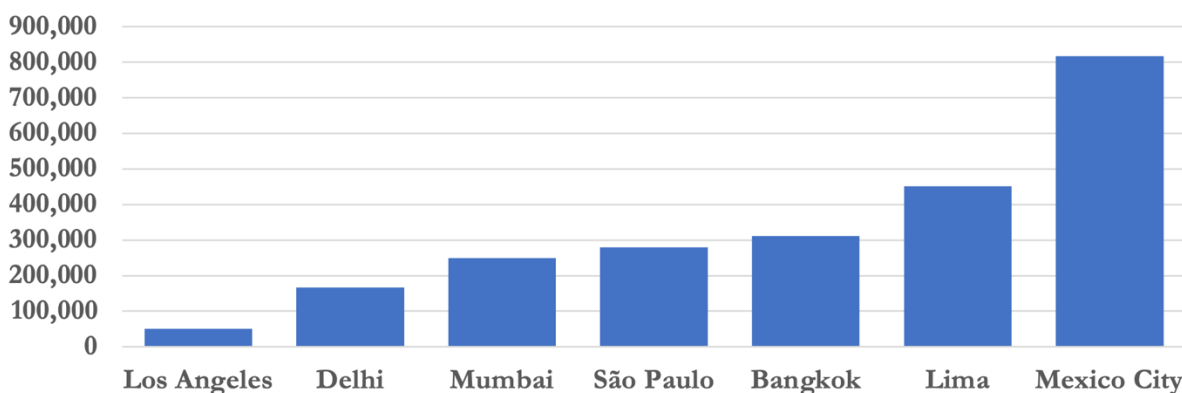
To analyze how political and bureaucratic structures impact how public space is assigned, used, and contested, I study street vending in Mexico City. Through this study, I contextualize specific brokerage dynamics, highlighting the complexities of bureaucracies at the city scale, something that is often missing in studies of the bureaucracy (Pepinsky et al., 2017). Even though this study focuses on street

⁴⁴ It could be argued that some street vending associations will want to provide their political support to the local government in exchange for using public space. This will be likely happening with smaller street vending associations. However, it will be difficult for these smaller associations to form alliances with larger street vending associations if they politically support the party of opposition.

vending, street vendors might also be representative of other activities in cities, such as waste-picking, day labor, unlicensed transport, and sex work, sharing similar constraints and organizational structures. Street vendors and other street economies are usually associated with negative externalities, such as neighbor complaints, unsanitary conditions, traffic congestion, and crime, which exert pressure on the urban public policy agenda (Bromley, 2000). However, street vendors are more politicized compared to other street economies due to their visibility in public spaces (Zaremborg, 2010)⁴⁵. Vendors' visibility grants them with greater political leverage than other groups, but it also creates greater tensions with powerful vested interests that want to make use of cities' public spaces.

I study Mexico City because it is a canonical case of street vending politics, depicting how state bureaucrats have historically supported street vending associations in exchange for political and economic favors (Cross, 1998b). Therefore, this research builds on the seminal work of John Cross, to illuminate how these political relationships have changed in a context of decentralization and democratization. As I will further explain below, Mexico City street vendors represent a large voting group within a context of weak institutional civil service with tenured inspectors. Therefore, the findings of this study are relevant to other cities with a large number of street vendors (as shown in Figure 11) such as Bangkok, Delhi, Mumbai, Lima, or Los Angeles. Moreover, this study might shed light on the consequences of bureaucratic change in local governments due to partisan political unalignment with the citywide government and how that impacts the quality of local governance.

Figure 11. Number of Street Vendors and Market Traders Across Different Countries



Notes: I collected data from multiple sources and for different years. Data from all cities except Mumbai and Los Angeles used the methodology developed by WIEGO (Vanek et al., 2014) that I used in Figure 4 and Figure 5. Mumbai and Los Angeles do not include market traders and can potentially have more vendors than the estimates I show. Data for Bangkok (Poonsab et al., 2019) and Delhi (Raveendran & Vanek, 2020) were collected from 2017. Mumbai (Bhowmik, n.d.), Mexico City (Luján Salazar & Vanek, 2020), and São Paulo (Bouvier et al., 2022). Lima from 2018 (Aliaga Linares, 2017) and Los Angeles from 2014 (Tso, 2014).

As shown Figure 2 in chapter 1, boroughs in Mexico City divide street vending under three main subsectors: 1) *via pública*, 2) *tianguis* (street markets), and 3) public markets. These categories are regulated by different government officials and have varying degrees of social, political, and legal recognition⁴⁶. In this chapter, I focus on the regulation of *via pública* vendors, since these are the most

⁴⁵ Street vending also has positive aspects, such as filling unemployment gaps, contributing to global supply chains, distributing goods and services across cities, and providing affordable food to the population (Bromley, 2000).

⁴⁶ For example, public markets are managed directly by the city government, with boroughs playing a minor role in their supervision. Street markets in 2019 won a legal battle to also be legally recognized and managed by the city government

politicized and most conspicuous type of street vendors in the city. These vendors commonly set up with fixed or semi-fixed stalls⁴⁷ on sidewalks, parks, or plazas across the city. Due to their semi-permanent condition, *vía pública* vendors (both fixed and semi-fixed) are subjects to clientelism, extortion, and eviction, unlike the other types of vendors (*tianguis* and public markets). For example, their legal framework changes depending on the road they are installed on (main street *versus* secondary road)⁴⁸. If a *vía pública* stall is installed on a main road, its regulation depends on the city government. If the stall is placed on a secondary road, the regulation lies under the supervision of the borough⁴⁹.

Street vendors represent an important percentage of the voting population in Mexico City in quantitative terms. According to multiple sources from my interviews (vendors, vending associations, and local officials), street vendors must bring to political rallies and voting booths at least 5 people with them⁵⁰. On many occasions, vending associations roll call, making sure that vendors participate politically, punishing vendors if they fail to bring people along them. Their punishment usually entails being prohibited to work for several days, impacting directly on their income.

Using the methodology developed by WIEGO based on data from the National Survey of Occupation and Employment (ENOE) (Luján Salazar & Vanek, 2020; Vanek et al., 2014), I estimate that for the third quarter of 2023, there were 442,482 *vía pública* street vendors in Mexico City. This means that if every vendor brings approximately 5 people along them to the voting poll, this will account roughly for 2.2 million votes in Mexico City, which translates roughly into 24% of the population of the city (9,209,944 according to the 2020 Census).

I also study Mexico City because it is a case with a weak institutional civil service with tenured inspectors responsible for enforcing street vending regulation. Dasandi and Esteve (2017) create a typology of the different types of political-bureaucratic relationships by conceptualizing cases which vary in terms of their distinct separation between political and administrative spheres (separation), and in terms of the freedom inspectors experience to perform their functions without the interference of politicians (autonomy). According to their typology, Mexico falls into the collusive model⁵¹, with low separation between the political and administrative spheres and with inspectors having low autonomy from politicians. These are characteristics of a system where public administration appointments are provided on a discretionary basis, despite having electoral competition (Grindle, 2012). Thus, having strong political interference and no separation between political and administrative dimensions makes inspectors highly dependent on the political incumbent.

Moreover, previous scholarship has argued that bureaucrats acting as brokers might help maintaining the incumbents' political party in power by allocating loyal officials as public servants

(Interview with street vending leaders, February 24, 2023; June 20, 2023). Since street markets supply healthy foods at affordable prices to the population, they have greater social recognition than *vía pública* vendors.

⁴⁷ The main difference between fixed and semi-fixed vendors on *vía pública* is that fixed stalls stay permanently in the same location, having a metallic stall that is drilled to the ground while semi-fixed stalls have to install and uninstall their stalls daily. Even though fixed stalls have greater assurance to work in public space, boroughs might carry out raids to get rid of these stalls during the night (Interview with inspectors, June 22, 2023; July 18, 2023).

⁴⁸ Mexico City's political structure is composed of the head of government (the governor of the city) and 16 mayors (ruling the boroughs) with all appointments lasting a 3-year term in office and being able to be re-elected once. Within the city government, the function of the Subsecretary of Boroughs⁴⁸ is to ensure the development of boroughs, enforce regulations of public space, and keep a strict control of street vending licenses. Since many of the street vending associations are present across different boroughs of the city, the Subsecretary of Boroughs negotiates with the leaders and reaches political agreements to distribute public space.

⁴⁹ For this case, despite these legal details, this difference is seldom applied in practice and the regulation of *vía pública* vendors is carried out by the boroughs directly.

⁵⁰ Even though street vendors might not live in the same neighborhood that they work in, brokers create IDs with a fake address, so they can vote within that borough (Leader, July 21, 2023).

⁵¹ The authors also typologize the collaborative model (with high autonomy and low separation); the intrusive model (with low autonomy and high separation); and the integrated model (with high autonomy and high separation).

(Oliveros, 2021). However, that is much harder when the largest percentage of the appointments are taken by unionized employees. Ana De la O (2024) shows that for the entire Mexican territory, the largest percentage of municipal employees have non-permanent contracts (*de confianza*) (62%), arguing that a large percentage of public employees can be fired at will. In contrast, and using the same data, I show that 72% of all public employees across all borough governments in Mexico City (equivalent to municipalities) have job security (i.e., are base or unionized workers), 4% have a non-permanent contract, and 14% have a temporary contract for 2023 (see Table 2). Thus, in theory, the stakes of turning power over to the opposition should not be as high in terms of patronage jobs.

Table 2. Type of Public Employee (Percentage) by Borough in Mexico City, 2023

Borough	Type of Public Employee				Total
	Confianza (Entrusted)	Job Security (Base or Unionized)	Temporary	Other Non-Specified	
Álvaro Obregón	4%	70%	5%	21%	100%
Azcapotzalco	3%	72%	24%	0%	100%
Benito Juárez	4%	68%	15%	12%	100%
Coyoacán	3%	74%	5%	18%	100%
Cuajimalpa de Morelos	4%	73%	23%	0%	100%
Cuauhtémoc	3%	78%	19%	0%	100%
Gustavo A. Madero	3%	76%	21%	0%	100%
Iztacalco	4%	70%	11%	14%	100%
Iztapalapa	3%	68%	8%	21%	100%
La Magdalena Contreras	4%	65%	30%	0%	100%
Miguel Hidalgo	7%	63%	14%	16%	100%
Milpa Alta	4%	82%	4%	11%	100%
Tláhuac	4%	76%	8%	11%	100%
Tlalpan	5%	64%	31%	0%	100%
Venustiano Carranza	3%	71%	12%	14%	100%
Xochimilco	3%	73%	13%	11%	100%
Total Mexico City	4%	72%	15%	10%	100%

Source: National Census of Municipal Governments and Territorial Demarcations of Mexico City estimates (INEGI, 2023), Table 4 in Organizational Structure and Resources.

Note: Shaded boroughs have mayors belonging to the party of opposition to the city government.

Empirical Strategy

The evidence I present in this chapter draws on 15 months of fieldwork in Mexico City, conducted between 2021 and 2023⁵². This research is centered on three methods of data collection. First, I conducted over 70 in-depth interviews with politicians and former politicians of local (boroughs) and citywide governments (12), leaders of street vending associations (17), borough street-level bureaucrats (inspectors and administrative bureaucrats, 17), and street vendors (36)⁵³. By interviewing

⁵² I conducted a series of early in-depth interviews with street vendors and leaders of street vending associations from May to August of 2021. I then returned to Mexico City in January of 2023 and conducted interviews and direct observation until September of 2023, with some follow-up interviews carrying out until January of 2024.

⁵³ The length and type of interviews varied across people, with semi-structured one-time interviews with street vending inspectors lasting 30 minutes, in-depth interviews with mayors lasting 1-hour, in-depth interviews with street vendors lasting on average 2 hours, and in-depth interviews with street vending leaders lasting on average 3 hours, with the longest lasting 4 hours and 25 minutes.

such varied actors, I triangulate the perspectives of politicians, bureaucrats, and leaders of street vending associations and their role in regulating public space. I selected the interviews through snowball sampling starting through two main informants: one was through an international non-governmental organization and the other was through a former politician which I contacted through email. Second, over the year of fieldwork, I observed vendors across different neighborhoods, with particular attention to four street vending areas where I kept track of vendors' presence, their position on the sidewalk, and their relationships with street vending associations and borough governments. Third, I analyzed street vending regulations by studying documents from boroughs and city documents issued in the Official Gazette⁵⁴ to understand how actors make use of the complex legal framework⁵⁵.

Through a comparative case study, I explore three central boroughs⁵⁶ in Mexico City with similar poverty levels (middle-income boroughs), similar number of street vendors, and number of street vending inspectors⁵⁷. The main difference between the boroughs is the political party to which the incumbent belongs to. As shown in Figure 12, one of the boroughs has an incumbent from the same political party as the city government (Borough A) while the other two boroughs have an incumbent from the party of opposition, varying only if the local executive changed the bureaucratic structure.⁵⁸ One moved around tenured inspectors within the borough's bureaucratic structure and placed instead their own loyal employees as street vending inspectors (Borough B), while the other kept the tenured inspectors in place (Borough C). I select these three cases because they represent the possible alternatives politicians have in structuring the bureaucracy when they become incumbents. The two main strategies are to keep tenured inspectors when the government is aligned (A) or to place loyal inspectors when the government is unaligned (B). However, there are cases (C) when the

⁵⁴ Gaceta Oficial de la Ciudad de México: <https://data.consejeria.cdmx.gob.mx/index.php/gaceta>

⁵⁵ Although many street vending associations are registered as civil associations, the legal ambiguous framework through which they mediate between street vendors and public officials for controlling public space is one of the main sources of tension between different levels of the state and civil society (Hayden, 2017; Meneses-Reyes, 2011; Roever, 2005)⁵⁵. In practice, there are written and unwritten rules that govern street vending and the use of public space (Mattews & Alba, 2015). Thus, the regulation of public space depends on how street vendors, leaders of street vending associations, bureaucrats, and politicians use these rules at their convenience (Holland, 2017). Other common efforts to regulate public space have been relocating street vendors to plazas, but these are often unsuccessfully since street vendors seek areas with heavy pedestrian traffic, such as subway stations, commercial malls, hospitals, and schools. For years, efforts have been made to relocate vendors to markets or squares away from public spaces (with relocation programs in 1993 and 2007 in the downtown Historic Center as notable examples) (Cross, 1997; Crossa, 2018; Meneses-Reyes, 2011; Silva-Londoño, 2010). However, reorganization programs do not necessarily imply relocation but rather renegotiation between both politicians and street vending associations.

⁵⁶ Most street vending literature has focused on the downtown Historic Center. However, the Historic Center is a territory with a different legal jurisdiction from the rest of the city and directly controlled by central government even if it falls within the spatiality of the borough. For that reason, I decided to focus on the political and spatial dynamics outside of the Historic Center. The most intense persecution of street vendors has been focalized in downtown Mexico City, in parks and plazas where governments have sought to modernize (with private real estate investment), "cleaning-up" vendors and renewing the public spaces for the consumption of tourists and middle and higher-income classes (Becker & Müller, 2013; Crossa, 2009; Giglia, 2013). In recent years, downtown has also become a turf war between rival criminal groups: *Unión Tepito* and *Fuerza Anti-Unión*, and more recently, larger drug cartels outside of Mexico City (Romandía et al., 2019). *Unión Tepito* is a large criminal group that dominates and extorsions small-business owners and street vendors through violence and fear while *Fuerza Anti-Unión* has had closer relations with government officials attempting to control the drug retail. Although violence and fear of the *narvos* are deeply imbricated across all boroughs of Mexico City, the levels of violence for the use of public space in downtown Mexico City is much greater.

⁵⁷ Poverty levels were taken from 2020 CONEVAL data. The number of street vendors was captured from the 1998 Agreement, since it seems to be the most accurate account of vendors relative to other boroughs. The number of street vending inspectors was obtained through information requests in February of 2024.

⁵⁸ I do not specify which boroughs I select to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees.

government is unaligned and the preferred strategy of placing loyal inspectors is too difficult to implement due to significant roadblocks⁵⁹.

Figure 12. Selection of Cases: Actors' Incentives and Theoretical Expectations

	Borough Government Politically Aligned with City-wide Government	Borough Government NOT Politically Aligned with City-wide Government
NO Change in Borough Governments' Bureaucratic Structure	<p>Borough A</p> <p>Stakeholders' Incentives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politicians: Max. Rents • Tenured Bureaucrats: Max. Rents <p>Theoretical Expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politicians will have greater reliance on street vending associations. • Tenured inspectors will be loosely monitored by politicians. • Associations will maintain political influence. • Borough government has the capacity to control public space. 	<p>Borough C</p> <p>Stakeholders' Incentives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politicians: Max. Rents • Tenured Bureaucrats: Max. Rents <p>Theoretical Expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politicians will strategically rely either on street vending associations or tenured inspectors on a case by case basis. • Tenured inspectors will prefer aligned political party to have less pressure from politicians' monitoring. • Associations will gain political influence. • Borough government does not have the capacity to control public space.
Change in Borough Governments' Bureaucratic Structure	—	<p>Borough B</p> <p>Stakeholders' Incentives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politicians: Max. Votes and Rents • Loyal inspectors (placed by patronage): Max. Votes and Rents <p>Theoretical Expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politicians will have greater reliance on their loyal bureaucrats. • Loyal inspectors' monitoring will be self-sustained. • Associations will lose political influence. • Borough government has more capacity to control public space, but will use public space to its maximum capacity.

