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## **Symbolic capital, informal labor, and postindustrial markets: the dynamics of street vending during the 2014 World Cup in São Paulo**

Jacinto Cuví

Contact info:

Jacinto Cuví

Institut de Sociologie  
Université de Neuchâtel  
Fbg de l'Hôpital, 27  
Neuchâtel, NE – 2000  
Switzerland

e: [jacinto.cuví@unine.ch](mailto:jacinto.cuví@unine.ch)  
t: +41 (78) 676 4719

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### **ABSTRACT**

In contrast to industrial markets based on mass-production of material goods, postindustrial markets hinge on images, experiences, and emotions produced and exchanged on screens and in real life. Because postindustrial markets tend to be highly concentrated and technology-driven, they pose a threat to small businesses and low-skill workers in both advanced industrial economies and the Global South, where a large share of the population makes a living in the informal economy. Using the 2014 World Cup as a case of postindustrial economic activity hinged on spectacle, emotional experience, and intellectual property, I analyze the income-making strategies used by street vendors in São Paulo, Brazil. I show that organizers' control of fan markets was limited by local conceptions of ownership over national symbols as well as informal workers' flexible relation to legal norms and enforcement-dodging practices. Circumventing market barriers required risky and sophisticated strategies, however, which were more readily available to the more marginal section of the street vending population.

**Key words:** Brazil, intellectual property rights, policing, social exclusion, sports mega-events, urban poverty

Informal labor is a longstanding feature of urban economies in the Global South (Fernández-Kelly and Shefner 2006; Portes and Sassen-Koob 1987; Roy and AlSayyad 2004). For the British anthropologist who coined the term “informal sector,” informal workers constituted the “reserve army of the proletariat” (Hart 1973)—a pool of surplus labor that can be tapped into and laid off according to the cycles of industrial production. Early research on economic informality found that several informal trades were closely tied to the manufacturing sector in industrializing countries (Castells and Portes 1989).

But how do informal workers adapt to the rise of the service industry and information technologies? This transition increases the value of nonmaterial assets such as knowledge, image, brand, and related forms of intellectual property, control of which tends to be concentrated in a select workforce and multinational corporations. As globalization widens the scope of these changes, beyond the advanced economies where they originated, to parts of the Global South where low-paying service jobs are not available on the same scale as in the United States or Europe, it is worth examining what informal workers do to secure their livelihoods.

This study addresses the question through an analysis of street vending during the 2014 World Cup in São Paulo, Brazil. As an entertainment industry that relies on the global distribution of information through advanced telecommunication technologies and offers a “unique” emotional experience, sports mega-events epitomize the postindustrial economy (Bell 1973; Block 1990; Castells 2011; Webster 2014). Moreover, sports mega-events reflect the exclusionary logic of corporate profitmaking in postindustrial markets. The protection of intellectual property and official sponsor monopolies calls for aggressive enforcement measures that seek to bar local competitors from lucrative fan markets and criminalize unofficial trade (Black and Van Der Westhuizen 2004; Boykoff 2013; Horne and Manzenreiter 2006).

I argue that street vendors are able to tap into these markets nonetheless. For one, some objects of symbolic consumption such as paraphernalia bearing the colors of the national team fell beyond the scope of organizers’ legal claims. The national symbolism of the World Cup was accessible to—and exploited by—street vendors. Moreover, informal workers’ flexible relation to the law and their experience navigating hostile regulatory environments enabled street vendors to overcome the legal and material barriers even in tightly regulated markets such as drinks and snacks sales at official events. Circumventing these barriers required risky and sophisticated strategies, however, which were more readily available to the more precarious section of the street vending population.

## **Postindustrial Markets and Informal Labor**

Postindustrialism denotes a series of structural changes in economies previously based on manufacturing. The most cited developments are the rise of the service sector and technological change, especially in information and communication technologies. The debate about whether the postindustrial society has arrived—and, if so, what it entails—is an old but enduring one (Bell 1973; Block 1990; Carruthers 2015; Webster 2014). Economic sociologists concur nevertheless that new economic forms are emerging in the wake of these changes, which spawn new products, new organizational structures, new attitudes among consumers, and new markets.

A distinctive feature of postindustrial markets is the receding importance of material goods in favor of image and emotion, as observable in the expansion of both “emotional consumerism” (Lipovetsky, 2010) and symbolic consumption. Emotional consumerism refers to the quest for recreational experiences that break with the routine of daily life—moments of excitement, pleasure, distraction or relaxation often shared on social media. Whereas material infrastructure

is needed to produce these experiences, the product being purchased is a set of sensations and emotions—as well as, implicitly, the memories thereof. The overprized picture of yourself screaming down a rollercoaster at Disneyland typifies the joint commercialization of image and emotion in postindustrial markets, along with these markets’ fragility and transience—the ubiquitous use of smart phones and selfies making print photographs by third-parties obsolete. The porn industry, which grew dramatically over the last few decades, or the market for ever more realistic and absorbing videogames also speak to the junction of image and emotions, to which the fields of tourism, yoga, gourmet food, or mega-events add full(er) embodiment.

Symbolic consumption, on the other hand, refers to the acquisition of goods and services based on the social meanings attached to them rather than their intrinsic utility (Balsiger 2016; Baudrillard, 1998). As Lipovetsky (2010, 28) notes, “[t]oday, the buyer wants not so much a product... as a brand with its imagery, identity, and prestige.” Here too, the story is not one of disappearance of material goods so much as a shift in the sources of value. Symbols make up a larger share of a product’s commercial value, even in the case of manufactured items. The appeal of a Tesla, for example, stems in no small part from the status it confers on its owner.

Less apparent, but equally important, is the political economy of postindustrial markets. Echoing Bourdieu’s (2000) analysis of the housing market in France, Fligstein (2002) puts forth a theory of markets as battlefields divided into two categories, incumbents and challengers, where incumbents use different means to fend off competitors and, thereby, secure and extend their control over markets. In a postindustrial market, one key resource to this end is what may be called symbolic power. As conceptualized by Bourdieu (1977, 2001), symbolic power is the ability of the dominant party to impose cultural schemes and values on the dominated—that is, to define what is beautiful, proper, distinguished, etc.

If extended to markets, the concept of symbolic power could be used to signify the ability of incumbents to define and control what is valuable and desirable—that is, trendy, cool, hip, etc.—in the eyes of consumers. Postindustrial market incumbents are taste-makers who exercise symbolic power through both design (including software development) and marketing, which involves differentiation strategies aimed at casting one’s brand and products as unique and superior to others (Komarova 2017). The result is an accumulation of symbolic capital, that is, “the acquisition of a reputation for competence and of an image of respectability” (Bourdieu 1984, 335). In this regard, perhaps no other company has been as successful as Apple, which managed, with iPhones, not only to create a distinctive status-bearing product but to market it so extensively that *not* having an iPhone carries something of a stigma in many circles. The company’s stock market valuation reflects its symbolic capital. Finally, the centrality of image fosters not only marketing but public relations activities. A scandal can turn the fortunes of an otherwise successful company and cost millions of dollars (Frenckel et al. 2018). Postindustrial market players are beholden to public opinion.

