



The African Diaspora in Times of Covid-19: Tourism and Itinerant Street Vendors on the Southern European Border

Susana Moreno-Maestro*

Abstract

Within a conceptual framework proposed by the African Union, which views the diaspora as a sixth African region, this article analyses the economic situation of Senegalese street vendors in the city of Seville, in the southern European border region. For this community, street trading is the most important economic activity and source of income, of which tourism is a significant market. Using an ethnographic methodology, including interviews with street vendors, City Council officials, a lawyer-activist and observation, the study examines institutional perceptions and the treatment of Senegalese street vendors within the administrative and planning processes of the public administration, and the relationship this has with tourism. The results show how ethnocentric prejudices and criminalising stereotypes influence local administration policy. The analysis also examines the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of the lack of institutional assistance for this population group, how the Senegalese population coped with the economic impact of lockdown through their own networks and support systems, and by migrating outward. The results presented in this article are part of a broader research project on urban development and sociospatial impacts of tourism in large cities in Andalusia, Spain (PAIDI-FEDER 2020: R+D+i Project).

Keywords: African diaspora; itinerant street trading; Senegalese economy; Seville

* Professor of Anthropology, University of Seville, Andalusia, Spain.
Email: susanamm@us.es

Résumé

Dans un cadre conceptuel proposé par l'Union africaine, qui considère la diaspora comme la sixième région africaine, l'article analyse la situation économique des vendeurs ambulants sénégalais de la ville de Séville, dans la région frontalière sud de l'Europe. Pour cette communauté, le commerce de rue constitue l'activité économique et la source de revenus les plus importantes, le tourisme constituant un important marché. Utilisant une méthodologie ethnographique, comprenant des entretiens avec des vendeurs de rue, des responsables du conseil municipal, un avocat-activiste et des observations, l'étude examine les perceptions institutionnelles et le traitement des vendeurs de rue sénégalais dans les processus administratifs et de planification de l'administration publique, et la relation de ces facteurs avec le tourisme. Les résultats montrent comment les préjugés ethnocentriques et les stéréotypes criminalisants influencent la politique de l'administration locale. L'analyse examine également l'impact de la pandémie de Covid-19 en termes de manque d'assistance institutionnelle pour ce groupe de population, la manière dont la population sénégalaise a fait face à l'impact économique du confinement grâce à ses propres réseaux et systèmes de soutien, et en migrant vers l'extérieur. Les résultats présentés dans cet article font partie d'un projet de recherche plus large sur le développement urbain et les impacts sociospatiaux du tourisme dans les grandes villes d'Andalousie, en Espagne (PAIDI-FEDER 2020 : Projet R+D+i).

Mots-clés : diaspora africaine ; commerçant ambulant ; économie sénégalaise ; Séville

Introduction

The African Union has denominated the diaspora as the sixth African region, defining it as 'peoples of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent'.¹ In an increasingly interdependent world, the dispersal of large numbers of expatriates around the globe presents a challenge to the physical borders of states. In 'diasporic states' (Zoomers and Adepoju 2008), borders are redefined by the emergence of transnational communities in which people organise their lives simultaneously in various geographic spaces. Processes of identity construction take the territory of origin as the point of reference for *African existence* (Izard Martínez 2005), but the realities of this existence – social, economic, cultural, etc. – are territorialised beyond the continent. The reconstruction of identity therefore also entails the reconstruction of territory. This is the case with the diaspora economies that are rooted in the cultural logic of Africa but inserted in the economic, legal-political and social reality of the destination country.

The 600,000 Senegalese immigrants living abroad in 2019 are part of this African diaspora (Naranjo 2019) and can clearly be considered a 'diasporic state'.² That Spain is part of this diasporic state is evident in an abundant body of academic work on this population in relation to themes such as religion (Moreno-Maestro 2019; Massó Guijarro 2013), co-development (Llevot Calvet and Demba Fall 2017), and migratory networks (Jabardo 2006), among others. At a political level, the existence of social security agreements between Senegal and Spain is a good example of the transnational dynamics of this population and territorialisation on both continents.³

This article analyses the economic activity of the Senegalese population in the city of Seville, located in the southern European border region of Andalusia (Spain), many of whom engage in legal and illegal itinerant street trading.⁴ The article examines the administrative regulations and practices that govern and define legal street trading, attitudes towards legal and illegal vendors, and the diffuse relationship between legal and illegal street trading in the Senegalese population.

The fundamental questions that guided the research are the following: given Seville's heavy reliance on tourism, what place does street trading, the main activity of the Senegalese in Seville, occupy in the local authority's urban development and design plans? How is the existence of the African population in the city, especially the Senegalese, affected by local planning policies? And finally, what are the impact and repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic on itinerant street trading, and what are the responses by public institutions and the Senegalese community themselves to the consequent loss of income?