Evidence: Local Governments' Partisan Alignment and Bureaucratic Change

In this section, I examine the implications derived from my theoretical account of the variation of inspectors across three local borough governments according to partisan alignment with the city-wide government. Prior research on collective action has argued that in a context of weak state capacity and where the number of street vendors is high, politicians encourage street vendors to organize so that they can delegate the enforcement of regulations to these associations (Hummel, 2022). Given the historical legacies of organizing in Mexico City, where the government forced vendors to organize in order to have greater control over the population and allowing street vendors to use public space in exchange for votes, we would expect politicians to support street vending associations. However, leaders of street vending associations complained of certain borough governments' antagonism and lack of support, seeking to dismantle the street vending associations. The reason that some borough governments vary in terms of how much they delegate the enforcement to street vending associations is the existence of state employee brokers that regulate the use of public space. These actors which

⁵⁹ I do not observe the case when local governments are politically aligned with the citywide government and dislodge bureaucrats.

operate as brokers within borough governments' bureaucratic structures have been overlooked within the clientelism literature, neglecting how internal government structures can impact the political intermediation between politicians and street vendors. Why, then, do borough politicians (mayors) prefer to make use of their own inspectors over leaders of street vending associations and why does this vary across borough governments? The following analyses examine why inspectors are incentivized to broker, their relationship with civil society, and how that will impact the borough governments' ability to secure elections and govern.

Within the borough's structure, at the bottom of the organizational chart and in direct contact with streets and street vendors are three different departments in each borough, each known in Spanish as the JUD (*jefe de departamento*) of the borough (see Figure 2 in chapter 1). The *vía pública* JUD is the department which has direct contact with what is happening on the streets. For that reason, the direction of *vía pública* and markets is the most coveted position within the borough governments' public administration. Whoever becomes the main manager of the JUD, oversees the legal and illegal financial gains collected by inspectors working from the streets' economic activities (Politician, June 14, 2023). Moreover, given their on-the-ground knowledge, managers in this position can achieve upward mobility within the bureaucratic structure, even obtaining the seat as mayors in a given moment.

The *vía pública* JUD is mainly composed by street-level inspectors. Most of the inspectors are permanent, unionized civil servants⁶⁰ which have worked in the boroughs for many years, remaining as inspectors across different political mandates⁶¹. Incorporating these actors in our analyses of state-society relationships is imperative since they have a direct impact on the streets and on the mayor's performance. Their main responsibility is to enforce street vending regulations. However, the complexity of the legal system and their street-level position places allows them to often extort street vendors. As an example, in 2017, a mayor decided to freeze the inspectors' salaries, but the inspectors filed a lawsuit and the mayor was impeached (Leader, July 21, 2023; Castillo García, 2017). Thus, mayors are wary of the role that inspectors play within the borough (Inspector, September 5, 2023; Politician, August 16, 2023).

Regardless of political partisanship, inspectors and leaders of street vending associations compete fiercely over space. Through my research, I find that inspectors within boroughs not only surveil and extort vendors, but that they also have their own groups of street vendors⁶², mimicking the behavior of leaders of street vending associations by mobilizing vendors and charging them daily fees in exchange for protection. It is common that inspectors displace street vending associations from working areas by threatening vendors or directly evicting the vendors, diminishing associations' political influence⁶³. However, the intensity of the competition and the capacity of the state to control

⁶⁰ In Mexico, civil servants are either *funcionarios públicos* (elected officials) or *empleados públicos*. Being *empleados públicos*, workers can be either permanent base workers (*base*), non-permanent contract employees (*confianza*), or temporary workers (*eventual* or *honorarios*). Inspectors are base workers that cannot be fired by the mayors.

⁶¹ For one borough, all inspectors have had at least 10 years of experience working as street vending inspectors.

⁶² Since the late 1990s, the two most powerful leaders filed a complaint against inspectors, since they were performing the same functions as the leaders (Cross, 1997). However, street vending leaders claim that the presence of inspectors has increased, weakening their political influence (July 21, 2023).

⁶³ Historically, street vending associations in Mexico City have had great political and spatial control over public space. Since vendors were forced to organize under street vending associations as a mechanism from the state to coopt street vendors, leaders of street vending associations have had the control over assigning public space. For most of the 20th century, public space was controlled mainly by two families led by two powerful women: Alejandra Barrios and Guillermina Rico. However, once the PRI lost the city election and the PRD came into power democratically, as part of the 11/98 Agreement, the PRD stimulated the competition among associations and the associations formerly controlled by the PRI begun to fragment into smaller associations (Alba & Braig, 2022; Cross, 1998a; Meneses-Reyes, 2011; Serna-Luna, 2020; Zaremberg, 2011). While these two families still have their family members controlling space across the city, the

public space varies depending on the political alignment between the local and city government. Thus, I present how these strategies vary between a borough politically aligned and two boroughs that are not politically aligned with the city-wide political party in power.

Borough A: Political Alignment with City-wide Government and No Change of State Employees

Borough A is a middle-income borough, central in Mexico City, but outside of the downtown area. It has approximately 6,000 street vendors (Acuerdo 11/98, 1998) and a slightly greater than average-size (more than 40 inspectors) working for the *vía pública* office within their bureaucratic structure (Information Request, 2024). It has had incumbents belonging to the PRD (Democratic Revolutionary Party) since 2000, until it changed to MORENA (National Regeneration Movement) in 2018. MORENA was created by the present-day president Andrés Manuel López Obrador in 2014 and continues to be the party's dominant figure. The president's wide popularity has allowed MORENA to gain government seats in competitive positions, such as the head of government in Mexico City. As such, the incumbent of a borough belonging to MORENA has a significant amount of political support from the city's head of government, who in turn has the political support of the president.

Therefore, Borough A is an exemplary case of a borough where there is political alignment with the city-wide government and where the bureaucratic structure of this borough remains the same, with tenured inspectors monitoring the enforcement of public space regulations. This borough showcases the typical relationship between street vendors, inspectors, and politicians previously described in the literature (Alba & Braig, 2022; Cross, 1998b; Crossa, 2018).

In line with the general argument, interviews suggest that in this case, politicians prefer to delegate the use of public space to street vending associations for two main reasons. First, because street vending leaders mobilize vendors to vote for the political party in power at the city-wide level; and two, because they can displace street vendors belonging to associations whenever they need to, instead of monitoring tenured, street-level inspectors. In the following paragraphs, I provide evidence of this strategy.

Street Vending Associations

At a street vendor association meeting on July 21, 2023, street vending leaders from different boroughs got together to form an alliance to support the future political candidate running for the city's head of government. Leaders argued that they had to come together and support the city's political party in order to gain a place (as street vending associations) within the government. Having greater influence at a city-wide level allows them to modify legal frameworks to gain greater recognition and public spaces within the city. Through this meeting, I realized that street vending leaders are inclined to back-up the political party that is in power at the city-wide level in order to gain access – as an entire united sector – to people in position of power within Congress and the city's governmental structures. As a leader argued:

“By backing up the president and the head of government, we will triumph as associations. Not only making candidates triumph but making association leaders stronger. We can guarantee that our areas are respected, improving the conditions of our members and the quality of the public spaces we work in. [...] If we unify, we could be part of Congress ourselves. That's how strong we can be.” (My translation).

atomization of associations has made street vending associations to significantly lose political influence and their authorization to assign public space (Alba & Braig, 2022; Cross, 1998a; Meneses-Reyes, 2011; Zaremborg, 2011).

A leader further explained that associations usually support whoever is in power, claiming that historically associations have been used by the government and that over time, associations have learned to “play the game”, using the governments themselves to achieve their own goals. However, during the same meeting, it became clear that street vending associations have different goals, making it difficult to maintain unity across associations. Some want to focus on electoral support, while others wanted to push for the creation of clearer laws in Congress, while others only want to defend their use of public space locally.

Leaders from Borough A also explained that street vending associations have partisan incentives. As long as the borough is politically aligned with the city, street vending associations will provide political support in exchange for access to public space. As an example, in this borough, leaders of street vending associations described how they back-up politicians that are politically aligned with the city government because in that manner they secure their working areas within the borough. Their alliances with other street vending associations also allows them to display the maximum number of political supporters they can have in their borough if they allow them to work in public space (Leaders, July 29, 2023).

Despite associations’ varied goals, the mayor from Borough A (aligned with the city-wide government) does not have strong incentives to extract votes in exchange for allowing vendors to work within the borough’s public space because vendors will already vote for their political party. Leaders from Borough A argued that they support whoever the president, the head of government, and the mayor politically support, mostly by attending political rallies. However, they claimed that in Borough A, that the main problem was tenured inspectors extracting rent from the use of public space and displacing them.

Tenured Inspectors

Tenured inspectors will also prefer governments that are aligned with the city-wide government. Tenured inspectors within Borough A oversee street vending within their territory. An inspector, who has been working for the borough for 17 years, shared that inspectors are assigned specific neighborhoods within the borough to monitor street vending (July 18, 2023). For this reason, he knows all street vendors within his jurisdiction, so whenever a new vendor sets up, it is easy for him to spot them⁶⁴. Leaders and mayors explained that the permanent nature of the inspectors gives them profound knowledge of the legal and spatial order⁶⁵ as well as experience to deal with street vending associations to obtain their compliance with regulations (Leaders, July 29, 2023; Politicians, August 16, 2023; September 5, 2023).

As an example, a leader of a street vending association in Borough A (August 11, 2023) explained how different sets of street vendors work within the same space in a given day. In the morning, street vendors belonging to his association set up. Around 1 pm, street vendors associated to the tenured inspector arrive, and at 7 pm a new batch of street vendors belonging to the street vending arrive to make use of that public space. A tenured inspector of the same borough explained that there is a long-lasting relationship with leaders of street vending associations, having a relatively stable relationship and agreement with inspectors over who controls which spaces. The inspectors’ tenured position reveals the close relationship between inspectors and street vending leaders. He argued that they know each other well, since they have worked within the same territory for many

⁶⁴ Although tenured inspectors have acquired great expertise by daily monitoring the neighborhoods, it is also a common practice across boroughs to carry out street vendor censuses at the beginning of each political mandate in order to facilitate inspectors the tracking of the vendors (Politician, August 16, 2023; Inspectors, July 18, 2023, July 20, 2023).

⁶⁵ He argued that inspectors know perfectly well who is where during the four work shifts (morning, evening, night, and weekends).

years, meeting with each other at least 3 times per week to discuss the allocation of vendors. This incentivizes both inspectors and leaders to maintain a working relationship, trying to respect each other's turfs, despite it always not being the case. The inspector added that even when street vending associations are displaced, inspectors try to help them find another working space within the borough. However, both leaders and inspectors also argue that certain inspectors try to maximize personal monetary kickbacks and use their experience to extract money from street vendors. As a leader described:

“[...] inspectors are present in all the boroughs. They come every day, charging their fees. They are worse than the *narco*⁶⁶. Even if you belong to a strong street vending association, the inspectors are a big problem. [...] Since they represent the authority, we can only use the existing legal mechanisms to protect our spaces. They wanted to evict my vendors from a working area, but I filed a lawsuit since they did not act according to the law. I laugh at them because I only reached middle school and I'm winning the lawsuit, despite them having undergraduate degrees.” (July 12, 2023, my translation).

He added that while some inspectors respect the existing agreements, others are abusive, having to recur to legal mechanisms to protect themselves from inspectors. However, he argued other leaders do not have the legal knowledge or the resources to protect their spaces against the inspectors, so they resort to physical violence (July 12, 2023).

Politicians

Politicians rely more on street vending associations than on tenured inspectors as a source of rent extraction despite inspectors being state employees. A tenured inspector argued that whenever there are new street vendors, inspectors are mandated to direct vendors to go to the borough so the officials can assign them to a street vending association. In that manner, the association can manage their location and collect the weekly fees and hand them directly to the elected officials. Oftentimes, leaders of street vending associations in Borough A do not even have to pay inspectors (Interview with inspector, July 18, 2023). Instead, they go directly to the borough and pay their fees there. These fees are not even to acquire the official permits issued by the city, but rather constitute monetary kickbacks for the borough. As mentioned in chapter 1, official permits are regulated at the city-wide level. Therefore, issuing these permits diverts money outside of the borough. The mayor of Borough A argued that since the year 2000, the borough has been aligned with the city-wide government and it has not issued any official permit (Politician, July 10, 2023). This example shows how politicians favor rent extraction within this borough, relying on street vending associations instead of tenured inspectors.

Moreover, tenured inspectors from Borough A argued that they can be dislodged from their position if they do not follow the political incumbent's direction. Despite their political relevance, inspectors do not have a close, quotidian relationship with politicians. As pawns of the borough, they must work according to what the mayor – and consequently the director of government and the director of *via pública*⁶⁷ – mandate (Inspector, July 18, 2023). Thus, inspectors must adjust to different ways of working according to the policy inclinations of the incumbent.

⁶⁶ Even though it seems that street vending associations are dissociated from the *narvos*, there are leaders that negotiate with *narvo*, sometimes due to extortion from organized crime, but other times due to convenience or greed.

⁶⁷ At the local level, the 16 mayors are elected for each borough across the city, and they may or may not belong to the same political party. Street vending regulation falls within the department of government and legal affairs of the borough.

As an example, a tenured inspector recalled evicting a street vendor that did not have the authorization either from the street vending association or from the borough. As soon as he notified the vendor, he got ambushed by some cars and was threatened by a criminal group. He noticed that the vendor had been absorbed by the organized crime, so he proceeded to call his direct boss. However, once his boss talked to the mayor, he told him to let the vendor use that space, since the mayor had already negotiated with the criminal group. This example shows the hierarchies within the borough's bureaucratic structure and the limited capacity of tenured inspectors to evict street vendors if they do not have the support of local incumbents.

As such, even if tenured inspectors manage to carry out discretionary transactions to extract rents from vendors, their permanent role within the bureaucratic structure and their direct contact with city dwellers is limited to obtaining personal monetary kickbacks at the street level⁶⁸ that they must share upwards in the bureaucratic structure (Leaders, July 21, 2023; Inspector, September 5, 2023). Thus, politicians will not remove tenured inspectors from that position as long as inspectors share a portion of the rent-extraction (Leaders, July 21, 2023).

Control of Public Space

In electoral terms, the mayor in Borough A does not have enough incentives to monitor and avoid extortion of their inspectors since the mayor has allied with street vending associations that vote for the political party in power at the city-wide level (Leader, August 11, 2023). Consequently, the mayor has greater capacity to control the use of public space, limit the number of street vendors, or extract more resources from the use of public space by threatening street vending associations. A leader explained how the director of government unexpectedly asked him to remove his vendors from certain spaces so they could offer the spaces to a group of organized crime. Since the leader resisted, the director added that the borough would offer money in exchange for the removal of vendors only for the weekend (Leader, August 11, 2023). The previous example depicts the borough's capacity to control public space. However, the example also shows how the mayor is not willing to control public space and maintain it free from vendors, allowing street vending associations, inspectors, or groups of organized crime to extract resources from the use of public space.

Most importantly, mayors of borough governments politically aligned with the city-wide government are aware of their state capacity, having the possibility to enforce stricter regulations whenever they need to evict vendors (Inspector, July 18, 2023). The need to evict vendors is usually to allow a new commercial development, whenever the number of vendors exceeds to comfort of neighbors, or when they need to relocate vendors in exchange for other political favors (Politician, June 20, 2023). Having the support of the city-wide government, inspectors argued that their job became easier whenever they needed to enforce regulations because the city-wide government would even provide elements of the military (*Guardia Nacional*) to control public space when they need it, evicting street vendors regardless of their affiliation to any association (Politician, June 22, 2023; Inspector, July 18, 2023).

The director holds a close relationship with the mayor, but also maintains close ties with the street-level bureaucrats, the street vending associations, and the neighbors within the borough. Working under the department of government and legal affairs is the director of markets and *via pública* (public way) which functions as the administrative operator for coordinating and managing street vending inspectors.

⁶⁸ Inspectors collect weekly fees and other extraordinary fees, extorting vendors to maintain their spaces of work. The fees have been so exorbitant, that Congress members have filed complaints against the boroughs of their party of opposition.

Borough B: Local Political Opposition with City-wide Government and Change of State Employees

Borough B is also a middle-income borough, central in Mexico City, but outside of the downtown area. It has approximately 6,000 street vendors (Acuerdo 11/98, 1998) and approximately 40 inspectors (Information Request, 2024) working for the *vía pública* office within their bureaucratic structure. Although it has had incumbents belonging to the same left-wing party since 2003, by 2021 it shifted to the right-wing party PAN (Party of National Action). Borough B represents a case where there is no political alignment with the city-wide government and the incumbent changed the bureaucratic structure of the borough. Within this borough, tenured inspectors are moved to another section of the bureaucratic apparatus and loyal workers are placed as street vending inspectors.