The commodification of symbols and accelerated technological change in postindustrial markets lead to a heavy reliance on intellectual property by incumbents.<sup>1</sup> Name-brands are both identity markers and trademarks, that is, symbols turned into intellectual property. Pieces of coding are subject to copyrights, and Google zealously protects its famous algorithm. In the market for emotional experiences, corporate players seek to increase control by trademarking event names or “marks,” as with SXSW, and by regulating and monitoring participation.

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<sup>1</sup> This is not to suggest that intellectual property was not important in industrial markets. In fact, intellectual property law played a key role in the early stages of industrialization (see Ford 2017).

Together, symbolic capital accumulation (which rests on brand differentiation) and the centrality of intellectual property (which is exclusive by definition) lead to high concentration rates in postindustrial markets. Winner-take-all dynamics are observable for example in the distribution of information or content (e.g., Google, YouTube, Netflix, Pornhub, or Spotify) as well as online retailing (e.g., Amazon), dating (e.g., Tinder), or transportation (e.g., Uber and Lyft). As the heavy fines imposed on Microsoft and Google by European anti-trust regulators indicate, moreover, these are not simply random or structural outcomes but reflect efforts by incumbents to extend and secure control over markets, in line with Fligstein's perspective (see Nicas 2018). Beyond regions of the world where intellectual property rights are consistently enforced, firms and business groups such as Microsoft, Adidas, pharmaceutical companies or filmmaker associations lobby governments to crack down on counterfeit goods, "piracy," copyrights infringements, and other violations of intellectual property rights (Karaganis 2011).

Finally, the exclusionary logic of postindustrial markets impacts not only competitors but workers. In an economy based on knowledge, image, and consumer experience, owners of the means of symbolic production employ scarce manual labor in the production of value. A small set of high-skill, highly paid, "creative" workers can design, produce, and market extremely profitable products. Blue collar workers displaced from industrial and extractive sectors struggle to find a footing in postindustrial labor markets, and they are pushed towards precarious service jobs. Exclusion rather than exploitation governs postindustrial profitmaking.<sup>2</sup>

## Informal Labor

According to Saskia Sassen (2014), the existence of large surplus populations is a defining feature of the post-Fordist global economy, which excludes or—in her words—"expulses" people out of the economic realm. However, the idea of a surplus labor force has a long lineage in socioeconomic thinking, going back at least to the Marxist concept of a lumpen proletariat. This idea was also at the heart of the debate on economic informality in the developing world.

The term "informal sector" was originally coined to designate small-scale income-making activities undertaken by rural-to-urban migrants who could not find manufacturing jobs—or did not earn enough to live off those jobs—in developing countries (Hart 1973). These activities were typically unregulated, eschewing tax codes, work safety standards, licensing procedures, sanitary norms, and the like (Agarwala 2013). Hence, the term economic informality was later extended to all unregulated activities carried out in a context where similar activities are regulated by the state (Castells and Portes 1989). The International Labour Organization (ILO) insists on the "deficits" of rights and poor working conditions faced by informal workers (ILO 2002). In a controversial but influential volume, De Soto (1989) emphasizes for his part the lack of clearly defined and secure property rights. Because they operate in an informal environment, these entrepreneurs lack enforceable claims to their fixed capital, merchandise,

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<sup>2</sup> The distinction between exclusion and exploitation echoes the well-known distinction between the theory of social closure developed by Max Weber and the Marxist theory of exploitation. In its most common understanding, social closure refers to the erection of entry barriers by members of a privileged group to prevent others from sharing in their benefits. Whether or not the concept of social closure applies to the market practices described here is a complex question given both the variety of practices by which market incumbents preserve their advantages and the different conceptions of social closure in the literature (see Cuvi 2018), but the establishment of formal rules of exclusion is certainly one key mechanism in Weber's (1978) original formulation.

and workplace, which limits their ability to invest in and thereby expand their business. De Soto calls for formalization procedures that extend legal titles to informal business owners.

From a structural perspective, early theories of informality cast informal workers as a “marginal mass” etching out a living in isolation from the rest of society, according to what was then called the dualistic view of the economy (Nun 2000). But empirical research soon revealed a complex relationship between the formal and informal sectors. Tokman (1978) proposes a number of scenarios involving either exclusion or integration of informal workers. Notwithstanding this diversity and the ambivalent relationship at the macro level—where one does not observe a significant reduction in the relative size of the informal workforce despite sustained industrial growth in the postwar era (Castells and Portes 1989)—large segments of the informal sector depended on local manufacturing activity as suppliers, distributors, or clients. As Roberts (2005, 116) notes, “[t]he dynamism of the informal economy is undermined by cheap imports and by high-tech sectors in manufacturing and services, which do not put out work, as did the domestic manufacturing sector of [import-substitution industrialization].”

According to the ILO (2002), economic restructuring in the late XX century led to an increase in the numbers of informal workers across the Global South. However, the relation between informal workers and postindustrial markets has received less attention, even though market concentration and skill-biased technical change raise the prospect of heightened exclusion (Brugger and Gehrke 2018). In fact, the idea of a marginal mass is making a comeback, even among scholars who criticized it in the past (González de la Rocha et al., 2004; Perlman 2010). Yet, as several students of informality point out, informal workers should not be regarded as passive victims of socioeconomic exclusion but, rather, as resourceful, productive agents who defy formidable odds on a daily basis. What AlSayyad (2004) refers to as the “informal way of life” involves investing, taking risks, innovating, and tapping into formal circuits of wealth. Bayat (2000) describes this practice as the “everyday encroachment of the ordinary.” In short, informal actors, while at a disadvantage in the prevailing social, legal, and economic order, defy that order in their daily routines to secure a livelihood. Are informal workers still able to tap into inherently exclusionary postindustrial consumer markets and, if so, by what means?