The structure of the article, after explaining the methodological aspects, questions the social imaginary that surrounds street trading and the people who practise it. To this end, the analysis explores the problems shared by all street vendors and those specific to the migrant population, particularly the Senegalese. In the second part, the article analyses, on the one hand, local administration policy regarding street trade and the relationship with the tourism sector and, on the other hand, the organisation of Senegalese street vendors. Finally, the article analyses how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected street trade and the responses in this regard given by the local administration and the Senegalese community in the city of Seville.

Methodology

The study is framed by an Afrocentric approach in order to avoid essentialist categories that tend to invisibilise the perceptions and experiences of the African diaspora, in particular the importance of the connection between the economy and other spheres of life.

During the fieldwork, I conducted interviews with the Seville City Council officials who are responsible for street trading,⁴ Senegalese street vendors, and a lawyer-activist who defends street vendors' rights. The data collection also involved observation in various street markets, including the Parque Alcosa Street Market, one of the largest weekly markets in the city, and others in the historic centre of the city.

The interviews were conducted in the period following the lockdown that resulted from the Covid-19 pandemic, from March to September 2021. The interviews were semi-structured with two objectives:

1. to obtain concrete answers about local administration policy and social issues related to street trading;
2. to bring out perceptions and issues felt to be important by the actors.

Observations in street markets were fundamental to perceive the dynamics and meanings of these contexts.

Taking the local Senegalese population of street vendors as the unit of observation permitted a twofold analysis: on one side, the relationship between tourism and immigration, and on the other, the practices of local institutions in terms of perceptions and the administration of street trading and vendors.

To organise, understand and interpret the information gathered in the course of the research, I used thematic analysis processes. I transcribed all the interviews and ordered the descriptions and annotations of the fieldwork. In this way, I identified the main themes of the problems to be analysed and constructed the text based on the understanding and interpretation of the information gathered through the methods used (semi-structured interviews, informal conversations and observation).

The article includes quotations from interviews with informants that were recorded and transcribed. In order to safeguard informants' identities, the City Council officials are identified by their departments only, whereas the street vendors are identified by pseudonyms.⁶

The Context of Itinerant Street Trading in Times of Covid-19

The Social Imaginary of Itinerant Street Trading

Street vendors are at a fundamental disadvantage because, in the social imaginary, the type of business they carry out is often not perceived as being of equal measure to other economic activity. This is reflected in their treatment by public institutions, as evident in the following extract from an interview with a City Council official:

... they are business people just the same, the type of business, they do it differently, but most of them are proper self-employed business people.

(Official, Department of Economy and Commerce, Relations with the University Community and Metropolitan Area)⁷

Thus, while recognising the validity of their status as business people, the 'different' way they carry out their activity means that they are differentiated by policymakers and this is subsequently translated into administrative practice.

The institutional interpretation of itinerant street vendors' business activity is strongly influenced by perceptions of this group that are both ethnocentric and criminalising. This can lead to an invalidation of ways of working, forms of life and, therefore, of specific cultures (Espinosa Zepeda 2017). At present, itinerant street trading in Seville is mostly carried out by members of the Gypsy, Ecuadorian and Senegalese communities. Increasingly, it has become a survival strategy for people in situations of extreme economic precarity, which, to a large extent, is a result of ethnic-based institutional discrimination and exclusion. In terms of the Senegalese population, the impact of institutional policy has been enormous because, as Mbaye, a street vendor, pointed out: 'The majority, almost 90 per cent or more of us sell, men and women do itinerant trading in the street market, illegal or not, but most of us are street vendors.'

Institutional discrimination stems mainly, although not exclusively, from the legal framework for third-country foreigners in Spain (Moreno-Maestro 2015). This is compounded by the social imaginary that surrounds Africa and African people, which defines them as permanently in need of assistance and also as victims of heartless organised crime groups.

Even a cursory observation of street trading activity by Senegalese vendors in the street markets in the centre of Seville, such as Plaza del Duque and Parque Alcosa, shows that it is practised by legal licence holders (acquired from the City Council) and illegal vendors or *Manteros* [displaying and selling on blankets]. However, even though non-licensed or illegal street trading is only a part of the overall spectrum of activity, the attitudes of the City Council officials are strongly influenced by media discourses that link all Senegalese street vendors to criminality and organised crime:

Yes, but it's true that the great majority ... There is a problem which is causing a lot of problems for us in Parque Alcosa, which is the illegal immigration around that area. Many of them, or the great majority that you tend to see, are Senegalese ... they go there, I mean, around the itinerant street markets. But I want to make it clear, everybody needs to eat, to earn money, so for them that's the only way. [...] Unfortunately, I'm sure that behind it all is ... the mafia, because, otherwise, it's hard to understand it. (Official, Department of Economy and Commerce).