Despite having the majority of public employees as tenured, unionized workers (see Table 2 above for details), interviews reveal that politicians in boroughs such as Borough B cannot fire most of their workers, but instead develop strategies to place their loyal employees wherever they please within the bureaucratic structure replacing tenured workers from their positions as street vending inspectors. As shown in Borough B, mayors of the opposition reengineer the bureaucratic structure, keeping their trusted employees as street vending inspectors for two main reasons. First, because they will be able to distribute the use of public space in exchange for votes, amass vendors to attend in political rallies, and receive monetary kickbacks. Second, because they want to have a close control of what happens on their territories, having greater capacity to enforce policies and having fewer issues of monitoring the employees they control.

Street Vending Associations

As mentioned above, street vending associations politically support the party that is governing city-wide, mobilizing street vendors at the city scale (Leaders, July 21, 2023). Therefore, the mayor's strategy in Borough B, belonging to the party of opposition, is to maximize the number of street vendors under the control of loyal inspectors to guarantee greater political support (Politician, August 16, 2023). Since public space is limited, I find that loyal street vending inspectors seek to displace vendors represented by street vending associations. In this manner, the borough, through loyal inspectors, curtail the number of political supporters, votes, or monetary kickbacks that the political party in power receives in exchange for those spaces by negotiating with street vending associations.

Moreover, since loyal inspectors operate as political intermediaries between street vendors and borough politicians, they come into direct competition with leaders of street vending associations. This competition spurs spatial disruption and street violence, creating antagonisms among street vendors and an excess of street vendors in public space (Leaders, June 5, 2021; July 14, 2021; February 24, 2023; July 29, 2023; August 11, 2023). This often leads to urban disorder, overflowing sidewalks, parks, and public squares which become impossible to use. A veteran street vendor complained:

“The only problem I have in controlling my workspace is brought by the (borough) government. The inspectors arrive and allow their own vendors to set up anywhere they want. Their vendors come here, get stoned, acting aggressively, and expanding without demure. As long as these vendors pay the borough, vote for them, and attend their political rallies, the inspectors will allow them to expand⁶⁹ beyond the assigned working area. I already talked to the inspectors pleading them not to bring more vendors. But I acknowledge that this is our problem as leaders. They were no one and we have allowed them to have power over us.” (Leader, July 14, 2021, my translation).

⁶⁹ In Spanish, they call it “*el desdoblamiento del comercio en vía pública*”, which directly translates to “the unfolding of street vending”.

Loyal Inspectors

In this case, politicians rely more heavily on loyal inspectors, seeking to maximize their votes through the territory that they govern. Politicians do not have to worry about monitoring the political support of inspectors because the patronage contracts are self-sustaining (Oliveros, 2021). However, through this reorganization, mayors of the political opposition must tread with care when rearranging the bureaucratic apparatus since street vending inspectors are unionized and can file lawsuits against them (Inspector, September 5, 2023; Politician, August 16, 2023). Instead, they resort to put aside street vending inspectors, placing them on leave while giving them a salary and replacing them with their own loyal employees as street vending inspectors (Inspector, September 5, 2023; Politician, August 16, 2023). As a mayor explained:

“I would love to get rid of all the vendors. [...] But in this city, all incentives are structured in a way that encourages more street vending. At times, I have attempted to remove street vendors from specific areas, but it appears that these vendors are part of *our own vendor group*, so I cannot get rid of them. Why would I shoot myself in the foot, getting rid of vendors belonging to *my own group* who politically support me and then leave the vendors belonging to mafia associations supporting MORENA? It would be an unfair competition.” (August 16, 2023, my translation, emphasis added).

The mayor further explained the meaning of having “their own group of vendors”. Once in power, the mayor paid tenured inspectors, requested that they refrain from working, and placed their own loyal street vending inspectors, that regulate street vendors themselves. At the beginning of the term, loyal inspectors carry out a street vending census and ask them for their vending permits. The minority of vendors have an official permit issued by the city, while most of them belong to a street vending association. Then, using their authority, the loyal inspectors request – and at times persuade – vendors to make payments directly to the borough, rather than to a street vending association. In this way, street vendors paying directly to the borough have less conflicts with the inspectors but are at risk of losing their space whenever these inspectors are gone (Leader, August 11, 2023).

Politicians

As such, politicians encourage loyal inspectors to expand and compete over space with the street vending associations in order to gain votes. However, this complicates the presence of street vending associations within the borough. As an interview with the mayor revealed (June 14, 2023), working with street vending leaders that have political commitments with the political party at the city-wide level becomes really hard. The mayor argued that vending associations often close streets and make it hard for the borough to work. Associations are almost every day outside the borough, and they constantly appeal to their human right to work in public space.

The mayor of Borough B (August 16, 2023) claimed that trying to fix street vending was fruitless since their political party is unaligned with the city-wide government. The mayor argued that it is impossible to have a dialogue with central government when the borough is of the opposition. As such, Borough B has not provided a single official permit, because that would formalize vendors and create a stream of money going into the city-wide money. Also, issuing permits would represent a major loss of money and votes that the mayor is not willing to give up. The mayor added that negotiating with street vending associations is also an option, but that there is only a handful of leaders with whom they can negotiate. Instead, the mayor found that having their own loyal workers was the best strategy to regulate street vending and get re-elected. Therefore, the control of public space

depends on the willingness of street vending associations and borough government to contain public space, but they do not have any incentives to do so.

Control of Public Space

In sum, loyal inspectors in boroughs of the opposition compete more intensely over public space, creating lasting consequences for street vending associations that used to have greater control over public space. These dynamics have brought profound changes in how the use of public space has been assigned, particularly in boroughs that are of the political opposition (Leader, July 29, 2023).

Moreover, the mayor of Borough B displayed less control over public space because they do not have law enforcement support from the central government, and they have motivations to encroach more to maximize the number of votes. In order to enforce street vending laws, boroughs need police power to evict street vendors that are unregulated. This borough wanted to carry out the eviction of vendors that overcrowded a hospital and the mayor of the borough government needed the authorization of the central government due to the centralization of the police. However, since the borough government did not have an active and positive working relationship with central government, it became impossible to carry out eviction operations and the street vendors remained (Politician, August 16, 2023).

Borough C: Local Political Opposition with City-wide Government and No Change of State Employees

Lastly, Borough C is also a middle-income borough, central in Mexico City, but outside of the downtown area. It has approximately 6,000 street vendors (Acuerdo 11/98, 1998) and a slightly smaller than average-size *via pública* office within their bureaucratic structure (Information Request, 2024). It has had incumbents belonging to the PRD (Democratic Revolutionary Party) since 2000, until it changed to the right-wing PAN in 2021, having a similar structure to Borough B. As such, Borough C exemplifies the case when local politicians are unaligned with the city-wide government, but do not change their bureaucratic structure.

For this case, interviews suggest that mayors are not always able or willing to follow through in replacing the tenured inspectors with their own loyal inspectors. The relationship between tenured inspectors and leaders of street vending associations is similar than in Borough A. Tenured inspectors, as pawns of the bureaucracy, have to follow the political line of the borough. However, in Borough C, tenured inspectors are more closely monitored than in Borough A. Once the unaligned party is in power, mayors they have to deal with tenured inspectors having close relationships with street vending associations. Furthermore, in Borough C, politicians do not have the support of the city-wide government to remove street vendors. In consequence, the mayor has less political leverage over tenured inspectors and has to either monitor inspectors more closely or rely more heavily on street vending associations to control public space.

In an interview with the director of government and legal affairs, they mentioned that the inspectors' tenure and experience opened spaces for scheming and corruption (High-level bureaucrat, September 5, 2023). To illustrate the relationship between tenured inspectors and leaders of street vending associations, he explained that recently, a leader of a street vending association had come into their office complaining about losing vending spaces. The director then heard an inspector tell the leader of the association: "Calm down, politicians are only here temporarily. They are here at most 6 years with the reelection. We will be here forever. Just remember that and calm down, you'll get your spot back." (High-level bureaucrat, September 5, 2023, my translation). Clearly, street vending associations cannot wait for a politician to step down, so they will most likely relocate their vendors elsewhere within the borough, sometimes even with the help of inspectors.

The mayor from Borough C was clear in defining the state of affairs: “I want to be really objective. The goal of any political party is to have power to implement any political program. For that, you need votes, and it is always a tempting offer when you are presented with vote blocs. That’s when the permissiveness from different authorities begins. This becomes really difficult when the central (city) government wants to maintain their power and we are a party of opposition, because everyone wants vendors to vote for their own political party” (my translation, September 7, 2023). The mayor then added saying that “...in the case of street vendors, [the authorities’] permissiveness is also involved with tenured inspectors extracting the greatest amount of money possible from vendors’ use of public space” (my translation, September 7, 2023). The mayor further explained that some of the money is distributed among higher ranks in the borough, but sometimes tenured inspectors manage to extract rents without notifying the borough and that without loyal workers in the base, it becomes really time consuming to know what is happening on the streets. This creates a tension between keeping seasoned inspectors, who may be good at generating revenues, and loyal inspectors, who may be good at extracting political favors. Thus, in Borough C, politicians use tenured inspectors and street vending associations strategically to control street vending on a case-by-case basis.

Using Tenured Inspectors

Through direct observation and interviews in two locations where street vendors heavily congregate, I found that within this borough, street vendors belonging to a street vending association identified with the political party in power (MORENA). In this case, politicians tried to evict these vendors and instead of relying on another street vending association, they placed vendors directly regulated by tenured inspectors to displace these vendors (Interview with central government official, June 14, 2023). When the street vending association complained, the city’s government interceded to protect street vendors. This created tensions between the mayor and the city government since the borough did not want to communicate with the city’s government (High-level bureaucrat, September 5, 2023). According to a central government official, the borough’s government argued that instead of helping them regulate street vending, the central government was only interested in protecting these vendors since they belonged to MORENA (June 14, 2023).

Using Street Vending Associations

In another area within Borough C, I found that whenever the control for public space became unruly, politicians relied more heavily on street vending associations. A clear illustration of this phenomenon can be observed in a particular location where street vendors were initially overseen by tenured street vending inspectors. However, the increase of foot traffic due to a newly constructed mall brought an increasing number of street vendors to the area. Subsequently, the local neighborhood association⁷⁰ raised concerns with the borough government about vendors encroaching on the sidewalk. As a response, rather than seeking police assistance from the city-wide government to remove street vendors, the mayor of Borough C engaged in negotiations with a prominent street vending association. This resulted in the association assuming control over the management of vendors in that area. Consequently, this negotiation enabled the associations to earn a share of the rents collected from street vending. In this manner, the mayor was relieved of the obligation to regulate that space in response to complaints from residents, attributing the uncontrolled use of public space to the

⁷⁰ The mayor also explained that people often think that most complaints about street vendors stem from middle and high-income neighborhoods. Instead, the mayor emphasized how there is an increasing number of complaints coming from “*el barrio*”, asking for the government to evict vendors despite their right to work in public space (September 7, 2023).

perceived “mafia” influence of street vending associations. Furthermore, this arrangement allowed the borough to continue receiving rents from street vendors.

Concluding Remarks

The main argument of this chapter is that political party alignment between city and intra-city local governments in cities have an impact on the bureaucratic structures of government and on the governance of the city, the boroughs, and public spaces. The incoherence between street vending policies at different scales of government is one of the main reasons why there is intractability of street vending regulations (Roever, 2005) and the control over public space. However, having coherent street vending policies between levels of government becomes unattainable when local and central governments are represented by different political parties.

To further explore this intractability, this chapter finds that there are actors within the state which are key to understanding the relationship between the state and street vendors. Even though these relationships have often been characterized as clientelist, literature examining political intermediation ignores the role that these street-level inspectors play as brokers between street vendors and politicians. Despite being tenured public servants who cannot be fired, politicians leverage their power by reshuffling appointments within the bureaucracy whenever they need to. Thus, this research also has broader implications for the literature on multilevel governance (Hooghe & Marks, 2021) by depicting how a decentralized urban system provides greater autonomy to local governments, but reveals the complexities of governing given the variegated political interests across local governments constituting the city and the difficulties that arise when these political interests are not aligned with the central, city government.

Moreover, to understand how clientelism persists and how it has changed across time (Fox, 1994; Gay, 2006; Hilgers, 2008; Szwarcberg, 2015), we need to consider different actors within the bureaucracy, such as street vending inspectors. Taking into consideration the complex set of relationships they establish provides a window of study for scholars on clientelism. Scholarship in political science and urban planning has argued that there are new actors within state bureaucracies which are impacting policymaking. These scholars denominate these employees as activist bureaucrats (Rich et al., 2019) or as insurgent bureaucrats (Nicholls & Bibler Coutin, n.d.), since they have greater ideological alignment with civil society groups (Alonso Ferreira, 2023) and carry out civic advocacy from within the state.⁷¹ In contrast, I find the role of bureaucrats within the political arena that are in direct opposition to civil society groups, antagonizing with social movements and using their political influence to collect monetary kickbacks from street vendors.

Through this research, I find that across Mexico City, street vending inspectors working for borough governments are in direct competition for space with leaders of street vending associations. While this competition is prevalent within all boroughs, the partisan alignment between the borough government and the city government impacts the levels of prevalence of inspectors acting as street vending brokers. I find that while politically aligned boroughs keep their bureaucratic structures practically intact and delegate more power to civil associations, mayors of the opposition reorganize the bureaucratic structure, placing their own inspectors through patronage to act as street vending brokers. Since most street vending associations politically align themselves with whoever is in power at the city level, the competition for public space and street vendors using that space in exchange for votes becomes fierce within boroughs of opposition.

Since the use of public space is seldom studied within clientelism scholarship, future research could focus on how public space is exchanged through the examination of public space as a market which is monetized. Who determines these prices, who are the actors involved to determine these

⁷¹ Call for more precise definition distinguishing between politicians, administrators, and operators within the bureaucracy.

prices, who contest these prices, how many times are these spaces being sold? How often are these spaces being sold? How many people occupy one same space? How do these prices vary geographically across the city? These questions might help us have a deeper understanding of the role that politicians play in using public space as a good that they can distribute, who is part of these brokerage dynamics, and how cities that are increasingly growing and competing over space will control the politics behind public space.

Chapter 4. Governing the Governable: The Implementation of San Francisco's Street Vending Policy

Introduction

Around the 24th and Mission Street Bay Area Railway Transit (BART) plaza in San Francisco, men are binge-drinking all day long. Talking and playing music loudly, harassing passers-by, and obstructing the bus-stops, they signal that they own this public space. On the west side of the street, people move in and out of the plaza. Groups of people hover around a person pointing at products placed on the ground, eagerly trying to buy products that are most likely stolen and sold at significantly lower prices than their market value. Among the multitude of people, there are also conspicuous exchanges of drugs and bodies strewn along the edges of the plaza, their presence a testament to the struggles of mental health, substance abuse, and homelessness widespread across the city.

Across the street, there is a fruit street vendor who I have interviewed on multiple occasions to understand the implementation of a 2022 street vending ordinance adopted by the city to control stolen goods and drugs sold in the plaza. He is a 76-year-old man who immigrated from Mexico in 1985 to work as a farm worker in Northern California. He quickly transitioned to work as a day laborer and until recently, he started working as a street vendor in the Mission District, since he was no longer employed anywhere else due to his age. In earlier interviews, he continuously expressed his satisfaction with being able to sell products on the street, keeping himself busy and providing him with a steady income.

Unlike past interactions, one evening he expressed his disdain towards the disorderliness prevailing in the Mission District and how some vendors were unwilling to comply with the new street vending regulation. Inquiring about his discontent, I asked what had gone wrong with the regulation. He quickly stated that the city was the one to blame for the failure of vendors to comply with the regulation, since local officials were strictly enforcing the law on long-time neighborhood vendors, while barely enforcing the law on people selling stolen products and drugs. He argued that if city officials would enforce the law more strictly, that he would be the first to comply. Almost two years after the ordinance was adopted, he is nowhere to be seen, while the vendors hovering around the plaza are still present. Vendors at the plaza wait for the minute that the police leave the area to go back to selling drugs and stolen products. However, as it has been widely documented, implementing a law is not a simple task due to diverse actors' interests, legal complexities, enforcement challenges, social and economic dynamics, and political negligence (Roever & Skinner, 2016; WIEGO, 2020), particularly in a highly unequal city where homelessness, drugs, and mental health prevail.