This study addresses these questions through an investigation of street vending practices during the 2014 World Cup in São Paulo, Brazil. Sports mega-events like the World Cup and the Olympic Games encapsulate several aspects of postindustrialism. Mega-events offer an entertainment experience, the production of which relies on a highly specialized workforce (including, of course, professional athletes), advanced information and communication technology, and sophisticated legal structures. Much of the value generated by sports mega-events stems from the celebrity status of athletes and the dramatized staging of contests between nations that stir emotions among consumers-cum-spectators. Moreover, the largest source of revenue for FIFA and the International Olympic Committee consists of the leasing of intellectual property in the form of broadcasting rights to networks as well as advertisement and commercial rights to sponsors (Horne and Manzenreiter 2006). The result is a multimillion dollar spectacle. The price paid by broadcasters for television rights for the summer Olympics went from 334 million USD in 1988 to 1.372 millions two decades later (Horne and Manzenreiter 2006, 3). According to Panja (2017), “global sponsorship income from the 2014 [World Cup] was \$650 million higher than the \$1 billion generated at the 2010 in South Africa.”

Sports mega-events also display the exclusionary logic of postindustrial markets. In the 1980s, the firm ISL Marketing worked with FIFA and the International Olympic Committee to establish a model based “on selling exclusivity of marketing rights to a limited number of sponsoring partners” (Horne and Manzenreiter 2006, 7). Restrictions apply to both virtual (e.g., TV

screens) and physical spaces, especially official fan gatherings. Moreover, event related symbols, from the name to the logo to the mascot, are trademarked and protected by *ad hoc* legislation (Hummel 2018). And organizers enlist the help of multiple police and security forces, turning event sites into “some sort of immaculate repression zone” (Boykoff 2001).

There are of course several factors behind the extensive police presence, including the ambition of host countries to raise their international profile, which entails projecting an image of modernity (a “country without peddlers,” as one peddler put it) and avoiding unseemly disruptions.<sup>3</sup> In authoritarian regimes like Russia in 2018, China in 2008, or even Mexico in 1968—where the infamous Tlatelolco massacre took place before the summer Olympics—repression is an outgrowth of the political system. As the financial stakes rose, however, the economics of sports mega-events became entangled with political considerations in what Boykoff (2013) calls “celebration capitalism.”<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, in a democratic context like Brazil in 2014, where the left-leaning Worker’s Party was still in power and elections were scheduled just months after the World Cup, the government faced conflicting incentives, and heavy-handed policing of lower-class workers was not the obvious option. But authorities were under pressure from FIFA to honor the terms of the agreement and protect sponsor monopolies.<sup>5</sup>

Sports mega-events offer an interesting window into the relation between postindustrial markets and informality because they “export” these markets to parts of the world with large numbers of informal workers. Moreover, the spatial dimension of these events creates the conditions for on-the-ground competition between market incumbents and challengers. Among informal workers’ groups, street vendors are at the frontline of this competition/confrontation. They risk being evicted or displaced by official events and increased policing, but they are also among those who can tap the consumer markets for tourists and fans generated by the tournament.

Moreover, street vendors are a core constituency of the informal workforce. Like all informal workers, peddlers operate in a limbo marked by uncertainty and insecurity as to their ability to keep working (Agarwala 2008; Goldstein 2016). Their property rights are ill-defined. Some peddlers have licenses, but even licensed vendors transgress rules and regulations regarding type of merchandise, stocks, and procurement on a daily basis, and fear enforcement as a result. Moreover, their licenses are usually precarious, revocable titles (Cross 1998). Finally, in the symbolic landscapes of stratification, street vendors, licensed and unlicensed, are stigmatized as lower-class invaders of public spaces who “pollute” the urban environment (Bromley 2000).

Studies of street vending during mega-events are scarce. The few studies available emphasize exclusion and tend to focus on impacts. They find that mega-events have an overall negative impact on the income and working conditions of peddlers (Horn 2011; Hummel 2018; Lindell, Hedman, and Verboomen 2013). This finding echoes other scholarship on the impacts of sports mega-events on disenfranchised groups, including low-income tenants, shantytown residents, and the homeless (Boykoff 2011; Lenskyj 2012). As the authors themselves deplore, however, efforts to assess impacts suffer from a perennial shortage of data on informal workers and methodological difficulties associated with surveying informal populations (Horn 2011, Hummel 2018). Finally, these studies tend to neglect the resourcefulness and creativity

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with unlicensed street vendor, August 4, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> In his book, Boykoff (2013) elaborates on the “commercialization” of the Olympics and security measures.

<sup>5</sup> FIFA forced Brazil to legalize the sale of alcoholic beverages inside stadiums (and to allow the trademarking of event names). The tightly regulated environment of recent World Cups contrasts with past editions such as Brazil in 1950, when an estimated 30,000 spectators attended the final game without purchasing tickets.

generally attributed to informal actors (Clark 1988, Cross and Morales 2007, Hansen, Little, and Milgram 2013). Indeed, peddlers use different strategies to dodge or forestall enforcement, including: a) physical mobility, either in the form of roaming or pick-up-and-run tactics; b) within-group exchanges of goods and information, which Bayat (2000) refers to as “passive networking”; c) bribes to law-enforcement agents, especially policemen and inspectors; and d) informal arrangements with local politicians. These strategies can be collective or individual, and result in “tolerance” or “forbearance” from the state (Cross 1998, Holland 2015).

The purpose of this study is to examine how these and other strategies were used by street vendors in São Paulo during the 2014 World Cup to tap into fan markets hinged on emotional experience, symbolic consumption, intellectual property, and spatial concentration. I make no claims as to the overall impact of the event on street vendors beyond noting that it benefitted some of them and took a heavy toll on others. I do claim, however, that vendors used old and new strategies, including reliance on shared symbolic capital, to participate in World Cup markets, and that those further at the margins of the legal order were better positioned to do so.

### **The Setting**

With about 20 million residents, São Paulo is the largest metropolis and has the largest gross municipal product (GMP) of the southern hemisphere. Almost 80 percent of its workforce is employed in the service sector (counting trade and retailing).<sup>6</sup> Estimates of its street vending population oscillate between 100,000 and 130,000 (Pamplona 2013), but its size fluctuates depending on economic, demographic, and policy factors. In São Paulo, many street vendors hail from the poorer northeastern part of the country and, increasingly, from other countries in Africa and Latin America.

During the World Cup, roughly 1,500 peddlers were legally entitled to work as licensed street vendors by virtue of a court order, following the cancellation of all street vending licenses in May 2012. These vendors are referred to hereafter as “licensed” or “authorized.” Licensed vendors own roofed stalls which they set up at fixed selling “spots” (*pontos*) designated by the city. Most licensed spots are clustered on squares or along thoroughfares, but some isolated stalls can also be found in different parts of the city. They sell anything from bags, plastic jewels, and clothing items to cheap electronics, hardware, and packaged foods. With 479 authorized vendors, the downtown district had the largest concentration of licensed peddlers at the time of the World Cup.