Itinerant Street Trading and Immigration: A Clarification on 'Papers' and Licences

Among the Senegalese population, legal trading with a stall licence and illegal street trading by Manteros occupy the same urban spaces in the street markets and around shopping centres. However, to understand why one vendor may have a licence to trade in a particular place and another does not, it is necessary to consider the immigration status of the person. Whereas people with irregular immigration status – also known as undocumented or those without papers – are obviously excluded from applying for trading licences, the reality is more complex as even vendors 'with papers' also engage in illegal street trading:

If they see you with the blanket, they chase you. Wherever you are, whatever you're selling. It's because you don't have a licence. It's not for selling fake goods, it's because you don't have a licence. You have to live, so you have to sell, it's illegal selling. Until the police catch you. (Mbaye, vendor)

For those caught by the police, the consequences are not the same for vendors with regularised immigration status and those without. To start with, it affects the possibility of recovering merchandise seized by the police:

In Seville, I sell in Puerta Jerez, Plaza de España, but always trying to stay one step ahead of the police. That's the dodgy part, but I always sell around there. The police have caught me many times, of course. They take the merchandise off me. At the time I had papers.⁸ They take it off me, I say, 'we're going to count the merchandise'. Then, they give me the fine and I go and pay it. It was 90 something euros, less than 100. But now they have put the fines up a lot. (Pap, vendor)

In some cases, when the fine is very high, the vendors say it is not worth getting the merchandise back. If the vendor is undocumented, however, recovering the confiscated merchandise is not even a possibility:

It's very dangerous, from the moment you leave your house until you get home, you're really worried. Because you're going to say, what I have is worth X amount and that's what I have left to pay the rent and eat this month. So, if they take it off me... (Ibrahim, vendor)

The way the vendors are treated by the police depends, in large part, on the product they sell. Normally, vendors who sell counterfeit brands do not have regularised immigration status and, if ever caught trading illegally by the police, it would make the regularisation of their status extremely difficult.

The Local Police caught me in the Nervión [Plaza, shopping centre]. They always say that it's the mafia, that you are involved in counterfeiting. It's an

industrial crime. You have to compensate Nike ... There are people who have paid 300 [euros], there are people who have paid 400. I've paid off the 900 [euro fine]. I was paying 115 every month. I deposited the money in the court. That will go against you, they won't give you papers. When I tried, they said I was a danger to the public. (Ibrahim, vendor)

The Viability of Itinerant Street Trading

The mistreatment that Senegalese street vendors experience by law enforcement, public institutions and the media is a reality they share with other members of the Senegalese diaspora in places such as Argentina (Paccecha, Canelo and Belcic 2017; Marcús and Peralta 2021), Brazil (Brignol and Costa, 2018) and Italy (Ragone and Avallone 2022), or in other parts of Spain such as Barcelona (Espinosa Zepeda 2017; Pérez Rabasa and Jaramillo 2019), Madrid (Vázquez-Aguado 1999) and Grenada (Fernández and Blanco 2017). However, they face other difficulties related to market changes that have had a significant impact on the profitability of street trading, such as an increase in the number of Chinese bazaars, the exponential growth in online shopping through internet giants such as Amazon, and the establishment of large low-price retailers, such as Primark, in local shopping centres.⁹ As the lawyer-activist who specialises in the rights of street vendors explained: 'Before, there were only small shops and El Corte Inglés.¹⁰ We were the cheap alternative.' Thus, itinerant street trading has been experiencing more intense competition that is increasing with the development of new shopping centres, some of which open all day on Sunday. In this respect, there is a similarity with the crisis faced by traditional food markets (Crespi and Domínguez 2016).

From the perspective of the local authorities, however, the reality is almost diametrically opposite. Itinerant street trading is seen as an obstacle to the interests of large retail chains. This point was made by the lawyer-activist:

When IKEA set up its business, where it is, the first thing they did was to talk to the mayor about getting rid of the Castilleja de la Cuesta Street Market.¹¹ The Mayor didn't take the vendors into account, the vendors had to protest, they burned tyres in the middle of the road, cutting off the A49, and because of that they got what they wanted. The same has happened in Huelva. They moved the Friday market to Sunday so there wouldn't be any competition for the shopping centres. (Lawyer-activist for the defence of the rights of street vendors)

This gives an idea of how the occupation of public spaces by itinerant street vendors is directly linked to the interests of large investors, who often exert pressure on the local authorities to prevent them from operating. This is

consistent with Oriard Colin's (2011) observation that when competition for urban space is low, local administrations tolerate street trading, but when investors lobby, they prevent vendors from setting up in 'high-value' streets.