Regulating street vending can be challenging due to a misalignment between the legal order and the day-to-day realities of the street. Additionally, the spatial management of space often overlooks the political and social pressures that impact street vending. The appearance of vendors in public space shows a common cyclical pattern (Roever, 2005). Vendors decide to occupy a space to make a living, slowly increasing the density of vendors in a specific area to the point that it generates negative externalities to mobility, safety, and pollution. This pressures governments to implement measures to formalize, evict, relocate vendors, or increase the enforcement of existing regulations, reducing the number of vendors until sometime later, vendors appear either in the same space or a different space in the city, recreating the initial process. It is this process this chapter seeks to investigate: who legitimizes street vending and how are street vendors legitimized? While much of the street vending literature has focused on how legal structures and state capacity impact governance at a given moment of time, fewer studies have explored how local officials enforce policies selectively across different types of vendors, how these vendors have different compliance patterns, and how these mechanisms change across time and space.

To understand these processes, I trace the implementation of San Francisco's street vending ordinance – drafted in March of 2022 and adopted in July of 2022. The main objective of this ordinance is to amend the Public Works Code to regulate vending through the requirement of permits. San Francisco is a useful case study for three main reasons. First, compared to larger cities, it has a small number of vendors concentrated in few areas of the city. Second, it is a progressive city which has historically accepted marginalized communities. Lastly, the city of San Francisco counts with a strong state capacity to implement policies.

In this chapter, I shed light on the mechanisms through which street vendors are legitimized or excluded from the internal logics of the state. I focus on two elements: the heterogeneity of street vendors and the temporality of law implementation. My main argument is that the co-presence of distinct types of street vendors impacts city enforcement, vendor compliance, and the legal structure. I articulate how this process of differentiation happens spatially, legally, and socially through both the activities of the vendors, the way they are perceived by the surrounding community and the way they are regulated by the state. I draw on fieldwork conducted among street vendors, members of community organizations, and local officials (i.e., district supervisors, public works officials, and police officers) in San Francisco from May 2022 to January 2024. This fieldwork allows me to conduct an in-depth spatiotemporal examination of a street vending ordinance implementation to follow the constellation of actors involved in its governance, examining how the law shapes the urban order once it hits the ground and how the law and the actors change over time. I focus on the Mission District in San Francisco, which has been the neighborhood where the ordinance has been more strictly enforced than in other parts of the city.

I contribute to the literature on street vending regulations in multiple ways. First, I add to literature on street vending regulation and street-level bureaucracy by articulating how even within a context of strong capacity where enforcement is not limited, the differences between street vendors affects how cities enforce laws, how vendors comply with laws, and consequently, how legal orders change. Moreover, by building on sociolegal scholarship, I find that laws are both objective and subjective, with enforcers using each aspect of the law at their discretion according to street vendor type. Within the same literature, by including a temporal dimension in the study of governance processes, I add that there is a paradoxical effect during policy implementation processes finding that although laws are intended to bring order to the city, they might instead galvanize confusion and conflict.

The chapter unfolds as follows. In the first section, I discuss previous scholarship on street vending regulations and propose integrating the diversity of vendors to examine how various street vendors engage with legal mechanisms, enforcement practices, and compliance with laws through a temporal dimension. In the second section, I outline my research design along with an overview of the policy context within which the street vending regulatory framework evolved in San Francisco. In the third section, I present findings from the qualitative research, exploring the questions articulated above. Next, I briefly discuss the findings and finally, I conclude the chapter with reflections on potential avenues for future research and concluding remarks.

Literature and Theory: Street Vending's Implementation Cycle

The literature on the regulation of street vendors has chiefly focused on the structure of legal instruments and the state's capacity to enforce street vending laws. However, much of this literature ignores the heterogeneity of vendors, how that affects regulations, and how their differentiation sheds light on issues of legitimacy and compliance. This oversight hinders a comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding street vending regulation, including the varying needs and behaviors of different vendor types and their implications for policy implementation. Moreover, the literature

on street vending regulation (and legal studies more generally), has overlooked the temporal dimension when studying governance processes, which I show is crucial to understand how street vendors are legitimized or excluded from the internal logics of the state.

Legal Instruments Including and Excluding Street Vendors

A central question explored in the literature on street vending regulation is *who* legitimizes street vending and *how* is it legitimized. Previous scholarship argues that vending is poorly regulated due to the structure and framing of laws (Devlin, 2011; Kettles, 2006, 2014; Loukaitou-Sideris & Ehrenfeucht, 2009; Tucker & Devlin, 2019). Although crackdowns and criminalization of vending have been a common practice (Alejo & Schoenecker, 2020; Dunn, 2017; Roever & Skinner, 2016; Rosales, 2020; Vallianatos, 2014), cities have increasingly adopted deliberately progressive reforms of street vending (Roever & Skinner, 2016).⁷²

In particular, Koch (2015) analyzes how licenses have been used as a governmental tool to manage street food vending in New York City, Portland, and Seattle. His analysis reveals how licenses serve as a means of legitimizing street vending activities, including certain individuals while excluding others due to the bureaucratic hurdles involved in obtaining these licenses. By concentrating on the role of licenses, Koch illuminates how cities are organized and how governments manage social relationships through legal mechanisms. These legal artifacts vary greatly from one public agency to another and from one city to another, underlining the importance of focusing on the historical and social specificities.

Following Carol Rose's categorization of property laws, Kettles (2014), defines street vending ordinances as crystal or mud.⁷³ Crystal laws are applied in a seemingly objective way, clearly defining how the law should be enforced. As an example of crystal laws, cities like Seattle, Chicago, and Los Angeles, have set high sanitation standards making it virtually impossible for food street vendors⁷⁴ to comply with regulations to the point of almost eradicating vending in Seattle (Koch, 2015), dismissing vendors' ideas to monitor and exclude vendors in Chicago (Alejo & Schoenecker, 2020; Martin, 2014), and confiscating their carts and equipment in Los Angeles (Vallianatos, 2014). Mud laws, on the other hand, are applied subjectively because they leave more space for interpretation. Mud ordinances bring regulatory ambiguity, allowing authorities to discretionally exercise their power and displace street vendors that are not complying with the law, enforcing laws selectively (Devlin, 2010). Some cities, like New York, have implemented regulations through a capped number of licenses (Devlin, 2010; Koch, 2015; Loukaitou-Sideris & Ehrenfeucht, 2009), where the city legitimizes vending, but surveils vendors and the organization of public space (Valverde, 2003). Through the control of licenses, the city's practice of legitimizing street vending activities is based on its own convenience or discretion. This means that while the city may recognize and permit street vending under certain circumstances, it may also choose to enforce regulations selectively or interpret them according to its own preferences

⁷² Having a regulatory framework does not impede confiscation, harassment, or displacement of vendors (as happens in India, Colombia, and Mexico) (Meneses-Reyes & Caballero-Juárez, 2014). Ghana, Peru, South Africa, and Thailand also have national legislation establishing frameworks to regulate street vending. However, these regulations are often unreasonable, criminalizing vendors for their non-compliance (Bamhu, 2019). In fact, stricter regulations in New York City with the Rudolph Giuliani administration in the 1990s aimed to eradicate street vending by creating a Street Vendor Review Panel working together with private organizations to eliminate food vendors (Devlin, 2010).

⁷³ According to Kettles (2014), laws can also be spatial or nonspatial in structure, depending on the subject of the law. In the case of street vending in New York City, administrative rules are commonly spatial, determining *where* vendors are selling (e.g., their distance to a brick-and-mortar business), while public health rules are often nonspatial, referring to *how* street vending are carrying out their sales (e.g., condition of food). In the case of San Francisco, health rules can be very spatial, specifying for instance, how many feet away a stall should be from a bathroom.

⁷⁴ Since the enforcement of street vending typically intersects multiple agencies, including strict health regulations, scholarly attention has largely focused on street food vending.

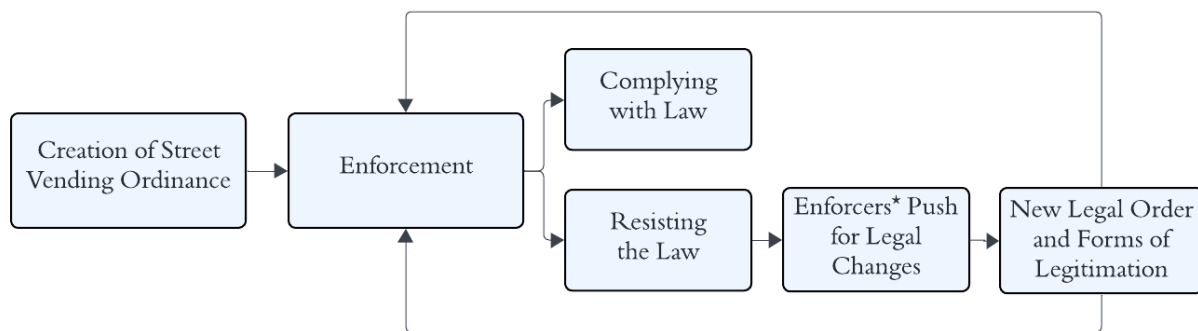
or priorities at different times. The control of licenses in New York has created a black market of licenses where vendors have the right to work in public space, albeit with restrictions on certain streets (Dunn, 2017). However, the costs of the permits have skyrocketed, posing a considerable obstacle for vendors in their pursuit of legitimate permits. The black market has led to a situation where many vendors are forced to operate illegally (Devlin, 2010), ultimately resulting in the city’s failure to capitalize on potential revenue-generating opportunities in the economy (Koch, 2015).

In the presence of mud laws, authorities maintain ambiguous spaces between law and everyday practices of enforcement, allowing for a “temporary suspension of the law” whenever is needed (Agamben, 1998) as a commonplace “exception-granting mechanism” applied by planners (Valverde, 2011). These ambiguities have pushed street vendors to work under incessant political and legal uncertainties, being forced to readapt to rapidly changing modes of governance, reinterpreting and renegotiating their strategies to continue working in public spaces (Bromley, 1998; Forkuor et al., 2017; Meneses-Reyes, 2013b).

Looking at the number of citations from crystal and mud laws, Kettles (2014) finds that in the case of New York City, crystal laws are usually widespread and repeatedly violated, suggesting that the law should be made less burdensome instead of attempting to make it more precise. Ehrenfeucht (2016) also argues that reducing regulatory restrictions would improve the functioning of street vending given its adaptable and self-regulatory nature.

In this chapter, I argue that while certain parts of an ordinance may be crystal other sections may be vague or muddy. As the implementation process follows (as shown in Figure 13), enforcers will pressure higher state officials to add legal specificities to the law to make it easier for them to enforce it. Through the iterative implementation cycle, the initial law will have more regulatory restrictions. This does not mean that it will become crystal, but it will create a more ambiguous and complicated legal framework which creates a wider window for enforcers to apply the law as they see fit in the short run.

Figure 13. Street Vending’s Implementation Cycle



* Note: Although enforcers push for legal changes up the bureaucratic structure derived from their everyday experience on the street, I also recognize that street vendors and non-profit organizations can push for legal changes. In this figure I assume that would be happening in the “resistance” stage.

Expanding the Sociolegal Perspective

Recent sociolegal scholarship analyzes the complex entanglements of space, time and law, providing a deeper understanding of the temporality of legal spaces (Braverman et al., 2014). Temporality of space is little understood despite its critical importance to understand power relations and the governance of space in cities. Thus, in this chapter I argue that implementing ordinances often leads to a paradoxical effect. While these regulations aim to establish order and clarity, they often result in

increased complexity, confusion, and even conflict or violence once enacted. As the implementation cycle progresses, actors will have to adapt to the enforcement and compliance of the law.

Franz and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann (2014) study the intricate dynamics of legal systems within spatial contexts, highlighting their temporal and multifaceted nature. They argue that places are not fixed but evolve over time. Places “come and go”, influenced by legal frameworks that define their existence and regulations. By using the concept of legal pluralism, they emphasize the coexistence of diverse legal systems within the same space, each with its legitimacy, power dynamics, and impact on governance, opening up “diverse arenas for the exercise of political authority and for the localization of rights and obligations” (2014, p. 30). The authors shed light on the challenges of navigating multiple legal regimes and uncertainties in space. Through multiple examples, they look closely at the manifestations of temporality and explore how legal regulations can lead to the movement, transition, or disappearance of spaces, affecting individuals’ rights and perceptions of their surroundings.

Valverde (2014) adds to the discussion by explaining how legal scholars often prioritize space over time theoretically, reducing temporality to empirical history. She argues that in legal geography, concepts like jurisdiction and sovereignty are examined through a spatial rather than a temporal lens. Thus, Valverde presents a case for analyzing temporal and spatial dimensions of governance simultaneously, by introducing the concept of chronotypes from Mikhail Bakhtin to explain the interaction between time and space in shaping each other. By using courtrooms and single-family homes as examples of chronotypes, Valverde highlights the interconnectedness of time and space in legal processes and challenges the conventional separation of spatial and temporal considerations in sociolegal scholarship. Building off scholarship exploring sociotemporal geographies, I contend that the differential enforcement of the street vending regulations based on the type of vendor is subject to changes in political incentives, enforcement officers, or time of the day. For example, politicians aiming to get re-elected get credit for “cleaning-up” streets or neighborhoods, showing their ability to improve street conditions. Thus, considering the temporal dimension during the implementation process of an ordinance becomes crucial to understand how legal instruments are being enforced selectively and how different types of street vendors react to these changes accordingly.

State Capacity to Enforce Street Vending Regulations

The other argument that is commonly used to explain street vending governance is the lack of state capacity that governments have to enforce existing laws. State capacity to enforce street vending regulations refers to the government’s ability to effectively implement and uphold laws pertaining to street vending activities. This capacity is influenced by factors such as the availability of resources, including personnel and technology, the clarity and robustness of regulatory laws, the level of coordination among relevant government agencies, and the mechanisms in place for addressing violations and enforcing penalties. A strong state capacity in this context signifies efficient regulatory oversight, ensuring fair and consistent application of the law, and a conducive environment for balancing public interests (e.g., public safety and pedestrians’ mobility), vendors’ rights, and overall management of urban spaces.

Lipsky’s work on city politics and “street-level bureaucracy” (1980) states that a critical dimension of local officials enforcing the law is the application of discretion. He argues that local officials’ decisions and enforcement mechanisms effectively become the policy that they carry out. As a consequence, Lipsky argues that officials will selectively choose who to govern, reproducing social behavioral patterns. Due to the personalistic nature of their work and the lack of information, resources, and time, officials develop coping behaviors in which they resort to improvisation when enforcing the law to satisfy public expectations. Thus, analyzing the position of local officials is vital to understand implementation since they are the direct connection between the state and vendors, applying and interpreting the law as they exercise their authority. In this chapter, I argue that in a

context of strong state capacity and where state capacity is kept as a constant, there will still be differences in how discretion is used during enforcement.

Most studies of street vending in cities of the global south focus on the political (or “clientelistic”) exchange between vendors and the state (Auyero, 2000; Holland, 2017; Hummel, 2022). But most vendors across cities of the global north are undocumented, making a notable difference in the analyses of these street workers. In democratic cities of the global south, vendors organize as a non-cohesive, but large voting block and engage in patronage politics (Crossa, 2016; Devlin, 2010). In contrast, vendors in the global north are largely composed of immigrants that are constantly exposed to harassment, criminal prosecution, and even deportation (Bennett et al., 2021; Hidalgo, 2020; Loukaitou-Sideris & Ehrenfeucht, 2009; Rosales, 2020; Vallianatos, 2014). Street vending in the global north is seen as an activity coming from outside the internal logics of the state, dismissing the importance of infrastructural power as a form of social control. In this chapter, I argue that it is precisely migrant street vendors that seek to be legitimized, in contrast to street vendors that actively skirt the law and do not want to comply with state regulations. Moreover, I argue that local officials will selectively enforce the laws according to street vendor type to be more lenient with street vendors that they believe should be legitimized, while enforcing them strictly on vendors believed to be a potential neighborhood nuisance.

Through the study of market traders in Kampala, Uganda, Goodfellow (2020) asks why some states are more effective at regulating marketplaces than others? He argues that state effectiveness does not depend on bureaucratic capacity and autonomy of the state from interest groups. Instead, borrowing the concept of infrastructural power from Michael Mann, he finds that effective implementation depends on deeper societal power relations and forms of social control. Moreover, Goodfellow states that for regulations to be effectively implemented, greater attention should be paid to compliance through the interplay of credibility and legitimacy of the state. In that sense, compliance is more likely to happen if the government has credibility of enforcement through legal mechanisms or credible commitments to implement regulations, creating greater legitimacy of the state to exercise its power. Greater credibility and legitimacy thus break away from discretionary implementation of regulations and clientelistic relationships. Thus, I argue that by adding amendments to the legal framework as shown in the iterative implementation cycle in Figure 13, the state risks being less credible in their enforcement due to an ambiguous set of regulations contingent on the political whim of the present incumbent or on any attempts to alter the legal order and forms of legitimacy.