In contrast to licensed vendors, unlicensed street vendors work on the move. They are constantly shifting sidewalks, streets, and corners to elude law-enforcement agents. They are also spread across the city but tend to concentrate in bustling commercial areas, and sometimes form small informal cooperative networks at specific locations to avoid confiscations. Their wares are similar to those of their licensed colleagues, although the imperative of continuous motion creates incentives to carry small quantities of lighter goods like headphones, watches, socks, water bottles, and chocolate bars. They carry these items in backpacks, tarps, or plastic bags. Where policing is less intense, unlicensed street vendors sometimes set up improvised

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<sup>6</sup> See Pesquisa Mensal de Emprego report published by SEADE, November 2017 at [http://www.seade.gov.br/produtos/midia/2017/12/Apres\\_PED\\_RMSP\\_396\\_nov\\_2017.pdf](http://www.seade.gov.br/produtos/midia/2017/12/Apres_PED_RMSP_396_nov_2017.pdf). Retrieved January 23, 2018.

stalls made of cardboards or metal grates, or push wheelbarrows with fruit, popcorn, and other foodstuffs.<sup>7</sup>

Licensed vendors are represented by a union, the Union of the Licensed, which is the only legally registered organization representing licensed street vendors as a group citywide. Membership to the Union is not mandatory, however. Another organization closely tied to the Union, the Disabled Vendors Associations (DVA), represents disabled licensed street vendors, which make up about sixty percent of licensed street vendors downtown. As with other street vendors' associations (Brown 2006), not all licensed vendors feel well represented by the leadership of Union and the DVA, however, whom they accuse of being self-serving and not transparent.

Political representation of unlicensed vendors is weaker and less formal, when it exists at all. Lacking lawful status, hawkers cannot aspire to the same organization as their licensed counterparts. Moreover, the fleeting nature of business for unlicensed vendors makes it harder to sustain any administrative structure and collect fees. Instead, in highly policed areas, these vendors rely on horizontal networks of co-workers, including friends and relatives. But associations of unlicensed vendors are present in some neighborhoods, usually under a different label such as "micro-entrepreneurs," and negotiate space with local administrators when political conditions allow.

Under the terms of an agreement passed between the city government and the state government in 2009, around 2,000 Military Police officers were deployed daily to hotspots of street vending at the beginning of 2014, alongside the regular body of officers on the beat. These officers complement the efforts of another police force, the Municipal Guard. The Military Police is known for its corporative culture, which makes it less amenable to influence by low- or mid-ranking civil servants and politicians. The Municipal Guard has the reputation of being a corrupt (and corruptible) police force, but short-term deployment and public attention hindered informal deals during the World Cup (Cross 1998). Both the Municipal Guard and the Military Police rely on city inspectors (*fiscais*) for the administrative procedure of apprehending wares.

When Brazil was awarded the 2014 World Cup in 2007, at a time of strong economic growth, the news sparked widespread celebrations. In 2013, Brazil hosted the Confederations Cup, an international soccer tournament also organized by FIFA considered a test run for the World Cup. By then, however, the public mood had shifted. Corruption, shortfalls in public services, and World Cup expenditures widely perceived as excessive or unjustified sparked massive demonstrations in most Brazilian cities. In São Paulo, almost a million people took to the streets. The chants uttered by protesters asked for schools and hospitals that also "met FIFA standards." While turnout fell sharply in the following months, demonstrations against the World Cup continued sporadically through the beginning of the tournament, with protesters denouncing the legal terms attached to hosting the event (including tax exemptions for FIFA and its sponsors), increased police repression, and the displacement of vulnerable social groups, among them street vendors.

As a host city, São Paulo had both a stadium and a Fan Fest. The Fan Fest is an enclosed park of about 10,000 square meters with promotional kiosks set up by World Cup sponsors and a mega television screen on which games are broadcast. Both the stadium and the Fan Fest have Areas of Commercial Restriction (ACRs) also known as "exclusion zones." Inside ACRs, FIFA and its partners hold the exclusive right to conduct advertising and marketing activities as well as "street commerce." Violators are liable to civil and penal sanctions including prison terms

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<sup>7</sup> A municipal bill legalizing the street trade of non-packaged foods was adopted after the World Cup.

of up to one year and fines. The maximum radius of ACRs is 2 kilometers around each official site, although the actual scope and contours are determined in negotiations between local city authorities and FIFA representatives in each host city ahead of the tournament.

In São Paulo, where a new stadium was built for the World Cup in the peripheral neighborhood of Itaquera, next to a namesake subway station, there were no licensed street vendors within the maximum scope of 2 kilometers set for the ACR. At the subway station, however, a group of about 30 unlicensed vendors used to set up stalls in the early morning and late at night, before and after the Military Police daily shifts, and on Sunday afternoons. The Fan Fest, on the other hand, was located downtown, near the historic center of the city. The downtown area is the commercial heart of São Paulo, and its main streets are bustling with street vendors, licensed and unlicensed. Approximately 250 licensed vendors had stalls within 2 kilometers of the Fan Fest, and rumors of potential evictions circulated ahead of the World Cup. On April 20, however, a map of the neighborhood specifying the dimensions of the Fan Fest and its ACR was published in the newspaper of public record. The ACR was far smaller than the 2 km radius allowed for in the federal bill, encompassing only 8 streets around the plaza and 5 licensed stalls. Still, the intensity of policing as well as licensed and unlicensed street vending in this area made it a prime site to observe the dynamics of informal trade during the event.

## **Data Collection**

This case study draws on multiple sources of data, including (1) direct observation of street vendors, (2) conversations and interviews with street vendors and state officials, and (3) documentary evidence collected on the field (e.g., newspaper articles, police records, leaflets, etc.). The data were collected before, during, and in the immediate aftermath of the World Cup.

Field research took place over the course of one year, beginning ten months before the June 12, 2014 kick-off and ending in mid-August, one month after the end of the tournament. In the run-up to the event, I interviewed state officials (including World Cup organizers), attended policy meetings, collected documentary material, and conducted ethnographic observation. Most quotes from street vendors about the World Cup come from conversations I had with them while they were working or taking breaks. Tape-recording was difficult, so I took notes during or after our interactions. During my year of fieldwork, I talked to more than 50 licensed and unlicensed street vendors, sometimes repeatedly, though not all conversations were related to the World Cup. In February 2014, I also took a short trip to South Africa, the host of the previous World Cup, where I asked a dozen street vendors about their experiences in 2010.

One month before kick-off, I conducted a small survey on a nonrandom sample of licensed and unlicensed vendors at three different locations. This survey was followed by a more extensive survey of 241 licensed street vendors carried out with the help of a collaborator in the immediate aftermaths of the event, which focused on the impact of the World Cup in terms of income and police repression. As with all surveys of informal workers, results are liable to sampling and response biases. However, in the process of administering the survey, we obtained valuable insights from respondents, such as particular answers or unsolicited comments, which I use.