Itinerant Trading in Seville: Regulations and Administrative Competencies

Street trading in Andalusia and the city of Seville is governed by regional law, the most recent of which was passed in 2012,¹² and local authority laws, such as the Seville Municipal Ordinance of 2014.¹³ The city ordinance defines three types of street trading: street markets, street trading and itinerant trading.¹⁴ However, the rationale for this typology requires exploration. To begin with, we can consider that while the Department of Urban Management [Gerencia de Urbanismo] is responsible for issuing licences for all types of trading, authority over the different types of trading is divided between two departments: the Department of Economy and Commerce is responsible for street markets,¹⁵ while the Department of Urban Habitat, Culture and Tourism (a sub-section of the Department of Urban Management) is responsible for street trading and itinerant trading. Although both activities are nominally the same, in terms of frequency of activity (weekly) and exterior locations, City Council officials make a clear distinction between street markets and street trading:

The type of vendor in street markets is different. There, we're talking about artisans, people who make their living from this type of activity. Itinerant street trading is a specific case and in specific occupations. (Official, Department of Urban Habitat, Culture and Tourism)

It is important to observe that, although the Department of Economy and Commerce is supposed to be responsible for the management of markets, the artisan street market in Plaza del Duque (Wednesday to Sunday) and the Historic Thursday Market in Feria Street – both in the historic centre and occupied by trading stalls – are actually under the remit of the Department of Urban Habitat, Culture and Tourism. This points to other criteria for the organisation of responsibilities for street markets. One of the City Council officials responsible for the division of competencies across the two departments made a distinction based on the product being sold, which revolves around the 'artisanal' issue:

Normally, the people from the Duque [street market] are more ... it's a type of occupation and activity that is more artisanal. That's an important difference with the [neighbourhood] street markets. (Official, Department of Urban Habitat, Culture and Tourism)

As a quick search on Google reveals, Plaza del Duque Street Market is called an artisanal street market. However, the Senegalese vendors who have licensed stalls in the market and some other markets run by the Department of Economy and Commerce, such as Parque Alcosa, sell the same products everywhere they operate: wallets, belts, sunglasses, bracelets, leather handbags, backpacks, etc. These are products that they buy wholesale from industrial estates in the city.

The division of responsibility between departments seems to be more closely related to the location of the street markets in the city centre and the implications of this for large investors and tourism. In this respect, the definition of Plaza de Duque as an 'artisanal street market' and the Thursday market in Feria Street as a 'historical street market' are clearly related: both are key to advertising the old town as part of the Seville brand and to make it more attractive to tourists and investors.

The current Plaza del Duque Street Market incorporates the stalls that were previously part of Plaza de la Magdalena Street Market in the old town of the city. This street market disappeared ten years ago to improve the city's spatial planning and provide better services in the commercial area of Seville's old town.¹⁶ That is, the declared purpose responds to what should be the objective of the City Council: the improvement of the living conditions of the city's inhabitants. Following the reorganisation and unification of the two markets, fifty-one stall licences were made available for Plaza del Duque, although the number of active stalls is currently much lower.

A visit to Plaza de la Magdalena following the works to pedestrianise and refurbish that area of the city showed that the two new buildings occupied by the luxury hotel Magdalena Plaza Seville (Radisson Collection Hotel) take up one entire side of the plaza and that the hotel has about twenty covered tables on the newly pedestrianised area.¹⁷ The refurbishment of the plaza also meant that the number 41 and 43 bus stops were relocated to Reyes Católicos Avenue, causing complaints from residents and business owners. The following testimony, from Bibiano Hijón, the owner of the La Flor de Mi Viña bar, was published in the local press and indicates the extent to which local visitors to this part of the city decreased after the redevelopment: 'We have lost a lot of customers that came from Triana on the bus, they had a coffee, walked around the centre, they got back on the bus and went home.'¹⁸

This prompts the question: who was the redevelopment of this public space actually for? The EUR 422,218 that the hotel owners invested in the refurbishment of the plaza would seem to answer this question, in part at least.¹⁹ It appears that the city's management of urban heritage, which

includes changes of regulations for the use and remodelling of spaces, depends, to a great extent, on private interests. Pap, a Senegalese vendor who had a stall in Plaza de la Magdalena before the move to Plaza del Duque, told me:

Before, in Magdalena, yes, they gave you space, but they also took it away. They are taking away spaces, even in Duque they have tried to take them away. Street selling is getting worse and worse. They ask for more, they give you a space, you pay EUR 10 per metre. Next year they ask you for EUR 30 or EUR 25 and so on. (Pap, vendor)

Among the Senegalese vendors who are currently operating in Plaza del Duque, many believe that the City Council wants to remove the market: ‘they are making it more and more difficult, it’s like they don’t want street trading’ (Amadou). The perception that the street vendors are not part of the city’s modernisation plans would seem to correspond to the same model of neoliberal urban development that Molinero-Gerveau and Avallone (2020) have analysed in Salerno, Italy.

Street Trading: Service, Goods or Both?