Context and Research Design: Street Vending in the Mission District

Methods and Data Collection

My analysis traces the implementation of San Francisco’s street vending ordinance by using eclectic sources of data drawn from survey mapping, in-depth interviews, direct observations, city documents, and newspaper reports. I mainly rely on implementation as an instrument (Lascombes & Le Galès, 2014) to study the multiple interactions between actors across space and time reacting to the street vending ordinance. By closely tracing the day-to-day implementation process of the ordinance, I unravel the intricate processes and dynamics involved in translating policy intentions into actionable measures. This method involves examining the formulation of regulatory frameworks, the allocation of resources and intensity of enforcement, the engagement of various actors, and the monitoring of compliance levels among street vendors. I pay special attention to how policy intentions translate into practical realities on the ground throughout time, including the challenges, opportunities, and outcomes associated with the implementation of urban regulatory measures on street vending.

Through the process of survey mapping, I collected data on vendors’ gender, location, and products. I systematically observed vendors at different times of the day between May of 2022 and

December of 2022. I also carried out in-depth interviews with sixteen street vendors, six members of community organizations (MCO), and four local officials (LO) (i.e., district supervisors, public works officials, and police officers) from May of 2022 to February of 2024 to trace the implementation of the ordinance and explore the consequences of its enforcement at the city level. By interviewing such varied actors, I was able to triangulate their perspectives on policymaking and their reaction to the implementation process.⁷⁵ I carried out the interviews in Spanish because the vendors and members of the community organizations predominantly identified as Hispanic. The interviews with local officials were carried out in English.

Policy Background

Street vending is not as widespread and organized in San Francisco as in larger metropolitan areas. Despite facing challenges such as economic downturns or shifts in industries, San Francisco has shown financial stability due to its diversified economy, strong job market, and ability to attract investments. Moreover, it boasts cultural diversity and progressive values that create a dynamic and inclusive environment that celebrates multiculturalism and activism. These characteristics show that San Francisco's city government is strong and capable enough to enforce street vending regulations in unison with a population that supports vendors.⁷⁶ In contrast to many other cities in the United States, San Francisco has a small spatial extent which facilitated the data collection and analysis. It is common that once street vending policies are implemented, street vendors relocate to other areas of the city. However, given the small of San Francisco, I could easily track vendors and examine their movements throughout time. Since vendors concentrate mostly in the Mission District, I focus on the spatial and temporal dynamics evolving on Mission Street. By examining one street, I explore the variation in enforcement and compliance in identical political and legal regimes.

Street vending in the Mission has been present since the 1980s when Mexican and Central American immigrants settled in the neighborhood, seeking to find job opportunities amidst a city that was undergoing an economic recession with little employment opportunities (Menjívar, 2000). Stagnant real wages and the decrease of blue collar work, coupled with stringent immigration policies, compelled migrants to establish networks characterized by low social capital and lack of reciprocity given the unstable circumstances they lived in (Menjívar, 2000). Contrary to conventional wisdom, the purportedly cohesive and resilient immigrant networks ultimately proved to be disadvantageous for recently arrived immigrants to the Mission District, previous research has found that they were unable to rely on the limited resources for support from family and friends (Menjívar, 2000).

Despite the long-standing presence of San Francisco's street peddler's permit that dates back to 1975⁷⁷, street vendors at that time encountered considerable challenges in navigating the bureaucratic procedures associated with obtaining such permits from the Police and Public Works Departments (Madrigal-Yankowski, 2022). Consequently, many vendors operated without official documentation, rendering them susceptible to persistent scrutiny and harassment by city inspectors (Madrigal-Yankowski, 2022). Since then, however, the regulatory framework for street vendors has

⁷⁵ In order to get a business permit, vendors need to have an individual taxpayer identification number (ITIN) or social security number (SSN). Undocumented vendors can process an ITIN, although they have to prove that they have lived in the United States at least 6 months and the process to acquire the ITIN takes at least 3 months. As a result, most of the licenses that were denied were from applicants that did not have an ITIN or SSN.

⁷⁶ After an incident of a Public Works employee pushing over a hot dog cart in October of 2023, people across the Bay Area donated money in support for the vendor, showing empathy with the vendor's financial situation (Peña, 2023)

⁷⁷ According to a Public Record from the San Francisco Police Department, the oldest permit that is on record was issued for sales of "balloons, flags misc. novelties" in the Fisherman's Wharf area pursuant to 869 MPC in December of 1975.

changed. The designation as the Latino Cultural District in 2014⁷⁸ led to a more lenient enforcement policy towards street vendors in the Mission, particularly vending at a distance from the BART stations. The city also allocated more resources to the Mission District with the goal to promote the communities' cultural assets⁷⁹ with a notable emphasis on street vending.

Furthermore, a state-level regulation change in 2018 made the peddler's permit obsolete. As a response to President Donald Trump's anti-immigrant discourse spurred advocacy efforts in Los Angeles, California pushed forward the 2018 Safe Sidewalk Vending Act (Senate Bill, SB 946). SB 946 legalized street vending at the state level and implemented a permitting process to legitimize undocumented street vendors in California. The enactment of SB 946 was a milestone for the street vending advocacy groups in Los Angeles, reducing crime penalties and discrimination towards vendors. Yet, a significant number of food vendors did not comply with the law because the onerous public health regulations made it almost impossible for them to get a permit, which ended up increasing administrative fines for them (Bennett et al., 2021)⁸⁰. Surprisingly, vendors, community organizations, and city officials in San Francisco were unaware of the impact of this state-level policy shift. City officials continued to recognize the peddler's permit although the state law preempted it.

As the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the Mission District underwent a surge of property crimes and violent attacks (Wright & Jones Thompson, 2022) and many people lost their jobs. One of COVID-19's most deleterious impacts was on the service sector and small businesses, raising unemployment particularly among the Latino community. Street vending emerged as one of their few employment alternatives (MCO, April 14, 2023). The economic crisis catalyzed by the pandemic increased the number of vendors, heightening tensions between pass-byers and vendors, which in turn led to greater complaints among neighbors and subsequent creation of the ordinance⁸¹.

The Mission also saw an increase in shoplifting, affecting local businesses and chain stores alike (Fuller, 2021). Enacted in 2014, Proposition 47 reduced theft felonies to petty theft if the stolen merchandise is valued below \$950 U.S. dollars, leading to weaker enforcement of shoplifting. There was also a notable presence of organized retail crime happening in the area, emptying pharmacies and grocery stores such as Walgreens and Safeway (Moench, 2021) with people re-selling the products outside the BART stations. The 24th and Mission BART station became a place where these issues

⁷⁸ Since the 1980s, the Mission has been historically a Hispanic neighborhood. However, the Hispanic population has declined from 51.9% in 1990 to 34.7% in 2020, with Hispanics being displaced due to tech-boom and the Ellis Act (Fukumori, 2021).

⁷⁹ Neighborhood vendors have been tolerated in the Mission and are recognized as a cultural asset by the community at large. Thus, neighborhood vendors have deployed a strategy to claim their place in public space by appealing to cultural practices. Community organizations encouraged neighborhood vendors to sell ethnic products, such as artisanries to change the negative public opinion about the neighborhood and help vendors adapt to the new ordinance (MCO, April 14, 2023). Similar to how artisan vendors have distinguished themselves from street vendors in Mexico City, this strategy shows how vendors, through the use of politics of difference, reproduce the city's discourse to legitimately remain in space (Crossa, 2016).

⁸⁰ Food street vendors must comply with a myriad of other permits. Since the legislation trapped vendors in non-compliance, street vending advocacy groups (Inclusive Action for City, Community Power Collective, East LA Community Corporation, and the LA Street Vendor Campaign) in Los Angeles mobilized to update the California Retail Food Code that required street food vendors to provide a place to cook, a clean vehicle, a disposal of waste, a store cart or truck, and to pay high fees in order to be associated with commissaries. These groups pointed out that SB 946's requirements were designed for food trucks, implicitly excluding street vendors from the regulation. After months of mobilization of Los Angeles advocacy groups, the Public Counsel, and UCLA Law School members, Senate Bill 972 passed in September of 2022, updating the California Retail Code to ensure healthy and safe outcomes for vendors and consumers alike. This regulation became effective on January 1 of 2023.

⁸¹ In line with previous research, greater density of street vendors often leads to political interventions to control public space (Roever, 2005).

converged, raising concerns about public safety, transportation accessibility, drug abuse, and stolen goods vending among the public.

These trends led to rumors that San Francisco Mayor London Breed was going to declare an official state of emergency in the Mission as she had done in the Tenderloin, allowing local officials to temporarily waive certain laws to respond to health and safety conditions (MCO, April 14, 2023). As a response and in fear of having long-time street vendors displaced, community-based organizations called for a partnership with the city to regulate vending (MCO, April 14, 2023). Thus, the mayor, together with district supervisors from the Mission, Excelsior, Sunset, and Tenderloin signed a street vending ordinance (no. 44-22) “amending the Public Works Code to regulate vending, require permits for vending, and authorize permit fees and enforcement actions” (p.1), while also amending the Administrative, Business and Tax Regulations, Park, and Police Codes. According to the ordinance, Public Works officials would lead the enforcement of these new permitting rules, as well as be the ones responsible for regulating public space and preventing criminal activity.

The Latino Task Force organization, created in 2020, emerged as a response to rising rates of unemployment in the Mission and formed an agglomerate of community-based-organizations partnering with the city government to support the Latino population. In 2022, the city partnered with local community organizations to help vendors acquire the permits. The city of San Francisco provided one of the community organizations, *Calle 24*, with \$250,000⁸² to help vendors acquire their permits⁸³ and inform the community of the legal and administrative processes (LO, December 13, 2022). Founded in 1999, *Calle 24* is a non-profit organization in the Latino Cultural District advocating for affordable housing, supporting local businesses, and preserving cultural events, and operates under a 501-c3 revenue structure. In May 2022, *Calle 24* launched a block party to familiarize vendors with the ordinance. Since then, it has been the main organization acting as an intermediary between vendors and the city government. However, once the ordinance came into effect, vendors, community organizations, and enforcement officers went through the iterative implementation cycle of enforcement and compliance which I describe below.

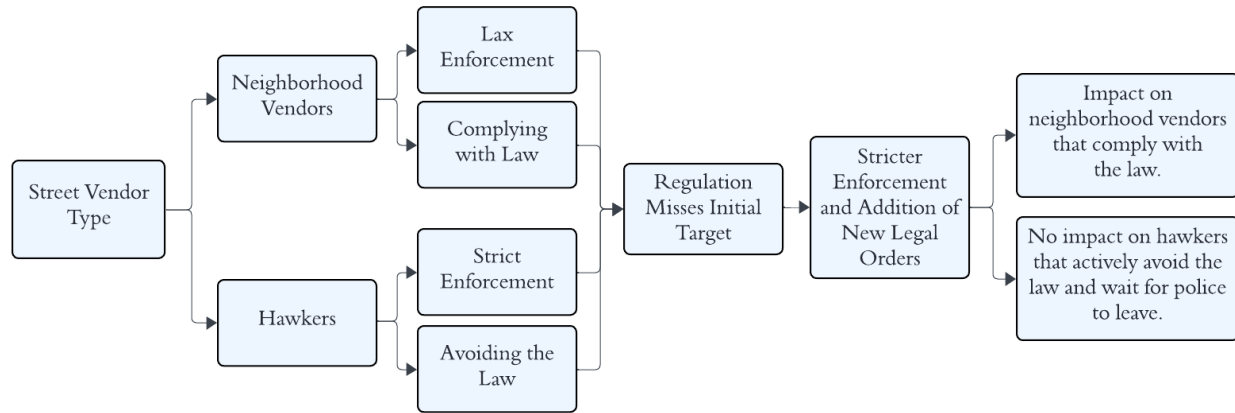
Evidence: Street Vending Heterogeneity in San Francisco

Throughout the study, I find that there are two types of street vendors that use space differently: neighborhood vendors and hawkers. In this context, I define neighborhood vendors as residents of the Mission who set their stalls to sell their products on a specific location on a regular basis. I define hawkers as mobile and improvised vendors that most likely sell stolen products. As shown in Figure 14, once the ordinance was adopted, local officials selectively enforced laws based on the type of vendors, being lenient on the neighborhood vendors and stricter on hawkers causing problems. These findings suggest that discretionary enforcement varies even in contexts of strong state capacity. Neighborhood vendors immediately responded by seeking legitimacy, whereas hawkers constantly evaded the law. However, enforcement and compliance have not been static in neither spatial nor temporal dimensions. By introducing spatial bans through the city’s website, I find that the ordinance has become less clear over time. Adding *ad hoc* legal restrictions through the website undermines the city’s credibility and may lead to potential compliance issues. I also find that street vending ordinances may not start as exclusionary but can become so during their implementation. Consequently, enforcers apply intricate laws to those who seek to be legitimized while they temporally surveil those who actively avoid the law.

⁸² Put into perspective, this one-time payment is not enough for a community organization in charge of doing the community outreach, hiring staff to process the permits, and acquiring the technical instruments to do so.

⁸³ The fee for the permit is \$430 U.S. dollars a year, the fee can be waived if the applicant has California State Medi-Cal, Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT), SFMTA Lifeline card, or Women Infant and Children (WIC) Benefits.

Figure 14. Street Vendor Diversity Impacts Enforcement, Compliance, and the Legal Order

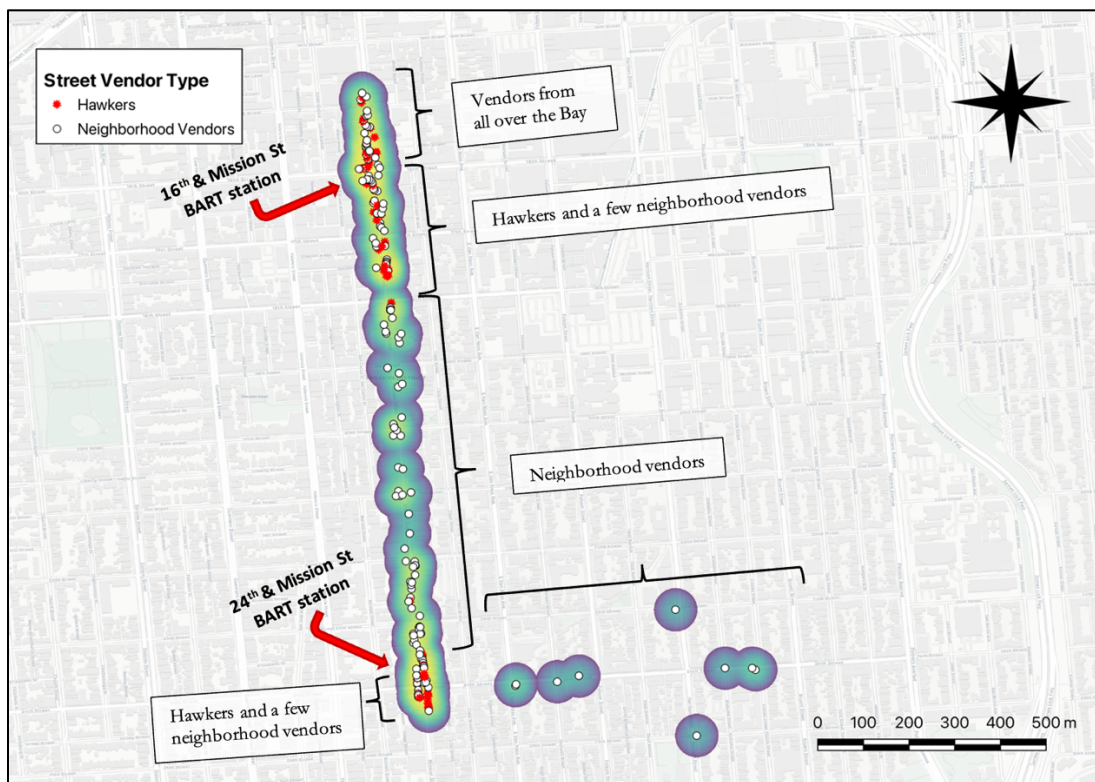


Finding 1: Hawkers and Neighborhood Vendors in the Mission District

I find significant differences among vendors in the Mission District, which become crucial for the analysis of this implementation. I surveyed 113 vendors before the ordinance became effective (in May of 2022) and 213 vendors after it was implemented (during August-December of 2022)⁸⁴. Prior to enforcing the regulation, street vending in the Mission showed a clear spatial pattern, with different vendors occupying specific locations. This spatial distribution created two distinct public spaces for vending: one around the BART stations and another in between the stations (between 18th and 24th streets). Figure 15 shows this distinction, showing how most vendors locate on Mission Street and how the type of vendors shifts along Mission Street. From daily observation and interviews with vendors, community organizations, and local officials, clear spatial divisions are drawn out across the Mission District, with both BART stations as the most conflictive areas.

⁸⁴ This number is low because community organizations in their first year of the implementation issued 293 permits (MCO interview, 14 April 2023). This might also be affected after the amendment of the California Retail Code that became effective on January 1 of 2023.