During the World Cup, I visited the Fan Fest on major game days and conducted walking surveys of its ACR, recording my observations and insights from conversations with street vendors on the same day. I observed both licensed and unlicensed vendors in the area. The other days, I carried out fieldwork at various sites, especially on a major commercial street called 25 de Março and at the subway station by the stadium.

Finally, a collaborator and I interviewed 34 unlicensed vendors about their income-making practices in semi-structured interviews after the tournament. These interviews were conducted with street vendors I met during the fieldwork and referrals from them. They took place in public places—either on the streets or inside restaurants or coffee shops—near or at the street vendors’ workplace, and interviewees received a small monetary compensation for their time.

## Results

### *Trademarks and colors*

On June 5, 2012, President Dilma Rousseff signed the General Law of the World Cup (*Lei Geral da Copa*) in compliance with FIFA hosting requirements. As a result, FIFA trademarks—including symbols, emblems, phrases, etc., either registered by FIFA or “notoriously recognized” as FIFA property—were protected by federal law, overriding previous legislation that forbade the trademarking of event names.<sup>8</sup>

Whenever the Brazil national soccer team plays, demand for fan gear spikes nationwide. Such gear includes flags, T-shirts, scarfs, vuvuzelas, and rearview mirror covers bearing the green and yellow colors of Brazil. Part of this merchandise is smuggled from China by Chinese or Korean storeowners who then sell it to local peddlers. Other products—especially garment—are manufactured locally in underground sweatshops. In line with local street vending parlance at the time of fieldwork, I refer to this merchandise generically as World Cup merchandise (*mercadoria da Copa*). Street vendors are among the main retailers of such goods (see Fig. 1).

In the run-up to the World Cup, uncertainty about what products would be tolerated by authorities pervaded not only the streets but the city bureaucracy. The question came up at a meeting of city officials in charge of World Cup organizing. One of them, who was directly involved in conversations with FIFA, said in an assertive tone:

“FIFA does not own the Brazilian flag.”

“Yet...,” added another civil servant.

“What do you mean yet?” said the first speaker, annoyed by the insinuation.

At another meeting, the main civil servant in charge of policing street vending downtown asked whether licensed vendors were allowed to sell official World Cup merchandise at their stalls if they procured it legally and could produce receipts, claiming he had been asked the question by licensed vendors’ representatives. Meeting organizers were unable to give him a clear answer.

Information was obscured by rumors, moreover, which pervade informal economies. Some licensed stall owners were fearful as a result. A licensed peddler interviewed during the preliminary survey said, “They say it’s forbidden. They say you can even lose your license [if you sell World Cup merchandise]. I’m just going to close shop and leave for Bahía [his home state, during the World Cup].” At the same time, a leader of the Union of the Licensed rightly noted in an interview ahead of the event that materials bearing the colors of the Brazilian flag did not fall within the purview of World Cup regulations so long as they did not display any World Cup or FIFA symbols. According to another interviewee, this leader’s stall was the only stall opened around the Fan Fest on the day of the opening game, and Brazil jerseys were hanging from it. This leader was not the only licensed vendor to offer fan gear with Brazilian colors at his stall, however. On 25 de Março, where the highest selling stalls are located

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<sup>8</sup> According to the VPRO Blacklight documentary *Trade Mark Twenty Ten*, even “2010,” during the 2010 World Cup, “belonged to FIFA.”

(including several stalls owned by members of the Union and DVA leadership), virtually every peddler offered World Cup merchandise during the World Cup.

Beyond that street, the picture was mixed: some licensed vendors added World Cup merchandise to their stock while others stuck to their usual products. But most vendors agreed that the World Cup shaped consumer preferences. As one leather belt vendor explained, “The only thing people cared about was soccer. Soccer, soccer, soccer.” A seller of wooden kitchenware said he broke even only because he sold World Cup merchandise on the side, as demand for his wares dropped. By the time most licensed vendors realized there would not be a ban or a crackdown on World Cup merchandise, however, wholesale prices were up and retail sales had slowed down.<sup>9</sup>

For unlicensed peddlers, the simple act of trading on public spaces constitutes an infraction, and the enforcement of specific regulations is less of a concern than the breath of policing. In anticipation of a major crackdown, Rodrigo, an unlicensed street vendor whose wares were confiscated a few days before the tournament, decided not to work.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, unlicensed peddlers at the subway station where the stadium was built expressed concern and disgruntlement, one of them going so far as to wish that a major disaster would disrupt the entire event. By and large, however, unlicensed hawkers, who are used to eluding police on a daily basis, did not show much concern. And some interviewees looked forward to the World Cup as an opportunity to increase their income by catering to tourists and fans.

For two weeks before kick-off, virtually all unlicensed street vendors on 25 de Março had been selling World Cup merchandise, especially green and yellow air horns which they sounded to attract customers, turning the place into a deafening mayhem. Only two of the unlicensed vendors I knew did not substitute their usual wares for World Cup merchandise. One of them was Blondine, a single mother in her forties who sold battery-powered massagers for anywhere between 8 and 20 USD apiece. When I asked her why, she replied that she felt repression was harsher on those selling World Cup products and that she was afraid. Besides, massagers sales had improved since there was less competition. Yet her friend Tina, another middle-aged woman proud of being an “independent mother” thanks to her earnings from street vending was not only selling World Cup merchandise but had brought her teenage son to help along.

On the opening day of the World Cup, when Brazil faced Croatia in São Paulo, the 25 de Março street was bustling as usual.

When I arrived, at around ten in the morning, I ran into Maria and Nora, a lesbian couple in their early twenties who had moved in together and supported themselves by selling children toys on the streets without license. They were not working and looked concerned while chatting with other peddlers whom I did not know. They asked me if I had seen Bryan, a mutual friend, who also worked as a peddler in the area. Even though they were not working and were technically not subject to confiscations, we moved into a nearby shopping mall where they felt safer and, from there, reached Bryan by phone. He joined us at the mall carrying a huge Brazilian flag (at least one by one-and-a-half meters) for which he was asking 50 reais (22 USD). They chatted. He agreed that the place was “wet” (*molhado*), the slang term for tightly policed. For a while, the small group remained in silence. Then Bryan said, “All right. I need to work. I can’t stay idle (*ficar parado*),” and stepped into the street. I asked the girls if they were also going. “In these conditions?” Nora told me, “We can’t.” (Fieldnotes, June 12, 2014).

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with licensed street vendor, August 2014.

<sup>10</sup> All names are pseudonyms.