By examining the two departments of the City Council that are responsible for street trading, the logic of the distinction in the management of street trading becomes more evident. In the Department of Economy and Commerce, street trading comes under its remit as part of ‘Consumption and Trade’.²⁰ In this respect, it is understood to be an activity that, on the one hand, provides essential goods to residents of peripheral neighbourhoods at affordable prices and, on the other hand, allows a sector of the population in a situation of growing precariousness to earn a living as vendors. The following district street markets are managed on this basis: Parque Alcosa, Cerro Amate, Charco de la Pava, Polígono Sur, Pino Montano-Cortijo de las Casillas, Mercatemático, Pino Montano Estrella de Oriente, Polígono San Pablo, San Jerónimo, Tamarguillo, and Torreblanca.

For its part, the Department of Urban Habitat, Culture and Tourism can only be responsible for street trading under the remit of tourism. In other words, according to the City Council’s website, ‘the promotion of the image of the City of Seville, foreign promotion of Seville and the organisation of events aimed at promoting the image of the city’ (authors’ translation).²¹ Within this ambit, the department is also responsible for organising the stalls that are set up at different times of the year, such as the Festival of Nations in the Prado Gardens in San Sebastian, which, in the words of its director:

... was born in the spirit of Expo 92. The first festival was held in 1993 at the Casino de la Exposición [cultural centre], where we were fortunate to keep the spirit of the Expo going. In a very modest way, we picked up that small baton.²²

This is similar to the Nativity Fair [Feria del Belén], which takes place next to the Cathedral and the General Archive of the Indies [Archivo de Indias] and which is organised by the *Asociación de Comerciantes del Belén de Sevilla* [Association of Traders of the Nativity of Seville] (ACOBES). The aim of the fair is to showcase the shops and businesses in the area:

The nativity market, well the same. More Sevillians go there, I mean, because they go for the Nativity Fair, to buy ... But in the end, with all these kinds of things we try to increase the product offering so that tourists go and spend. In the end, it is a whole cycle. (Official, Department of Urban Habitat, Culture and Tourism)

This alone would explain the division of responsibility for street trading into two departments of the City Council and their differentiated management. One relates to consumption for a population with scarce economic resources in peripheral districts (not strictly geographical but in terms of management by the City Council) and another related to tourism and the construction of 'brand Seville', where the artisanal and historical serve as a lure, as long as this does not conflict with the interests of large investors:

Street trading, not just in Seville, but in any tourist city, is a more attractive element. I mean, it's something more to offer. Let's just say it's a very topical issue in cities. Cordoba,²³ for example, has a conception of tourism that is very similar to ours, with its historic old town. If you go for a walk in the old town in Cordoba, you see a lot of street trading of artisanal products and all that type of thing. (Official, Department of Urban Habitat, Culture, and Tourism)

The 'Self-Production' of the City: Regulatory Versus Social Reality of Street Trading

Cities are constructed not only by the interventions of public administrations and private investors, but also through the customs and practices of its inhabitants – that is, by people and their everyday lives, what Oriard Colin (2011) calls the 'self-production' of the city. Although regulations enacted in the city of Seville establish an administrative division in order to implement planning policy and urban design proposals, particularly in the historic centre, they are much less relevant to street vendors, even though they obviously must take the different types of customers, local or tourist,

into account. Most commonly, street vendors work on the basis of specific routes and require a licence for each place where they set up. Routes may include the historic centre of Seville and other parts of the city frequented by tourists, as well as neighbourhood markets in the capital and nearby towns and provinces.

As well as Plaza del Duque Street Market, Senegalese vendors have been granted licences for fixed stalls in other parts of the city, such as the neighbourhoods of Triana and Remedios, around the Nervión Plaza Shopping Centre, in locations such as the Gran Plaza, Su Eminencia and Jardines de El Prado, etc. Although a stall licence is in the name of a specific person, other family members may operate it, as street trading is often a family business: 'My husband is a vendor, like most of us. At the moment, I'm helping my husband. I work with my husband, helping him' (Tako, vendor). Fairs and beaches, which are closely linked to seasonal tourism, are also of fundamental importance to the vendors' trading routes: 'I've always gone to the fairs to sell' (Aïcha, vendor).

Selling to tourists, domestic or foreign, and other local customers is part of the daily practice of street trading. The main question is how to diversify sales strategies:

I went to all the markets. I went everywhere. Every day we had a different street market. On Mondays, [I went] to a town near here, Guillena. It's a street market that's worthless, but you have to go, you don't know what day it might be good. On Tuesdays, I went to Los Palacios.²⁴ Wednesdays, Palma del Río.²⁵ Fridays, Huelva in the morning, Mazagón beach in the afternoon. [...] To the fairs, to a part of the mountains, I went to almost all the towns. To the Sierra Norte. And to Huelva too. To Aracena, to Aroche, and all over the place. You have a route. (Pap, vendor)

At the time of the research, Pap sold earrings, bracelets and anklets to shops that specialised in African products and to other Senegalese vendors, who were often undocumented and sold on different beaches in Andalusia. In other words, the vendors used a variety of sales strategies that incorporated different places, forms of business, and people with regular and irregular immigration status.