Figure 15. Spatial Distribution of Street Vendors in the Mission District



The vending dynamics are completely different between areas near the BART stations (on 16th and 24th streets) and the areas in between the stations. Vendors selling around the BART areas are characterized by the presence of hawkers (see example of vendor in Figure 16). Most hawkers come from outside the neighborhood and have no incentives to comply with the regulations because they are only interested in quick exchanges and are constantly on the move⁸⁵. Hawkings are commonly extorted by gangs and frequently sell stolen goods⁸⁶. The majority hawkers are selling stolen products and drugs at the west side entrance of the 24th BART station, most of whom commute into San Francisco from other places. Around the BART stations there are also extensive criminal networks. These areas are dominated by *Sureños* (16th BART) and the *Norteños* (24th BART) which are gangs linked to larger criminal enterprises outside of San Francisco. A local official mentioned: “All these people selling outside of the BART stations have higher ups that belong to a whole networking of trafficking and extortion – happening underneath the façade of vending.” (LO, April 18, 2023). There are also differences between both BART stations with, the environment around BART on 16th historically being “rougher” with a higher concentration of drug trade and with a conspicuous presence of the gangs (MCO, October 22, 2022, my translation). Members of community organizations expressed the difficulty in reaching out to vendors on 16th. They explained that street vendors on 16th and Mission arrive to work outside the theatres, bars, and music venues near 16th

⁸⁵ As enforcement increased in October of 2023, local officials defined these vendors as “fencers”, people selling and buying stolen goods (Stone, 2023). Although I group these vendors under one category on this context, hawkers range from extremely precarious individuals, selling whatever they can for subsistence purposes to highly organized hawkers that belong to a supply chain of stolen products.

⁸⁶ Stolen products are easily identifiable since there are a few items placed on a cardboard, with the tags of the store still on them.

that provide a demand for street vendors. Thus, street vending on 16th is more active at night, when community organizations are not working.

In between the BART stations, from 18th to 24th streets are neighborhood vendors who prefer to stay away from the BART stations⁸⁷ (see example of vendor in Figure 16). Neighborhood vendors can also be found around the 24th and 16th BART stations, but they represent a minority of all the vendors around the stations. Their locational choices are deliberate because they avoid setting up around the stations in fear of frequent police crackdowns and tensions among vendors, gangs, and police (Vendor, May 16, 2022, my translation). Previous work in Los Angeles has also studied how immigrant vendors seek to be part of the polity by complying with the law (Bhimji, 2010). However, in San Francisco, immigrant vendors have not managed to negotiate for their spaces collectively and seek to secure their legitimacy at a personal level.

Figure 16. Examples of Neighborhood Street Vendor (Left) and Hawkers Outside the 24th BART Station (Right) in the Mission District



Source: Author, 2022 (left), Annika Hom, 2022 (right)

Ignoring difference among street vendors and street vending politics limits our understanding of the hierarchical power relations in which legal structures are acting upon (Crossa, 2016; Hayden et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2018). At the federal level, previous work has revealed how planners and policymakers oftentimes ignore the complexities of society, intervening through technical rationalities, simplifying and homogenizing the governed (Scott, 1998). Thus, having a deeper understanding of the differences between street vendors becomes crucial to know how the implementation of a policy will impact street vendors in different ways (Hayden et al., 2023).

Like any project attempting to order public space, some cities have tried to make street vendors legible and governable (Scott, 1998) by bringing in discourses of entrepreneurialism (Alejo & Schoenecker, 2020). Among U.S. street vending literature, some academics have also followed this “entrepreneurial” approach (Agyeman et al., 2017; Cross & Morales, 2007; Ledesma & Giusti, 2021). However, by bringing in an entrepreneurial framing, the implementation of policies fall into a De Soto (1989) discourse on how excessive state regulations curtail street vending entrepreneurs. While some

⁸⁷ Neighborhood vendors were not shy to provide a negative view of hawkers selling outside of the BART station, complaining about the prevalence of drugs and alcohol.

vendors might have intentions to grow, the entrepreneurial discourse can overlook the experiences of vendors who work within a different logic, such as those simply seeking for employment to make a living. By moving away from the entrepreneurial approach, I agree with previous literature that argues against inculcating an “entrepreneurial subjectivity in street workers, with the goal to transforming them into desirable neoliberal subjects – through, for example, processes of formalisation and relocation into markets...” (Lindell, 2019, p. 7).

Finding 2: Heterogeneity Influences Compliance

There is a spectrum in the degree of street vending compliance, with most neighborhood vendors showing willingness to comply with the city and follow the regulation and hawkers actively avoiding it. The difference between hawkers concentrated around the BART stations and vendors along Mission Street shows how the regulation has completely missed its target. The regulation demands for detailed requirements from neighborhood vendors that are already willing to comply while being unable to control hawkers selling stolen goods and drugs. Hawkers outside the BART stations leave the area in the presence of local officials. Immediately after officials leave, hawkers populate the area again, regaining the use of public space, depicting how legal spaces are inactive when local officials are off duty around the BART stations. In contrast, neighborhood vendors complying with the ordinance usually vend as a main or alternate source of income. Some vendors have sold for 30 years, but others are newcomers that started selling during the pandemic since many service sector jobs shut down, small businesses were closed, or have simply aged as domestic workers or day-laborers and do not have other job alternatives.

Community-based organizations and neighbors recognize the differences between hawkers selling stolen good and drugs and neighborhood vendors. At the beginning of the implementation, organizations became aware that neighborhood vendors would comply with any regulation to achieve legal vending status. Although conventional wisdom assures that all street vendors will actively skirt the law, often, vendors also advocate for consistent and transparent regulations to achieve legal certainty and economic stability (Skinner et al., 2018).

During the implementation of street vending regulations, vendors adopt and adapt to regulation. In this case, the adoption and adaptation to the ordinance brought unintended consequences. Through interviews, I observe a lack of organization and legal knowledge at the three levels of analysis: vendors are not organized among themselves⁸⁸, community organizations do not have enough staff to help vendors applying for their permits, and local officials do not know the level of specificity of the multiplicity of codes, having issues with the enforcement of the law.

Community Organizations and Local Officials

It has taken many months for the community organizations to reach out to vendors and offer help for processing the permit. Instead, some neighborhood vendors prefer to have a direct relationship with the state by going directly to City Hall or talking directly with Public Works officials to apply for the permit. As a vendor mentioned, “There is a lack of communication between the community and the organizations, and the organizations and City Hall. I am getting my permit directly with City Hall, which takes approximately thirty days; however, my daughter did it through a community organization and they took three days to give it to her.” (Vendor, September 23, 2022, my translation). Moreover, there have been informational vacuums about the fee for the permit, the importance of the location of the stand and its size, and the type of product they commit to sell.

⁸⁸ With the exception of hot-dog, ice-cream, and some fruit vendors. Moreover, since the prohibition of selling their products on Mission street in November of 2023, neighborhood vendors, supported by community organizations created an association to legally appeal to their rights in order to have a place to sell (SV interview, January 17, 2024)

Community organizations started having weekly meetings with the police chief, the BART police chief, and the public works director (LO, December 13, 2022). But despite those meetings, state officials still experience a lack of information. For example, a street vendor managed to obtain a permit with the help of a community organization; however, once it was issued, a BART authority official declared the permit as obsolete since the location specified in the permit was under BART jurisdiction rather than the city's jurisdiction. Overlapping agencies generate legal ambiguities and make it difficult to have a central agency managing street vending and enforcing the law (Devlin, 2010; Koch, 2015; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1974). In terms of permitting, a local official exemplified the difficulties in providing information when a vendor owned a pre-2018 peddler's permit that was already invalid, but the police was unaware of it:

“...this guy kept insisting that his permit was valid, and I was like, it's not. He didn't like the answer, so he went to the police and the police didn't know. And they're like, that guy told me that the permit was valid, and I said: he doesn't know. And then he went to the media saying that we were trying to take away his space and make it hard for him. But then I was explaining that the permit is not valid anymore. So that's been a little bit difficult. People are defensive and sometimes not sophisticated and, you know, they need to protect their capital and it's a threat when somebody is saying you have to do something different now.” (LO, December 13, 2022).

Against Lipsky's (1980) theory stating that local officials hold local knowledge of a place, the case of San Francisco shows that officials lacked sufficient information to implement the policy. Through these dissociations and informational vacuums, local officials implemented the law to the extent of their knowledge. As such, the tolerance of street vending increased, leaving more discretionary space for local officials to define what is constituted as “good neighbor policies”. These spaces of discretion show the unpredictable dynamic of modern and premodern ways of seeing (Valverde, 2011) in the implementation of the ordinance, with vendors, community organizers, and local officials alike learning from the process of implementation. The difference is that throughout this process, “vendors are living in a context of fear and uncertainty, impeding vendors to organize” (MCO, April 14, 2023, my translation).

Through this process of disinformation, neighborhood vendors have grown in their distrust towards community organizations. Most permits have been processed through community organizations, which have waived the permit fee for two years. However, there are other permits that vendors need to process, who are unaware of what. Vendors remained skeptic about the enforcement of the law: “Nothing will change with the new law if that law even exists. Community organizations are only inculcating fear. Supposedly they were going to evict us on May 7th, but that didn't happen. Nothing ever happens. I much rather talk directly with City Hall to see what is happening and be better informed.” (Vendor, May 16, 2022, my translation). Although the community organizations issued 293 permits during the first year of the implementation (MCO, April 14, 2023), the vendor's quote depicts the distrust of the vendor in terms of the effectiveness of the law and the community-based organizations. The quote further illustrates that despite the outreach efforts undertaken by community organizations, there persisted a lack of information and uncertainty regarding the specific requirements and the extent of enforcement the city government mandated.

Analyzing the temporal dimension of the implementation process shows the informational vacuums and the resistance of vendors to comply with the law whenever enforcement is unclear. Through this analysis, I find that neighborhood vendors, who tried to comply with the law initially, have grown in their distrust towards community organizations who have relocated them into specific establishments where customers do not attend, disincentivizing street vendors to comply with the

ordinance in the long run. Thus, those willing to comply with the law are the ones being governed, while the vendors actively avoiding the law, end up being ungovernable.

Vendors

In San Francisco, the divergence between neighborhood street vendors and hawkers becomes apparent in their respective reactions to the regulatory measures when neighborhood vendors adopted the street vending ordinance quickly. Neighborhood vendors seek to comply with regulations to become not only legitimate vendors, but to cover other needs they have. A vendor exemplified during an informational event for acquiring the permit:

“Excuse me, but I do have another question now that we’re here. I have to take advantage, you know? Look, I’ve been having a problem with my apartment, but I don’t know what to do because I have to pay so much money. The woman that lives upstairs flooded her apartment and my whole apartment got wet. They’re now fixing it, [...] they told me that they would charge me five thousand dollars! [...] I’m worried about this because (community organizations) had already sent me a letter saying that they would evict me in three days, but I’ve done the renewal 3 times before with different people. I don’t think they can evict me. It’s not correct. I already struggled with this. I was living on the street because I didn’t know of the shelters, but since a social worker told me of the shelters, I moved to a shelter, and then to this little place, and now they will kick me out? I can’t afford to be kicked out as an old lady. I can’t go back to the streets.” (Vendor, October 22, 2022, my translation)

This finding contributes to the literature on street vending regulation, showing that migrant street vendors seek to be legitimized instead of skirting the law, precisely because they aim to be legitimized by the state, not only as vendors, but as active members of society. The quote also denotes how more profound issues unravel from one issue. As the consultation with the member of the community organization progresses, the issues become graver, depicting the multi-layered issues that many of these vendors face and the strenuous position that community organizations end up in when they cannot cover the needs and structural problems that these individuals face.

In stark contrast, since the beginning of the implementation of the law, hawkers around the BART stations have been actively avoiding all existing regulations and resorted to threaten and physically assault Public Works officials (Barned-Smith, 2023). In response to the escalation in violence, the city launched a street ambassador program in the Mission District trained to deal with “death-threatening conditions” and improve public safety (Office of the Mayor, 2023). This program is an attempt to train and connect the community organizations with people loitering around the BART stations (MCO, 14 April 2023). Moreover, the city increased police presence, leading to daily meticulous inspections of neighborhood vendors’ stalls, arbitrarily relocating vendors, and asking for adherence to regulations that have not even been issued (e.g., temperature of their food, height of their stall) (Vendor, September 19, 2023). Consequently, this heightened scrutiny has resulted in asset confiscations and impossibility of vending for all types of vendors (Vendor interview, February 3, 2024). Paradoxically, those willing to comply with the regulations are the vendors who are suffering from more intense scrutiny. This policy mismatch has created incentives for vendors to break the law because they cannot comply with the law, and they have to continue earning an income (Vendor interview, February 3, 2024).

Finding 3: Heterogeneity Influences Enforcement


Community-based organizations knew that neighborhood vendors would be the first ones to line-up to acquire their permit, while the hawker population around the BART stations would be elusive (MCO, April 18, 2023). However, they had to encourage permitting for all vendors: “We would have perfectly been able to say: ‘Oh, whatever is happening around the BART stations has nothing to do with us, because it has to do with drugs, homeless, and crime. We don’t do any of that!’ But the problem is that vendors from the community are also using that (public) space.” (MCO, April 14, 2023, my translation). This quote shows how community organizations struggle as intermediaries, in their role of getting people permitted and legitimized. They could not just serve the neighborhood vendors, but they had to help all types of vendors.

In the early implementation stage, local officials enforced the law selectively. Officials mostly hovered around the BART stations around the 24th and Mission plaza and only on occasion checked on vendors in between the stations. A local official explained, “We didn’t want to criminalize immigrants, their means of income, and poor peoples’ means of getting stuff at a cheaper rate. [...] We also didn’t want the police to be enforcing this because of history of violence and intimidation.” (December 13, 2022). The neighborhood vendors that I interviewed at the beginning of the ordinance also affirmed that the police were lenient with the vendors even before they acquired the permit. One food vendor even said: “Although I don’t have a permit, the police officers already know me and every time they pass by, they wave. They’re nice people and treat me well.” (September 23, 2022, my translation).


The quote by the local official depicts the intersection between law, economic precarity, and the history of violence. In accordance with the law, local officials should have not allowed food vendors to set up on the street, since the regulations for food vendors had not been established. However, they allowed for neighborhood vendors to set up and evicted hawkers located around BART stations if they did not have the permit yet. Most of the street vending literature emphasizes how the subjectivity of mud laws is applied in detriment of street vendors. However, this was not the case in the initial stages of the implementation of the law. Using their discretion, local officials applied different sections of the law selectively according to who they believe should be legitimized (e.g., tolerating neighborhood food vendors without permits while evicting hawkers without permits). Their selective enforcement shows that initially, the ordinance does not have a fixed political agenda with an exclusionary target (Valverde, 2011), but once it is enforced, discretion places a big role in legitimizing and delegitimizing social groups.

As mentioned above, the leniency of the enforcement on neighborhood vendors changed dramatically throughout time. The creation of the Public Works Order (206,887) in July 28 of 2022 establishes the guidelines for acquiring a permit and establishes the criteria for enforcement. By highlighting the interconnectedness of time and space in legal, I find how the implementation went through cycles of stricter and more lenient enforcement since the adoption of the policy. During this iterative implementation process, enforcement officers pushed higher officials to develop new guidelines to facilitate the enforcement of the policy. The city established the permit specificities through a website instead of clearly delineating the conditions of the permit *on the permit*, as shown in Figure 17. The permit reads that the conditions are subject to new orders that can be created in the future by stipulating that “permittees” are “required to abide by ...any successor rules or regulations” established at the Public Works Website. By updating the regulations through the website, state officials open spaces for discretionary enforcement even for permit-holders that have actively sought to comply with the ordinance.

Figure 17. Street Vending Permit



City and County of San Francisco
San Francisco Public Works - Bureau of Street Use and Mapping
49 South Van Ness Ave, Suite 300 - San Francisco, CA 94103
sfpublicworks.org - tel (628) 271-2000



22VDR-00056 NAME **Street Vendor Permit**

Address : MISSION ST: 24TH ST to 25TH ST (2800 - 2899) Cost: \$9.00 Block: Lot: Zip:

Name: NAME

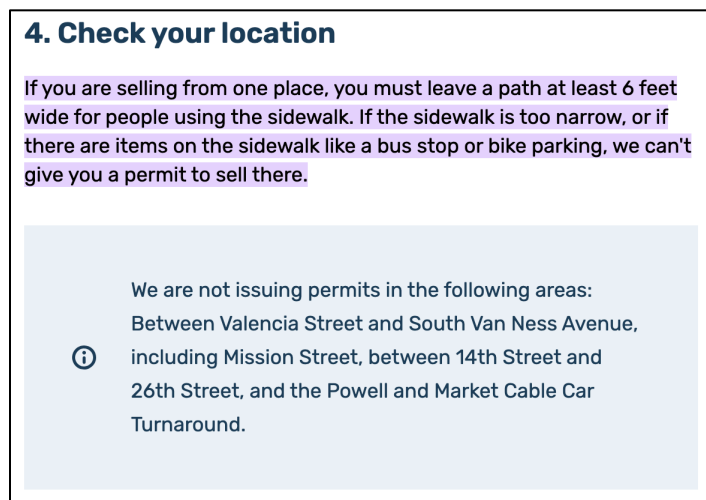
Days_Of_Operation	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday
Permit_FrontPage_Conditions	Permittee is required to abide by all terms of Article 5.9 of the Public Works Code and Public Works Order 206,887 and any successor rules or regulations, including all applicable right-of-way path of travel requirements in the course of their vending operations. Public Works Orders may be reviewed by visiting the Public Works website at https://sfpublicworks.org/services/permits/public-works-orders
Goods_Sold	Merchandise
Vendor_Type	Stationary Vendor
Business_Account_Number	1138168
Permit_Location_Description	In front of 2801 Mission St. Approximately 50 ft south of 24th St
HoursOfOperation	6AM-6PM
Permit_Start_Date	8/26/2022
Permit_End_Date	11/15/2023
PermitteeName	NAME
PermitteeEmail	Privacy
PermitteePhone	
SecondaryName	
SecondaryEmail	
SecondaryPhone	
Goods_Sold_Desc	Clothes, shoes and personal care products

Printed : 9/20/2022 10:27:47 AM

Source: Public Records #23-3316 and #23-1248 from the City and County of San Francisco.