After the opening day, however, police repression seemed to recede to its usual levels. In fact, most vendors on that street said policing was not harsher during the event. One interviewee said the police went after the air horns, because of the noise, but not the flags. Even Maria said she did not sense an overall increase in repression in a post-World Cup interview. Sales of World Cup merchandise went on for one week after kickoff, then fell sharply. One of the unlicensed peddlers working in the area said his income increased by around 2,000 reais (880 USD)<sup>11</sup> as a result of World Cup sales, about a fifty percent bump at that location. Another vendor whose earnings went up said he had worked longer hours, at various locations, to clear his stock of World Cup merchandise.

Even though not all unlicensed vendors sold soccer paraphernalia across town, sales of World Cup merchandise were widespread, from busy streets to traffic lights (see Fig. 1). Even a destitute peddler selling cheap used plastic accessories on a sidewalk added a few green and yellow bracelets to the corner of the ragged tarp on which he showcased his wares. Rodrigo, the peddler who decided not to work after his stock was confiscated before the World Cup, said he was surprised to see some of his colleagues display their wares on the sidewalks during the tournament, including Brazilian jerseys, without sanctions. In the view of another peddler, the police did not dare to crack down “out of respect for the national flag,” even if some of them did have their wares apprehended. A street artist—i.e., a performer or vendor who makes her own products by hand and is given credentials to work on the sidewalks—said she added green and yellow threads to the handicrafts she knitted—and sold well. Another street artist said he did not offer (manufactured) World Cup merchandise because that was the a condition the city imposed to let them work, but that some of his colleagues did—“they became peddlers.”<sup>12</sup>

Whatever motivated police restraint, the idea that national symbols lay beyond FIFA’s proprietary claims, despite the commercial interest spurred by the tournament, was shared by peddlers and civil servants alike, and street vendors benefitted from it. Incidentally, participating in this market did not require adherence to the underlying narrative. Waving a huge Brazilian flag, an unlicensed street vendor on 25 de Março shouted: “Buy a flag of Brazil, the most beautiful country,” and, jocularly, “Buy a flag of Brazil, the most corrupt of nations.”

It is noteworthy that the vulnerability experienced by the licensed minority deterred many street vendors from entering the market in the absence of reliable information on enforcement and regulations. Even though licensed vendors are used to transgressing regulations, they know some infractions can have dramatic consequences on their livelihoods and lacked antecedents in this case. Paradoxically, licenses are intended to decrease informal workers’ precariousness.

### *Policed monopolies*

Three weeks before the June 12 kick-off, the government deployed an additional 4,265 Military Police officers at 40 strategic spots across the city, where tourists were expected (Tomaz 2014). On the afternoon of Sunday, May 25, two policemen approached the group of unlicensed vendors at the stadium subway station to let them know shifts would double and peddlers would no longer be able to work at that location. “These are bad times, for you and for us,” the police officer said. By the end of the tournament, there were only 12 street vendors left, out of 30 or so. They said that their absent colleagues had deserted the venue or the trade and conveyed stories of increased hardship for everyone. These stories echo testimonies collected at the

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<sup>11</sup> Conversions are based on the exchange rate at the time of the World Cup.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with street artist, July 19, 2014.

historic square of Santa Catarina, another touristic spot, where unlicensed food vendors had a hard time trading due to increased policing and set up a system of interpersonal loans to get by.

Around the Fan Fest, however, street vending dynamics were more diverse. The Fan Fest park covered about half of the oblong pedestrian plaza on which it was located, between two subway stations. The high metal fences enclosing the park were guarded by private security personnel while Military Police officers monitored the two entrance gates and the surrounding area and the Municipal Guard patrolled street vending in the vicinity. Fan turnout at the Fan Fest varied sharply depending on what countries were playing. Unlicensed peddlers only took a chance when the plaza was crowded, that is, during the games of the Brazilian national team and in the final rounds of the tournament. Because the streets were cluttered, street vendors did not have to constantly run from law-enforcement as they do in their daily work routines. Instead, they blended in with the crowd while discretely offering merchandise—usually cans of beer, soda, or water bottles—to people around them. They carried the merchandise concealed in their backpacks, in large plastic bags, or, occasionally, in buckets or coolers.

As the tournament advanced and policing increased, the number of unlicensed peddlers in the ACR of the Fan Fest declined. During a walking survey around the ACR conducted half an hour before Brazil's second game, I counted 44 unlicensed street vendors. On the day of Brazil's following game, with a crowd of similar proportions, I counted only 24 street vendors. Towards the end of the tournament, the police would cordon off an area containing the Fan Fest and some adjacent space, making it harder for peddlers to cater to fans on the waiting line.

Other unlicensed vendors stationed themselves at strategic spots where they had access to large flows of pedestrians with minimal exposure. Thus, on the stairs leading to a bridge between the main subway station and the entrance of the Fan Fest, a woman sold beer cans from an open backpack. She was sitting on the stairs, about halfway up, leaning against the wall so she could not be spotted from the bridge. The flow of fans going up and down the stairs further protected her from view by police officers in the plaza. A lookout was stationed at the bottom of the stairs and another one at the top. If police approached by either end, the lookout would tip the seller who would then close the backpack, put it on, and exit the stairs by the opposite end.

Big business lay *inside* the Fan Fest, however, the most regulated space after the stadium. There, the market was literally captive, as fans were checked at the entrance by security personnel and forbidden from bringing in any beverages. Prices reflected this state of affairs. Whereas in the ACR a can of beer from an unlicensed peddler went for 3 *reais* (1.33 USD), inside the Fan Fest, where the Brazilian beer giant Anheuser-Busch InBev had a monopoly, the going price for the same can of beer was 6 *reais* (\$2.65 USD) and the volume of sales was much larger. Not only was access to the Fan Fest harder for peddlers as a result of its metal fences; circulating inside with a backpack marked you immediately as a suspect, and surveillance was higher. Moreover, the expected sanctions in case of apprehension were heavier. As one peddler explained in an interview, "When you get caught in an open space, on the streets, that's fine. But in an enclosed space, it's different. You are way more vulnerable."<sup>13</sup> Entering the beer market inside the Fan Fest thus required overcoming multiple barriers, physical and psychological.

Yet a small group of unlicensed peddlers did sell beer inside the Fan Fest. In an interview conducted after the tournament, an experienced unlicensed peddler explained how he proceeded. After filling up his backpack with cans of beer, he would pay a bribe to one of the security guards—50 *reais* (22 USD) per passage—to let him jump over the fence. A confederate

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with unlicensed street vendor, August 4. This interviewee said, quite tellingly, that the square was enclosed (*fechado*) "by Brahma," the official beer sponsor.

(his girlfriend) stood on the line to enter as a regular fan. Once inside the park, they met at an agreed-upon location. She would then keep the backpack full of beer cans at her feet while pretending to watch the game. In the meantime, he would go around selling one can at a time. When the stock sold out, the cycle began anew: He exited through the gates, with his empty backpack, filled it with beers, and jumped over the fence while she waited for him inside.