Support for the Self-employed During the Pandemic: The Collective Organisation of the Senegalese in the Face of Indifference from Public Institutions

The charges for each licence the vendors buy vary according to the size of the stall space. This means that it is not uncommon for vendors to be behind on payments, as well as having difficulty keeping up with self-employment taxes and social security contributions:

It is so easy to fall behind with payments, such as local taxes, because on each route you have to pay licence fees to set up on public roads, apart from general taxes [social security contributions and personal tax]. [Licence fees for] setting up on public roads also includes the cost of security, access to the market circuit, and also rubbish collection. (Lawyer-activist)

In relation to this, Mbaye told me:

Street trading is getting worse and worse. It's not because of competition. You have to pay the licence and that. And no one applies for it, for street trading. You don't make enough to pay for it. Everyone is in debt. (Mbaye, vendor)

In relation to the cost of licence and stall fees, Seville City Council permits the payment of debts in instalments. It has also allowed deferrals and exemptions due to the difficulties caused by lockdown measures during the pandemic. However, a key issue relates to access, or lack of it, to municipal assistance for the self-employed to help with financial difficulties caused by the pandemic. In many cases, street vendors may have been registered as self-employed and paying the appropriate tax when they took out the trading licence, but at the time that they required financial assistance had signed off the register due to lack of work. This issue is recognised by City Council officials: 'When they were given the licence, they were registered as self-employed, but I guarantee you that today ...' (Official, Department of Economy and Commerce).

Others may have accumulated debt which disqualified them from accessing financial support. In other words, street vendors have been excluded from this type of institutional assistance, even though the official I interviewed in the Department of Economy and Commerce recognised that 'in general, they were self-employed, self-employed and small and medium-sized businesses'. But also, 'None of them got it because they had signed off the register, others because they had debts. So, there was a large number of people that didn't get the government assistance.' The official explained the reasons for lack of support:

The assistance we gave was to people who had closed their businesses. It's true that street trading also closed down. What happened? We didn't think about giving assistance to street vendors because the first criteria that the general law for subventions sets out is that you have to be registered [as self-employed] and up to date with all taxes. If we start to give financial assistance to that group, unfortunately, they owe this, and this and this. (Official, Department of Economy and Commerce)

Due to the lack of assistance from public institutions during lockdown, Senegalese street vendors had to rely on their own resources and networks. For this reason, they decided to use EUR 6,500 from a community fund to

purchase food for Senegalese and some other African families in the city. This money included EUR 3,000 from the Social Fund,²⁶ EUR 3,000 provided by the *dahira* Mouride,²⁷ and EUR 500 by the *dahira* Tidjanne:

When the pandemic came, we thought that as most Senegalese are in their homes, and cannot go out, we would try and do something. And we decided to buy food to give to the Senegalese. In the end, we reached 160 families. We included Senegalese and Africans because there were some people from Mali and others from Guinea, others from I don't know where, and we helped them. Only during the lockdown because that's not the objective of the association [the Social Fund]. (Mbaye, vendor)

In terms of paying rent, sharing an apartment with people of the same origin made the situation more bearable for many in the community, because 'if one has nothing because they have no job, it is understood [that they cannot contribute at that time]' (Pap, vendor). Other networks, mainly local neighbourhood ones, for example around Plaza del Pumarejo in the city, were also used to help families pay rent and electricity.

Without doubt, these resources and assistance made the difficulties of the pandemic easier, but they did not solve them. Following long periods of inactivity in street trading, many Senegalese decided to leave Seville for Huelva 'when they were looking for people to work in the fields' (Amadou, vendor) or other places.

'If We Stop People Selling, Where Can We Go?': Perspectives of the Senegalese Diaspora Post-Covid

The Department of Economy and Commerce of the Seville City Council stated that the reopening of the street markets after the lockdown:

... is a regulatory issue at central and regional level, because of social distancing. They opened 100 per cent of the [street markets] they could: Cerro Amate, which has 36 [stall licences], Polígono Sur, which has 41, they opened from the beginning at one hundred per cent. But, for example, Parque Alcosa was at 50 per cent for a while. (Official, Department of Economy and Commerce)

In terms of fixed stalls in the city centre, the Department of Urban Habitat, Culture and Tourism stated that there were places where stalls had traditionally been established but that following the lockdown it had not been possible to set them up again:

hasn't been possible, for Covid safety reasons, because of capacity limits, related to the shopping centres, to more commercial areas of the city, for example. If I recall, in Nervión, in the area close to Nervión shopping

centre, I think there were specific areas where there were always stalls for street trading and the year before, well, there were less, because the reasoning behind the Covid measures meant that the entries and exits were ..., well, all the health security issues. (Official, Department of Urban Habitat, Culture, and Tourism)

Although a significant number of Senegalese have resumed street trading following the lockdown, many stalls have not returned. Some, as we have just seen, were not allowed to return. However, the reality is that while most of the licences are still active, many street vendors have not set up stalls, because, according to them, it does not pay.