As expected, in October of 2023, updates on the website established a spatial ban from certain areas to sell, including Mission Street, as shown in Figure 18. Although these spatial differences are not explicitly stated in the original ordinance. The Public Works Order 206,887 states that “Stationary vendors may not operate in areas that are exclusively residential”, near the Certified Farmer’s Markets nor Swap Meets. The original ordinance reads that “Public Works may restrict locations on the basis of public health, safety, and welfare.” However, using the website as a tool to change the requirements to comply with the law opens spaces to operate at discretion. Consequently, the website for the application has been changing since the ordinance came into effect, adapting to the reactions of the implementation and enforcement of the law. By adding guidelines through the website, the jurisdiction of the ordinance is thus made more flexible by having the permits depend on whatever is described on the website, as shown in Figure 18. Thus, the use of technology to determine the specificities of the ordinance “shorten” legal temporalities, making laws more quickly adaptable through time during the implementation process.

Figure 18. Banner Excluding Spaces within the City



Source: San Francisco Street Vending Application (Public Works, 2023) (Last seen: October 16, 2023).

Consequently, neighborhood vendors have had to either stop selling their products, sell only on the weekends when enforcement is low, or sell in other locations of the neighborhood (Vendor interview, February 10, 2024). Hawkers, on the other hand, continue selling whenever the police leaves the BART areas, despite the increased amount of time the police spends monitoring the area. These differences show that neighborhood vendors seek the legal paths to become legitimized and comply with the regulations to be considered legitimate members of the community, while hawkers are actively against the law, being able to sell whenever the police presence decreases. Although the creation of street vending ordinances does not assume an exclusionary or surveillance practice in its inception, this finding shows that it can have the potential to be implemented as exclusionary as the legal order becomes more complex through the iterative process of implementation.

Discussion

It is crucial to allow for iterations of the implementation to successfully enact a policy (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2014; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1974). However, in this cycle of readaptation, pushed by political and social reactions, previous scholarship has overlooked how laws intending to create urban order instead produce conflict and a more complex legal order. Previous studies have discussed how legal processes must be considered within the dynamic political and social context in which they are embedded (Azuela de la Cueva, 1987; Valverde, 2014; von Benda-Beckmann & von Benda-Beckmann, 2014). Azuela (1987) refers to this array of social representations that permeate political and social levels as “forms of legitimation”, that oftentimes replace legal rules and do not correspond to concrete forms of legality.

By using the case study of San Francisco, where there are relatively few vendors and having the opportunity to study the implementation from its incipience, this research allows me to understand how these forms of legitimation open spaces for discretion, and, most importantly, create an increasingly intricate legal system with each iteration in which the ordinance is implemented. As such, in reaction to the vendors adoption of the ordinance, the city creates new orders to guide the enforcement as the implementation progresses, making the legal system unintelligible. Thus, as the implementation is carried out, the complexity of the regulatory system increases, with more legal layers making it easier to enforce in the short-term but creating more spaces of ambiguity in the long term.

Although the temporality and iteration of the implementation processes can be reminiscent of other processes in urban planning (regulation of housing production, autonomous vehicles, or unregistered transportation), the precarity of vendors matters deeply in how the implementation is handled. It has been previously studied how the infrastructural powers of the state are constructed, creating a machine that is evolving together with social power relationships (Goodfellow, 2020). Considering that most vendors are immigrants who find themselves devoid of a safety net, it is plausible that, faced with the unfeasibility to work in public space, the subsequent outcome could involve them being compelled to live on the streets.

Although migrant vendors are willing to be governed to avoid persecution and harassment, through this iterative cycle, the state is gradually losing its credibility and legitimacy to enforce, hindering compliance from neighborhood street vendors in the long run. As a consequence, the street vending ordinance has largely missed its target and has created a new set of problems, implementing regulatory measures for street vendors who are not involved in selling stolen goods or drugs, but rather who are neighborhood vendors or started working on the street due to the COVID-19 crisis. The ordinance has failed to control hawkers it was initially intended to govern and has built instead a system in which those who have been governable will become ungovernable.

Concluding Remarks

Through an in-depth spatiotemporal analysis of a street vending policy implementation in San Francisco, this chapter shows how differences across street vendors has relevant implications for its enforcement, compliance, and the legal order. By tracing the implementation of the San Francisco street vending ordinance, this chapter reveals the misalignment between the written law and how daily life on the street plays out. From a policy perspective, this chapter shows that the city has deployed legal tools to govern the population that is willing to be governed and has failed to govern the population for which the ordinance was initially created. This indicates that the city is tolerating vendors that are *a priori* willing to follow the regulations, while neglecting the enforcement on those who are avoiding them, and not addressing the underlying causes that trigger their evasion. Following the iterations through the implementation process allows me to show why through this policy failure, a more ambiguous and complex legal system is built.

Through this analysis I shed light on the difficulties of implementing a policy, showing how enforcers and compliers react to the policy through time and space. I also depict the cost-benefit that exists when the enforcement is more flexible and how different types of vendors react to enforcement. Consequently, I find that enforcement does not distinguish between different types of vendors, governing neighborhood vendors willing to be governed, applying all the technicalities of the law to this group of vendors, while lacking the legal instruments to govern the ungovernable hawkers who actively skirt the law.

To study implementation processes, it is imperative to analyze enforcement and compliance across time. Through this analysis, I found that: 1) oftentimes enforcers do not know which laws exist, and 2) enforcers deploy new legal instruments, making a more complex legal system that gives space for greater ambiguity and discretion. In consequence, those evading the ordinance will continue to disregard any law; however, those complying with the ordinance, although trying to create forms of resistance, become subject of harassment by the myriad new legal orders created.

As such, neighborhood vendors that will face economic and fiscal responsibilities may be disincentivized from complying in the medium-term. By consequence, these hurdles might create disincentives to comply, triggering a process well-known to other cities – a never-ending negotiation among various actors to regulate different spaces in the city and the promotion of a discretionary

application of the law where the suspension of the law will depend on the governments' whim⁸⁹. By triggering this negotiation cycle, the governance of street vending in San Francisco is at risk of establishing an entrenched regime where vendors stop complying with the ordinance, opening possible avenues for discretion, corruption, and conflict.

⁸⁹ During the initial phase of the implementation, the discretionary enforcement and temporary suspension of the law were already apparent to avoid evicting vendors. It was most conspicuous with food street vendors, since the law requiring food vendors to have additional permits still had not passed when the ordinance became effective. It was one year later that the California Retail Code changed, and the city, jointly with community organizations is barely starting to determine how the new bill will be applied.

Conclusion

The main goal of the dissertation is to understand how public space, such as parks, sidewalks, and public squares are assigned, used, and contested. Since street vending and public space are notoriously difficult to regulate, I focus on how the social, political, legal, and spatial relationships among multiple actors (different levels of government, bureaucrats, leaders of street vending associations, and vendors) impact governments' incentives and capacity to control public space. I pay particular attention to competition between and among different forms of political intermediation (brokerage) including street vending associations and state employees who function as brokers. I also emphasize that politicians use brokers not only for electoral gains, but also to exercise power, which is crucial for urban planning research.

In this dissertation, I perform three main analyses. In the first two analyses, I study the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats at different levels of government, street vending associations, and street vendors in Mexico City. In the third analysis, I examine the implementation of a street vending policy in San Francisco. In chapter 2, through the analysis of street markets (*tianguis*), I examine how street vending associations' political influence impacts their capacity to lobby and their incentives to control the expansion of markets in public space. In chapter 3, I analyze how political party alignment between sub-metropolitan local governments and the city's government impacts the bureaucratic structure of local governments that in turn shapes the state's relationship with vending associations and their ability to control public space. In chapter 4, I trace the implementation of a street vending ordinance in San Francisco to understand the process through which street vendors are legitimized or excluded.

Summary of Findings

In Chapter 1, I introduce Mexico City's street vending administrative, bureaucratic, political and legal structures to better understand who are the main actors scrambling for the use and management of public space and the mechanisms through which they assign and contest those spaces.

In Chapter 2, I scrutinize the role of *tianguis* street vending associations and their competition over space in Mexico City. I create a typology of associations according to their size and spatial prevalence in the city (number of markets across different boroughs). I then examine how these different types of associations relate to different tiers of government, bureaucrats, and the neighborhoods where their markets are embedded in. I find that associations' embeddedness with neighborhoods and different levels of government impact their ability to form alliances with other vending associations and their incentives to limit their market expansion in public space. By forming alliances, associations have greater political influence to lobby with governments and secure regulations which are beneficial for street vendors more generally. Through this study, I contribute to research on political intermediation by elucidating the mechanisms through which associations build alliances with other associations and negotiate with governments at a city-wide scale. By incorporating the geography of street vending associations, I also elucidate the interconnectedness between associations and neighborhoods that explain how public space is contested within different regions of the city.

In chapter 3, I examine why local governments would rather regulate street vending instead of delegating the regulation to vending associations. By comparing tenured and loyal inspectors within bureaucracies, I study how political and bureaucratic structures shape street vendors' use of public space in Mexico City. I find that partisan political alignment between intra-city local governments and the city government mediates the levels of competition between bureaucrats (inspectors) and street vending associations, and the local governments' ability to control public space. I observe that inspectors act as political intermediaries themselves between vendors and politicians. Moreover, I find

that politically aligned local governments maintain their bureaucratic structures intact, maintaining their tenured inspectors within the administrative structures and relying more on street vending associations. Outsourcing brokerage to vending associations allows borough governments to have greater control of their territory, particularly when they have law enforcement support from the central government, allowing them to dislodge vendors belonging to street vending associations whenever they need their spaces. In contrast, unaligned local governments change the bureaucratic structure by placing their own loyal inspectors to act as intermediaries between vendors and politicians and rely more on loyal inspectors-brokers for the control of public space and the extraction of economic and political favors. Through this chapter, I contribute to the existing political science and planning literature by moving beyond the focus on how political parties employ clientelism to win elections and instead focusing on how clientelistic intermediaries assist with everyday governance tasks such as maintaining order in public spaces.

In chapter 4, I trace the implementation of a street vending ordinance in San Francisco to examine the misalignment between legal instruments and everyday activities. I examine how the diversity among vendors prompts diverse regulatory approaches. I use a case study in the Mission District to explore who legitimizes street vending and the mechanisms through which vendors are legitimized. Through this spatiotemporal study, I find that heterogeneity of vendors influences compliance, enforcement, and the legal structure of the ordinance, shedding light on the dynamic challenges to legitimize street vendors' use of public space. Consequently, I show that city ordinances only govern the governable, creating distinctions between vendors that are willing to be regulated and others actively skirting the law. I show that vendors who seek to comply with the law are the ones who face the intricacies of regulations. In contrast, vendors who avoid the law have to be monitored by a perpetual presence of local officials. In conversation with previous scholarship in sociolegal studies, I find that there is a paradoxical effect during policy implementation processes elucidating how laws that are intended to bring order to the city, they instead create greater confusion and conflict than what initially existed. This study can be generalized to other public space issues in California and the U.S. more generally. As an example, regulations that aim to control the increasing number of homeless encampments might have to consider how to implement policies that do not create unintended consequences that might be creating greater damage for the entire population.

Key Contributions

My dissertation makes two key contributions. First, I reveal a new frontier for planning theory and practice, by moving beyond stylized descriptions of the state as a monolithic entity that is either pro or anti-poor. By bringing in literature from political science into planning, I expose the inherent tensions between different levels of government and the complexity of enforcing regulatory frameworks. These tensions are apparent for three main reasons. One, because the negotiations between politicians and leaders of street vending associations determining the use of public space only last as long as politicians remain in power, making the use of space dependent on the shifts in the ruling political power. Two, because in a context of metropolitan decentralization, intra-city local governments might be politically misaligned with the city government, having different incentives and capacity to control public space and in turn creating tensions within the state to implement policies. Three, because implementing street vending laws can crystalize and become increasingly complex through an iteration of enforcement and compliance cycles. Even when policies actively aim to be inclusionary, informational gaps and varying degrees of enforcement delegitimize vendors who seek to comply with the law while being incapable of regulating vendors who skirt the law.

Second, I examine the competition among street vendors and street vending associations and how this can vary within cities. By incorporating spatial thinking to the analysis of intermediation dynamics, I detail how space is used and managed differently within cities. This is vital for urban scholarship because it is often assumed that vendors and vending associations are homogenous and act in similar ways across different parts of cities. Moreover, by including the geography of political intermediation, I extend the literature on clientelism beyond an exclusive focus on the “urban poor” and elucidate how relationships of political intermediation are prevalent across the city and are used by politicians as instruments to exercise their power.

Implications for Scholarship and Practice

To make public policy recommendations to improve the coexistence between urban planning and street vending, it is crucial to have an in-depth understanding of how the activity is currently regulated locally. As I showed in this dissertation, vending associations are often in conflict. From a historical perspective, political fragmentation within the state leads to fragmentation of street vending associations, making alliances among them more difficult. Their competition over space deters creating alliances. However, organized crime is currently a greater problem since it is taking over public spaces, displacing street vending leaders from the most coveted spaces in the city. Thus, smaller associations are unlikely to survive, since they will not be able to sustainably pay organized crime. In contrast, larger associations are more likely to compete and negotiate with organized crime, scrambling for maintaining their political influence over public space.

Despite these difficulties, Skinner, Reed, and Harvey (2018) suggest promoting spaces for dialogue in a more institutionalized manner that could help change the ways in which intermediation has existed in recent decades. They suggest using the Informal Economy Budget Analysis (IEBA) tool developed by WIEGO to gain a deeper understanding of the budgets and expenditures of local governments and community organizations. This tool can help actors understand how much budget is needed to enforce regulations⁹⁰. Contrary to common belief, street vendors advocate for more precise and transparent laws to have greater legal certainty. In this way, investments can be made to improve urban spaces and the conditions of street vendors.

More specifically, in terms of *tianguis* in Mexico City, I would recommend strengthening the 2019 guidelines that recognize *tianguis* in the city, making the Ministry of Commerce at the city-wide scale responsible for the regulations of markets and advocating to convert the guidelines into a law. Since markets are crucial elements of the food system, the city should oversee these markets to ensure the distribution, accessibility, and quality of healthy foods across the city. By having borough governments monitor the markets, street vending associations will have strong incentives to control the expansion of the markets. However, smaller street vending associations will continue to bribe local street level bureaucrats to allow their expansion and a more disorderly function of the market. Lastly, I would also recommend that street vending associations register formally as nonprofit associations, so they have their permits and spatial extension clearly delimited.

In terms of *vía pública* street vendors and the relationship between inspectors and politicians, I would advocate for civil service reforms in borough bureaucracies. Previous work has shown that despite political party competition, the relationship between politicians and civil servants in Mexico has not become more meritocratic and remains highly reliant on patronage (Grindle, 2012). Prior efforts have attempted to implement a career service in Mexico but have failed to create a more meritocratic system. Public sector managers have devised methods to circumvent laws and regulations,

⁹⁰ In the case of the Mission District in San Francisco, regulating street vending was not an issue of resources or transparency for the state. However, community organizations did not have enough money and staff to support vendors and a tool like IEBA could help organizations to effectively demand the state for more resources.

ensuring their ability to keep their loyal bureaucrats in government positions. Yet, different political conjunctures might be more successful in carrying out civil service reforms which can undermine the power of tenured bureaucrats and establish a professionalized bureaucracy focused on the skills of public employees. Public examinations would potentially undermine patronage politics and reform an entrenched clientelistic system that locally regulates public space.

In terms of street vending in San Francisco, instead of relocating vendors in a futile attempt to control public space, I would recommend that future policies consider enforcing policies in multiple stages to assure compliance and adjustment to the law. This would avoid adding amendments to the law, which in the long run, complicates enforcement and creates a complex regulatory framework which becomes impossible to apply. Lastly, I would recommend that vendors in cities of the global north form associations to present their demands to city governments, building spaces of dialogue with politicians, public officials, and community organizations that might be interested in supporting vendors.