Licensed peddlers, for their part, are tied to the locations of their stalls stated on the licenses, most of which were removed from World Cup gatherings, and during big game days most businesses shut down anyway. Moreover, license holders are not, under any circumstances, allowed to sell alcoholic beverages. The municipal bill regulating street trade (DL 11,039) explicitly prohibits the sale of alcoholic beverages, which could lead to a revocation of the license. Despite witnessing multiple irregularities, I never saw a vendor offer a can of beer from a licensed stall in ten months of fieldwork prior to the World Cup or during the event.

The street vendors who subverted sponsor monopolies at official event sites were therefore unlicensed—as were those who lost their livelihoods, like the peddlers at the subway station. Even for successful peddlers, however, financial gains were far from extraordinary. At every World Cup, on the other hand, Brazil’s games are broadcast on public squares, with far less police presence and without ad hoc regulations. Some of the same peddlers interviewed for this study sell beverages and snack without license at these showings. Hence Bryan’s pointed remark: “The World Cup is good for our business, so long as it is held abroad.”

### *Peddling images*

In an effort to quell public criticism about the costs and exclusionary effects of hosting the World Cup, organizers launched an initiative to enlist street vendors as commission sellers of sponsor products in areas of commercial restriction. The making of this policy involved multiple meetings between city officials, an NGO working with street vendors, and representatives of street vendors associated with the NGO. NGO employees eventually withdrew from the talks, but the street vendors they had brought remained at the table. A final agreement between the latter and city officials was signed one month before the World Cup. Despite initial claims that 1,000 street vendors would be able work at six different locations, the number was reduced to 600 peddlers at only two locations: the Fan Fest (200 slots) and the stadium (400 slots).

Registered vendors would sell at a fixed official price of 5 *reais* (\$2.25 USD) beer cans from a single brand sponsoring the World Cup and supplied to them by a designated provider while pocketing 30 percent of the value of the sales. Recruitment of participants was left in the hands of the three street vendors who attended the meetings of the working group. However, parallel negotiations took place between the head of the district where the stadium is located and the leader of a local association that also worked with street vendors, who took care of recruitment around the stadium.

Interviews conducted around the stadium suggest that some of the participants were not street vendors but had been recruited through other networks. Moreover, the association charged an unlawful fee of 30 *reais* (\$13 USD) to all recruits, the proceeds of which were pocketed by the leaders. Additionally, suspicion towards the leadership discouraged street vendors at a nearby park, for whom the program was partially intended, to register. Nevertheless, one of the unlicensed street vendors who used to work at the stadium subway station and signed up to work in the stadium ACR reported making 180 *reais* (\$80 USD) in one game. But logistical problems with supply and changes in the times peddlers were allowed work limited gains. At the end of the tournament, the local leaders charged participants another 10 *reais* (\$4.45 USD).

Sales around the Fan Fest were low throughout the event. Even though the group never reached the projected number of 200 vendors, the roughly 90 vendors present on the first day were far too many considering the size of the ACR. They ended up selling within feet of one another. Poor logistics on the part of the contractor in charge of supplying the merchandise delayed the operation. On the first day, due to a strike by inspectors ( *fiscais*), registered vendors faced the competition of unlicensed vendors who sold beer by their side for lower prices while making bigger margins. Even after the crackdown that followed the free-for-all of the opening day, registered vendors still had to compete with the bars in the area, which were allowed to continue operating normally and offered a larger variety of beers at more competitive prices.

As a result, many participants deserted the program after the first day. One of those who continued was Natalia, a street vendor whose license had been revoked and who lacked other sources of income. As an evangelical, selling beer went against her religious beliefs, but she felt she had no choice. Like others, however, she complained it was not worth it. Some days vendors sold only one or two drinks, some days they sold nothing; on a good day, Natalia said she made about 50 reais (\$22 USD). The only vendor who acknowledged making a profit broke the rules by buying the merchandise underhandedly at a store instead of from the designated provider. The supplier, on the other hand, said that a number of peddlers who signed up for the program took off with the merchandise, leaving a 700 USD debt that the city offered to cover. Despite the shortfalls, FIFA mentioned this experiment as an example of the World Cup's inclusive legacy, citing the official participation figure, far above actual numbers. For his part, the civil servant who designed the program, touting it as a blueprint for future events, lamented that it had no lasting impact, and that policymakers would have to start from scratch next time.

## Discussion

Soon after the 2014 World Cup ended the Brazilian economy collapsed. A massive corruption scandal engulfed the entire political system. Then-president Dilma Rousseff secured reelection in November by a slight margin but was impeached two years later in what her supporters described as a coup. By the time of the 2016 Rio Olympics, the country was deep into its worst recession on record.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, FIFA was facing a massive corruption scandal of its own, which forced the resignation of its president, Sepp Blatter, and led to the indictment of several high-ranking officials. Some of the corruption allegations against FIFA and the Brazilian government involved kick-backs in the construction of stadiums or the illicit resale of World Cup tickets. The mega-events were not the sole or even the main reason behind the country's demise, but they certainly contributed to it.

It is not as though Brazilians did not see this coming. The massive protests that took place one year before the World Cup denounced corruption, FIFA's hosting requirements, and even social exclusion. It is likely that these protests, which gathered international attention, led FIFA and the Brazilian government to relax some of the most exclusionary clauses during the tournament. Perhaps exclusion zones were smaller than first planned to preempt public criticism, and perhaps the police crackdown would have been more widespread were it not for the public outrage. At the same time, the protests put the country's security apparatus on high alert.

Regardless of the protests and their impact, the Brazilian state had limited enforcement capacities to begin with. And the observed outcome was what was to be expected under these circumstances: a high concentration of police forces at strategic locations, especially official

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<sup>14</sup> See BBC "Brazil's recession worst on record" at <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-39193748>. Published March 7, 2017. Accessed December 6, 2018.

event sites such as the Fan Fest and the stadium. Even there, however, a number of unlicensed street vendors managed to break through the security barriers and cater to fans around and even inside the Fan Fest. The strategies they used include some of those already identified in the street vending literature—i.e., mobility, passive networking, and bribes. To these one may add a) embeddedness in crowds, and b) active networking, that is, coordinated action among individuals who knew and trusted each other, and used a forethought “scheme” (*esquema*) or plan, as in the case of the lady with the lookouts on the stairs or the couple inside the Fan Fest.