Right now, sales are getting worse and worse. Right now, it's very difficult because people are reluctant to buy, because of everything that has happened ... People are still afraid. (Pap, vendor)

This fear of buying from street vendors was corroborated by a worker in an association for the rights of migrants.

In early 2022, various waves of the pandemic and the implementation of health measures continued to see the suspension of fairs and festivals, reduced capacity, fear of buying, local customers with less income, and a drop in tourism (although there was a rapid return of tourists to almost pre-pandemic levels, which contrasts with the persistent restrictions in other sectors, such as culture):

There isn't any money. My stall, before, was full of people, with what I sell, things that are not too dear and good quality. But not now ... There isn't any money. (Mbaye, vendor)

All of these questions relate to the street vendors' lack of financial capacity to buy merchandise. Faced with this exceptionally difficult situation, the responses are varied: some vendors who had left for Senegal before the pandemic, but with the intention of returning to Seville, had not returned: 'I don't know, girl, I don't know when I'll go back. For now, I'm here' (Marième, vendor). Others, who had stalls in Plaza del Duque and other markets and who also had residency and work papers, returned to Senegal as soon as the pandemic permitted it: 'Things are terrible, I'm going to Senegal to rest with my family. There's no business, so I'm going' (Mbaye, vendor).

Mbaye and others later returned to Seville as conditions in Senegal had got much worse with the Covid-19 crisis. This was largely due to the consequences of restrictive health measures based on international protocols developed in the interests of Western states (De la Flor 2020). Even so, in some cases, the reality of living in Seville is not much better, particularly when lack of money means being unable to buy merchandise to sell:

They don't even have money to eat, how are they going to have money to buy merchandise. Many of them are in shanties now. Yes [it's true], because in shanties you don't pay anything. If you go to Lucena del Puerto, you'll be shocked, there are many shanties now. There are also new ones [people] that arrived during the pandemic and they have found people without any money or anything and they have sent all those people to Huelva. Of course, because there are shanties there. (Pap, vendor)

Thus, of those who had not returned to Senegal nor stayed in Seville, a significant number had gone to Huelva, Almeria or Lleida to work picking fruit and vegetables. Others, through their migratory networks, had gone to England, Germany or France. Of those who had remained in Seville, some had stopped street trading to do other work, such as the orange harvest in Cordoba, because they could do a daily commute.

It is still difficult to draw precise conclusions as to whether this is a transitory or more definitive issue, but the outflow of Senegalese street vendors from Seville to other places is currently incontestable.

Conclusion

The analysis of the economic activities of the Senegalese diaspora in the city of Seville reveals how macro power relations are reproduced at the micro level. In this respect, Africans' existence in Spain is determined by the legal framework for third-country foreigners, and the colonial imaginary results in institutional discrimination. This was apparent in events before and after the paralysis of street trading due to government measures to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic, which required the Senegalese street vendors in this study to resort to their own forms of social organisation and resources to survive.

The reality is that street trading continues to be underrepresented in municipal responses compared to other self-employed categories. The way that street trading is carried out makes it largely incompatible with the receipt of public assistance, as evidenced by the lack of access to financial support aimed at alleviating loss of income caused by the pandemic.

The analysis also shows that the treatment of street vendors by the City Council is differentiated on the basis of two models. On one hand, the Department of Economy and Commerce regulates activity in the eleven district street markets, with the objective of offering affordable goods to low-income populations. On the other hand, the street trading controlled by Department of Urban Habitat, Culture and Tourism is subordinate to the touristification of the city and the interests of private investors who determine the use of public spaces. Thus, although street vendors, including

the Senegalese, may rely on the tourist population as customers, their interests are not of primary concern for the regulation of licences and stall spaces, but rather to what degree street markets contribute to the image of the city.

Events during the pandemic have brought to light how both institutional discrimination and the Seville City Council's modernisation project have generated uncertainty and precariousness for Senegalese street vendors. Although this lack of institutional support is compensated for by local actions and networks that make it possible for many in this population to subsist, the substantial loss of income has forced many of the Senegalese residents to migrate to other areas.

Achieving a balance that permits a plurality of local uses for a population characterised by its diversity (ethnic, national, gender, class, age, etc.) is a great challenge for local public administration. Enabling and caring for street trading as a livelihood, as a service and as an attraction is, therefore, an imperative.