Future Research

I have four main future research projects deriving from this dissertation. First, I aim to bridge literature from the global south with literature from the global north. Moving away from traditional comparative analysis from area studies, through critical comparative research I will delineate the differences in regulations between a metropolitan area from the global south with ubiquitous vending (Mexico City) and a spatially delimited city in the global north with scarce vending (San Francisco). In this manner, I will show how cities from the global north also negotiate the law and can learn from experiences from the global south, anticipating the regulatory and political consequences of widespread street vending.

Second, I want to better understand the nexus between street vending governance and food. In this dissertation my goal is to understand the politics of vending beyond the products they sell. Although I briefly mention the importance of food accessibility and healthfulness in chapter 2 (See Figure 19), in future studies I will analyze the role of street food vending in cities. Literature studying food access focuses on developing sophisticated spatial tools and models to better understand the food environment and the competition of businesses for urban space. However, there is little knowledge of how food outlets' healthfulness varies geographically and the role of street vending outlets in food environments. My goal is to link research on public health with my work on street vending governance to illuminate how governance structures shape the food systems that feed cities and how they compete over space. As an example, an upcoming project will study how corporate food businesses have been displacing smaller neighborhood food businesses in Mexico City through spatial point pattern analyses. Since point pattern analysis can serve as a tool to analyze competition of space and land in cities, the goal is to expand the use of these models for analyzing social processes in cities to further understand street vending activities and competition over space.

Third, I want to expand my work on street vending governance through the use of novel data to have a wider understanding of street vending dynamics in cities. Mobility research has focused on studying human mobility dynamics at a larger scale, providing a detailed understanding of how people move within a city, improving transportation planning and policy, and addressing social equity. Yet, these studies usually do not incorporate workers of street economies. Expanding on my dissertation research, I will examine how the daily mobility patterns of street vendors impact the governance of street markets they work in. Using the geospatial data of street markets in Mexico City I will use Location-Based Services (LBS) data to capture people coming into the region of interest (markets) and identify them as vendors. I will then identify their home location and their mobility patterns across the city. Through this analysis, I will examine if local vendors gain greater political leverage to remain

in place through 1) stronger community networks as a more cohesive group or, 2) by having a stronger clientelistic relationship by being part of the local politicians' jurisdiction.

Lastly, I also plan on developing a book project which focuses on changes in intermediation between local governments and street vendors in Mexico City, which links to a wider analysis of the conditions shaping contemporary urban development in Mexico. My goal is to examine how, since the decentralization and democratization of the city, street vending associations have adapted to local elections to maintain control of public space. By differentiating between the associations' electoral, political, and social struggles, I will trace and reconstruct the history of government policy towards vending associations. Through the introspection of the politics of these associations, I will study the "stickiness" of an authoritarian political culture and how it impacts the street economies of cities.

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San Francisco’s Legal Documents:

Temporary Uses and Mobile Food Facilities (297-10):

<https://sfbos.org/ftp/uploadedfiles/bdsupvrs/ordinances10/o0297-10.pdf>

Mobile Food Facilities - Department of Public Works Permitting Authority (298-10):

<https://sfbos.org/ftp/uploadedfiles/bdsupvrs/ordinances10/o0298-10.pdf>

Mobile Food Facilities at Certain Institutions in Specified District (118-13):

<https://sfbos.org/ftp/uploadedfiles/bdsupvrs/ordinances13/o0118-13.pdf>

Mobile Food Truck Facilities Locational Requirements (119-13):

<https://sfbos.org/ftp/uploadedfiles/bdsupvrs/ordinances13/o0119-13.pdf>

Mobile Vendor Regulation (118-21): <https://sfbos.org/sites/default/files/o0118-21.pdf>

Street Vending Regulation (44-22): <https://sfbos.org/sites/default/files/o0044-22.pdf>

Safe Sidewalk Vending Act (SB 946):

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB946

Sidewalk Food Vending (SB 972):

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220SB972

Public Works Order - Department of Public Works Permitting Authority (206,887):

<https://sfpublicworks.org/sites/default/files/Vending%20Order206887.docx.pdf>

Appendix A: Street Vending Legal Framework in Mexico

This table is by no means comprehensive, but I attempted to fill it as much as I could throughout my research to keep track of all the legal instruments that have existed and are applied.

Table 3. Legal Instruments Impacting Street Vending

Year	Name of Instrument	Scale	Incumbent	Articles Cited	Goal Related to Street Vending	Vending Type
1917	Mexican Constitution	Country	Venustiano Carranza	-	Social rights (right to work, articles 5 and 123)	All
1931	Regulation for semifixed and ambulatory vendors in the Federal District (<i>Reglamento del comercio semifijo y ambulante del Distrito Federal</i>)	City	Lamberto Hernández (Pascual Ortiz Rubio as president)	(Meneses-Reyes, 2011)	Regulate commercial competition by establishing specific spaces for vendors, defining the physical characteristics of stalls (booths at that time), and setting guidelines for the sanitation of spaces.	<i>Vía pública</i>
1947	Law of Communication Routes (<i>Ley de Vías Generales de Comunicación</i>)	Country	Miguel Alemán	(Meneses-Reyes, 2011)	Establishing the requirements for street vendors to obtain a permit in exchange for a payment.	<i>Vía pública, toreros</i>
1951	The Market Law of 1951 (<i>Reglamento de Mercados</i>)	City	Miguel Alemán	(Cross, 1998b; Crossa, 2018; Giglia, 2018; Meneses-Reyes, 2011)	Organization of <i>tianguis</i> and public markets, removing <i>vía pública</i> . Allowing vendors to work in established locations, but in case of traffic obstruction, they can be removed. Establishes that associations have to be conformed of at least 100 members.	All, but mostly public markets.
1993	Popular Commerce Improvement Program (<i>Programa de Mejoramiento del Comercio Popular</i> , derived from the Bando which prohibits fixed and semifixed stalls within the perimeter determined by the Federal District)	City	Manuel Camacho Solís	(Jiménez, 1998; Silva-Londoño, 2010; Stamm, 2005; Vázquez et al., 2011)	Prohibits commercial activity on <i>vía pública</i> . Relocation of vendors to shopping centers, particularly in the Historic Center.	<i>Vía pública</i> and markets.
1997	Urban Development Law of the Federal District (<i>Ley de Desarrollo Urbano del Distrito Federal</i>)	City	Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas	-	Establish <i>sistemas de actuación</i> , an instrument which seeks to carry out specific projects and works related to infrastructure, equipment, and public space that generate direct benefits for people and the urban environment in specific areas.	All
1998	11/98 Agreement (<i>Programa de Reordenamiento del Comercio en la Vía Pública – Acuerdo 11/98</i>)	City	Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas	(Giglia, 2018; Jiménez, 1998; Silva-Londoño, 2010; Stamm, 2012; Vázquez et al., 2011)	Review of the 1993 bylaw, which establishes the application of fees, recognizes the right to work, and allows commerce in delimited public spaces, contributing to the formalization process of traders and the creation of SISCOVIP	<i>Vía pública, toreros</i>
1999	Penal Code for the Federal District (<i>Código Penal para el Distrito Federal</i>) (Article 171, Section II): 'Anyone who induces others to conduct vending on public roads without permission from the competent authority, obtaining some benefit or profit for themselves or a third party.'	City	Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas	(Meneses-Reyes, 2011; Moctezuma, 2021)	Penalization of street vending to deter it. Establishing that street vending is not a crime, but the consequences of its presence can be. Applying fines to those who provide public space for vending without the permission of the relevant authority. Establishes that associations have to be conformed of at least 10 members to promote the creation of new associations.	<i>Vía pública, toreros</i>
2000	Partial Program for Urban Development in the Historic Center (<i>Programa Parcial de</i>	Historic Center	Andrés Manuel López Obrador	(Moctezuma, 2021; Vázquez et al., 2011)	Reducing popular commerce in the "A" perimeter of the Historic Center by constructing commercial plazas and discouraging the use of public	<i>Vía pública, toreros</i>

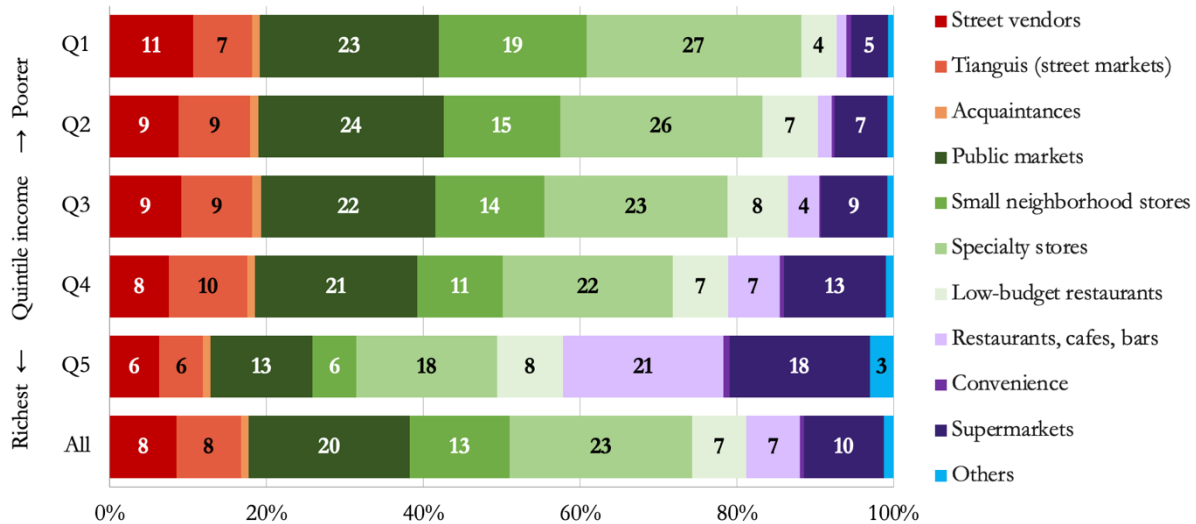
	<i>Desarrollo Urbano Centro Histórico)</i>				thoroughfares through administrative fines.	
2003	Agreement for the Reorganization and Regulation of Street Vending (<i>Acuerdo por el que se crea la Comisión de Reordenamiento y Regulación del Comercio en la Vía Pública del Centro Histórico del Distrito Federal de 2003</i>)	Historic Center	Andrés Manuel López Obrador	-	The commission created by the agreement is empowered to coordinate the execution of various governmental institutions, organize the recovery of public space, establish areas for the relocation of traders, develop legal instruments to control commerce, and authorize or revoke activities in the public thoroughfare in the Historic Center.	<i>Vía pública</i>
2003	Notice of temporary commercial activities during festivities in <i>vía pública</i> . (<i>Aviso por el que se determinan las áreas autorizadas para el ejercicio comercial temporal con motivo de festividades en la vía pública del Centro Histórico del Distrito Federal, los criterios y procedimientos de autorización y las disposiciones aplicables para la operación y el funcionamiento de esta actividad</i>)	Historic Center	Andrés Manuel López Obrador	-	Establishing exception zones, dates, and business types during festivities following guidelines from the Law on Patrimonial Regime and Public Service, the Markets Regulation for the Federal District, the Administrative Procedure Law of the Federal District, the Financial Code of the Federal District, and the Program for Reorganization of Street Vending (<i>Programa de Reordenamiento del Comercio en la Vía Pública</i>).	<i>Vía pública</i>
2004	Civic Law (<i>Ley de Cultura Cívica de la Ciudad de México</i>)	City	Andrés Manuel López Obrador	(Leal Martínez, 2016, 2020; Meneses-Reyes, 2011, 2013a; Moctezuma, 2021; Serna-Luna, 2020; Silva-Londoño, 2010)	The infractions include fines or imprisonment for obstructing public space, not having authorization for using it, or affecting public lighting. The law was amended in 2017 and 2019, making administrative offenses stricter, and the fine amount is negotiated with a civic judge.	All
2004	Agreement disclosing the formats for granting permits for using <i>vía pública</i> and for the census of street vendors (<i>Acuerdo por el que se dan a conocer los formatos para el otorgamiento de permisos para el uso en la vía pública y de censo de comerciantes en la vía pública</i>)	City	Andrés Manuel López Obrador	-	Creation of formats for granting permits for street vending by the General Directorate of Delegational Programs (<i>Dirección General de Programas Delegacionales</i>) and <i>Vía Pública</i> Reorganization (<i>Reordenamiento de la Vía Pública</i>)	<i>Vía pública</i>
2007	Support Program for the Relocation of Popular Commerce in the Historic Center of Mexico City (<i>Programa de Apoyo para la Reubicación del Comercio Popular del Centro Histórico de la Ciudad de México</i>)	Historic Center	Marcelo Ebrard	(Cossa, 2018; Meneses-Reyes, 2011; Silva-Londoño, 2010; Stamm, 2012; Vázquez et al., 2011)	Similar to the 1993 program. Reorganizing street vending, improving urban image, and relocating vendors to commercial plazas. This resulted in canceling permits for vending in the area (Meneses-Reyes, 2011).	<i>Vía pública</i> , markets
2009	Fiscal Code (updated 2019)	City	Marcelo Ebrard	-	Article 304 details the stall size for street vendors and tianguis, especially those located more than 200 meters from a market. It also outlines their fees, business type, and exemptions. Previously, these fees were specified in Article 297 of the financial code, which has since been repealed	<i>Vía pública</i>
2010	Urban Development Law of the Federal District	City	Marcelo Ebrard	-	Reordering street vending	All

	<i>(Ley de Desarrollo Urbano del Distrito Federal)</i>					
2011	Comprehensive Management Plan for the Historic Center of Mexico City 2011-2016 (<i>Plan Integral de Manejo del Centro Histórico de la Ciudad de México 2011-2016</i>)	Historic Center	Marcelo Ebrard	(Giglia, 2013)	Urban and economic revitalization of the Historic Center, reclaiming, democratizing, and organizing public space.	<i>Vía pública</i>
2011	Administrative Manual in its Procedures section of the Undersecretariat of Delegational Programs and <i>Vía Pública</i> Reorganization (<i>Manual Administrativo en su parte de Procedimientos de la Subsecretaría de Programas Delegacionales y Reordenamiento de la Vía Pública</i>)	City	Marcelo Ebrard	-	Adjustment and reinstatement of the local tax in the Street Vending System (SISCOVIP).	<i>Vía pública</i>
2014	Mobility Law (<i>Ley de Movilidad</i>)	City	Miguel Ángel Mancera	(Meneses-Reyes, 2011)	Article 15 grants municipalities the authority to keep roads free of obstacles, which is sometimes used to manage street vending, although it doesn't explicitly detail street vending. Previously, Article 25, Section II of the Law of Civic Justice for the Federal District of 2004 has been used for similar purposes.	All
2017	Mexico City's Political Constitution	City	Miguel Ángel Mancera	(Leal Martínez, 2017)	Through 'right to the city' discourses, it recognizes the right of all individuals to use <i>vía pública</i> .	All
2018	Organic Law of the Boroughs (<i>Ley Orgánica de las Alcaldías</i>)	City	José Ramón Amieva Gálvez	-	Article 119 stipulates that boroughs must provide stalls for <i>vía pública</i> and public spaces. Articles 196-198 attribute to the borough the responsibility of maintaining public spaces.	<i>Vía pública</i>
2018	Comprehensive Management Plan for the Historic Center of Mexico City 2017-2022 (<i>Plan Integral de Manejo del Centro Histórico de la Ciudad de México 2017-2022</i>)	Historic Center	Claudia Sheinbaum	(Moctezuma, 2021)	Progressive reorganization of street vending, and regulation and promotion of <i>romerías</i> .	All
2019	Tianguis Guidelines (<i>Lineamientos del tianguis</i>)	City	Claudia Sheinbaum	-	Homogenize the regulatory framework, bestowing the city with the legal responsibility to regulate <i>tianguis</i> . Boroughs' responsibility is limited to a role of supervision, only allowing local state officials to sanction and temporarily suspend the activities of the <i>tianguis</i> .	<i>Tianguis</i>

Appendix B: Relevance of Street Vending in Mexico City's Food System

Using data from the National Income and Expenditure Survey (ENIGH) and based on the methodology created by and her collaborators (Farah et al., 2022), I show the percentages of food and beverage purchases by food outlet in Mexico City across income levels. I classified income into quintile groups with Q1 depicting the poorest 20% households in Mexico City and Q5 depicting the richest 20% households of the city. I included this figure to reveal the importance of street vending within the food system. ENIGH classifies street vendors (fixed, semi-fixed, and *toreros*) separately from *tianguis*. From this figure, I find that on average, households in Mexico City spend 16% of their food purchases on street vendors and *tianguis*. This percentage also increases for poorer quintiles of the population.

Figure 19. Households' Food and Beverage Purchases (% Expenditure) by Food Outlet and Income Level in Mexico City, 2022



Appendix C: Geographic Location of *Tianguis*

Figure 20. *Tianguis* By Association Type, Mexico City