Putting these strategies into action involved significant risk and thus attracted risk-takers, especially young men. Some of them were experienced peddlers used to taking risks. Others were not “professionals” but enjoyed the adrenaline, like the street vendor’s girlfriend in the Fan Fest. Still others, such as the young tapioca seller, were neophytes unaware of the risks they were taking. Beyond the propensity to take risks, longtime unlicensed peddlers may also have benefitted from the skills developed in their trade. Unlicensed peddlers know, for example, that you do not wait until you see the policeman to take off—you run when you see other peddlers run.<sup>15</sup> As I observed the young tapioca seller from above, I was surprised that he did not move while other street vendors around him dispersed hastily. I later learned it was his first try at the business. The sophistication of some of the *esquemas* also suggests they were run by experienced vendors (this was the case for the vendor in the couple). Finally, unlicensed street vendors are socialized, through their trade, into working routinely at the margins of the law.

Informal workers’ flexible relation to legal norms is significant in other respects. Bourdieu’s (1977) first analysis of symbolic capital is based on his fieldwork in an agrarian society of Kabylia, where symbolic capital consists mostly in the honor and prestige held by some notable families of the village, who also happen to be among the largest landowners. Bourdieu insists on the “perfect interconvertibility” (p. 177) between symbolic and economic capital, as gifts and credit are converted into favors and work—“unpaid assistance of [an] extended group” (p. 179)—which are in time reciprocated through other gifts or protection. But Bourdieu also suggests that the conversion of symbolic capital into personal favors becomes less relevant with capitalism, as the law and the market regulate relations between employers and workers, which grow “cold” and contractual. However, the legal institutions of capitalism have not reached all corners of the world with equal strength and depth. Informality flourishes precisely in those parts of the world where economic relations are not yet (or no longer) fully institutionalized. In response to this state of affairs, De Soto (1989) claims that securing property rights should be a policy priority; it would make informal economies less informal, hence more productive. Yet this theory neglects that postindustrial markets are highly concentrated by design, that exclusion of competitors is the norm, and that intellectual property is central to their operation. Under these conditions, acting outside the institutional framework gives an edge to informal market challengers who, were they to play by the rules, would be excluded from the party.

It is also significant, in this regard, that those further at the margins of the legal order—that is, unlicensed street vendors—had more flexibility to challenge the exclusionary rules imposed by organizers. Some licensed street vendors sold World Cup paraphernalia and made profits, especially on the 25 de Março. The fact that a number of the stalls on this street belong to leaders of licensed street vendors raises the possibility of an informal arrangement with local authorities. I observed much political clientelism during my year of fieldwork, but I did not learn of arrangements for the World Cup, which one of the most influential licensed street vendors’ leader described dismissively as a passing event. Even in the absence of collusion with authorities, however, access to reliable information about the rules is an advantage that street

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with unlicensed street vendors, August 4, 2014.

vendors' leaders had—and used. In any case, it was unlicensed vendors who sold drinks own-account around and inside the Fan Fest, and who offered World Cup paraphernalia citywide.

As in the pre-capitalist economy studied by Bourdieu, profitmaking in postindustrial markets relies on the monetization of symbolic capital. Famous brands derive their profits from their name and then invest a significant share of those profits in upholding (or updating) their image, mostly through advertisement. World Cup organizers cultivate the image of the event as an inclusive, electrifying international festivity and a spectacular display of talent and sportsmanship. A cynical view—held and voiced by many protesters—argues that the mystical aura of the event is, like the beliefs and rituals of Kabilyan peasants, but a symbolic screen that conceals the moneymaking logic of the industry and the flows of money from the pockets of mesmerized consumers to a corruption-ridden organization.<sup>16</sup> The fetishism of the emotional consumer experience in postindustrial markets replaces the fetishism of the material commodity in industrial consumer markets. Whether or not one adheres to this view, the protests certainly diminished FIFA's symbolic capital—its “standing” in the eyes of the public (Bourdieu 1977)—and potentially depressed consumer enthusiasm—and spending—before and during the tournament. In a word, the protests disenchanted the event. And the “symbolic” attempts to restore part of that capital through the official policy to incorporate street vendors as commission sellers were undermined, among other factors, by the program's design, which, in its tight regulation of products, suppliers, and prices, reflected the exclusionary logic of postindustrial markets.

But World Cup organizers encountered other barriers in their efforts to capitalize on the charm of their product. In business as in politics, the nation is an endless source of dividends. Its symbols, including its colors, its flag, and its songs, are used by political and corporate actors alike—from the GOP to the NFL. The World Cup and the Olympic Games derive much of their charm from representing nations and staging peaceful contests among them. As that civil servant pointed out, however, you cannot trademark a country. Local conceptions of the nation and its imagery as a public good encouraged street vendors (including, ironically, some foreigners) to trade in World Cup paraphernalia. This use of the nation as an economic resource by the poor echoes the thesis of Chatterjee (2004) on the political meaning of popular sovereignty in countries where a majority of the population is sidelined by political institutions but nonetheless feels entitled to make claims on the state on grounds of national belonging (see also Agarwala 2008). Moreover, this shared symbolic capital is not limited to national identity in a narrow sense.<sup>17</sup> In Cape Town, a Black woman with a stall at Greenmarket square explained to me that organizers of the 2010 World Cup did not try to evict her and her fellow street vendors because the square had hosted a slave market in the past. Evicting poor Black traders would have awoken old ghosts in a country still grappling with a legacy of racial oppression.

For all the circumstances that enabled a fraction of São Paulo's street vendors to capture a fraction of the World Cup bounty, Brazilians as a whole, and the poor in particular, paid dearly for the event. Much of the revenue was siphoned off out of the country in tax-exempt transactions, construction companies like Odebrecht pocketed millions in taxpayer money while engaging in criminal behavior, and the Brazilian people are still grappling with the fiscal and economic crises that ensued. Hence this final caveat. Informal entrepreneurs have the means to tap into (some) postindustrial markets, but the macroeconomic effects of these

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<sup>16</sup> Bourdieu (1977) is critical of this view, which he refers to as economism, while still holding that rituals “disguise” actual (and unequal) exchanges of resources.

<sup>17</sup> Incumbents, not just challengers, can also take advantage of these symbolic commons, as Coca Cola's commercial use of Santa Claus and Christmas imagery illustrates.

markets' expansion in countries with a large informal labor force are by no means a blessing. In fact, these markets' potential role in fostering a transition of part of the informal workforce towards other survival strategies such as migration or crime is a question in need of further research.

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#### Short Bio:

Jacinto Cuvi is a postdoc at the University of Neuchatel. He is the author of "The Politics of Field Destruction" published in *Social Problems* (2016) and "The Peddlers' Aristocracy" published in *Qualitative Sociology* (2018). He is interested in how civil servants perceive and relate to informal workers as well as in the boundary between informality and crime.

#### FIGURE 1: UNLICENSED PEDDLERS AT WORK DURING THE WORLD CUP



Source: Eyewitness