Notes

1. Unión Africana. Report of the Technical Experts Meeting on the African Diaspora (TCEM), Pretoria, South Africa: African Union, 2011.
2. The organised African diasporas identified by Sow (2007) include: the Nuer and the Dinka (in Sudan), the Wolof, the Tukulör and the Soninkél (in Senegal), the Fula (in West and Central Africa), the Luba (in the Democratic Republic of Congo), the Masai (between Tanzania and Kenya), the Mandingo (Côte d'Ivoire), Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mali, Burkina Faso), the Eritreans, the Somalis, the Cape Verdeans, etc. What these diasporas have in common is that while not being completely nomadic they are 'transient peoples' whose culture is far from any idea of 'territorially fixed communities' (Sow 2007: 139–140).
3. It is estimated that 41,000 Senegalese are currently registered on the Spanish social security system. On 1 May 2022, the bilateral social security agreement between Spain and Senegal came into effect. This agreement 'guarantees workers' contributions made in both countries and their reciprocal calculation'. <https://www.mites.gob.es/es/mundo/consejerias/senegal/index.htm>
4. This study is part of a broader research project, *Desarrollo urbano e impactos socio-espaciales del sector turístico en grandes ciudades andaluzas* [Urban development and socio-patial impacts of tourism in large cities in Andalusia] (PAIDI-FEDER 2020: Proyectos I+D+i), that I have been conducting on the Senegalese population in Spain. For more information, see: <https://personal.us.es/susanamm/>
5. The City Council officials are political appointees.

6. All informants agreed to participate, having been informed of the aims and objectives of the research, with the ethical principles of respect, beneficence and justice derived from the ethical codes for research (Nuremberg Code, the Belmont Report and the Declaration of Helsinki, among others) prevailing at all times.
7. Hereafter, Department of Economy and Commerce.
8. Pap did not have papers at the time of the interview. His regularised administrative status had been suddenly withdrawn.
9. Primark's website states: 'Buy the latest trends at incredible prices at the Primark store in the Torre Sevilla shopping centre. Primark is the favourite place for fashion lovers and bargains in Seville and is the best place to find must-have items for this season. [...] Visit the Primark store in Torre Sevilla shopping centre to find the best fashion at incredible prices.'
10. El Corte Inglés is one of the oldest and largest Spanish-owned chain of department store.
11. Located in the outskirts of the city of Seville.
12. BOJA number 63, 30 March 2012.
13. Official Bulletin of Seville Province, Number 169.
14. While street markets take place one day (or more) a week in a designated urban location, street trading markets move from location to location (between urban districts) each day of the week. Itinerant street trading is trading from a vehicle at locations and along routes specified by the City Council.
15. At present, the 11 street markets correlate, more or less, to the 11 city districts.
16. As reported in various local newspapers: https://www.diariodesevilla.es/sevilla/mercadillo-artesanal-Magdalena-traslada-Duque_0_586741517.html, https://sevilla.abc.es/sevilla/sevi-mercadillos-magdalena-duque-unidos-201205150000_noticia.html
17. On the City Council's website announcing the plans for the 'historically respectful development' of Plaza de la Magdalena, there was nothing about a hotel, only the removal of vehicular traffic, the creation of pedestrian routes, the expansion of gardens and trees, the creation of spaces for recreational use, the restoration of the Baroque fountain as the centrepiece of the plaza, and the elimination of parking areas: <https://www.sevilla.org/actualidad/blog/plaza-de-la-magdalena-una-intervencion-respetuosa-con-la-historia>.
18. https://www.diariodesevilla.es/sevilla/nueva-Plaza-Magdalena-sevilla-quejas-ausencia-autobuses-cabreo-bares_0_1575144399.html
19. <https://www.sevillaactualidad.com/sevilla/185277-sin-autobuses-y-conveladores-asi-luce-la-nueva-plaza-de-la-magdalena/>
20. <https://www.sevilla.org/ayuntamiento/areas-municipales/area-economia-comercio-relaciones-comunidad-universitaria-area-metropolitana>

21. <https://www.sevilla.org/ayuntamiento/areas-municipales/area-de-habitat-urbano-cultura-y-turismo>
22. https://sevilla.abc.es/sevilla/sevi-festival-naciones-sevilla-2021-recorrido-50-paises-sin-salir-sevilla-202109232223_noticia.html
23. Another of the great capitals of Andalusia.
24. A town near Seville.
25. A town in the province of Cordoba.
26. Social Fund refers to the Union of Senegalese Women and Men of Seville for Solidarity [*Unión de las senegalesas y senegaleses de Sevilla por la Solidaridad*], an association created in 2013 from the union of two *dahiras* (the Mouride and the Tidjanne), the Association of Senegalese Women of Seville [*Asociación de Mujeres Senegalesas de Sevilla*], and the *tontine* of young Senegalese women. The objective of the fund is to provide financial assistance to members or their families in three circumstances: the repatriation of the body in the case of the death of a member; if a member is hospitalised or suffers a disability; and in the case of the death of a member's parent.
27. The *dahiras* are groups of Muslims whose aim is one of collective religious practice and solidarity, built around kinship and friendship. In the context of immigrant communities, these groups are very important as more than 90 per cent of the Senegalese population practises Islam through *tariqas* of Sufi brotherhoods, of which the two main ones are the Mouride and the Tidjanne.

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