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The Artistic Work of Street Musicians in Barcelona and Rio De Janeiro: Interstices of Work and Leisure

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the social practice of musicians who play in the streets and public spaces of Rio de Janeiro and Barcelona. We investigated the appropriation of these social spaces, the commodification of art on the streets, and the work/leisure relationship in the daily lives of these artists. Ethnographic methods were used for 24 months and included observations and interviews with 23 street musicians in these two cities. The interviewed musicians develop strategies aimed at meeting the need to survive from their art. The work/leisure relation is configured strangely in the social practice of these subjects and differently in the two cities. Nevertheless, the time/social space in which work and leisure are materialized in the daily life of the researched street musicians is directly related to the possible overlapping of one realm over the other.

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Introduction

Street art continues to be constrained yet at the same time valued by policy-makers in cities around the world: especially in those cities that are reliant on the flow of tourism in this age of post-industrial, postmodern or liquid modern neo-liberal economies (Falcão & Gomes, 2019; Robinson & Spracklen, 2019; Spracklen, 2021a, 2021b; Spracklen & Robinson, 2020). The presence of art in public spaces makes its existence visible but presents new challenges for leisure policies and leisure studies. Street musicians are seen to be playing a function in the performance of a city's character, providing a soundtrack for a city's marketing campaign. At the same time, the musicians are limited by what they can do on these streets, constrained by a web of official policies and laws constructed by those who believe busking is a moral failure. That said, busking continues to attract musicians who see the role of a street musician as essential to their own identities: as a form of work, as a form of leisure, and as a form of art that gives them meaning and purpose (Spracklen, 2009).

Art on the street such as busking transgresses established codes and hierarchies; and allows for the construction and performance of the liminal, the radical, and the marginal

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(Black, 2014; Bywater, 2007; Clua et al., 2020; Green, 2020). The street musicians' condition leads us to thinking about the expectations and tensions experienced by those who leave their homeland to develop their art and their work in other societies, and in other cultures. It is what is left behind by the migrant as well as the opportunity offered by the relocation. Under the contemporary conditions of globalization, wandering highlights multiculturalism, the multi-ethnicity and the polyphony present in large metropolises, stemming from migratory processes (Bauman, 2000; Maffesoli, 2006). We are interested in migration as most of our buskers are migrants looking for work. For Martins (1988), working on migration in Brazil, one of our two countries of investigation, temporary migration is more than coming and going. It is living in different territories, with temporariness pervaded by many social contradictions. According to Martins (1988), to be a temporary migrant means to live such contradictions in duplicate. It is as if each migrant were two people simultaneously, each comprised of historically determined social relations: it is to live as present and dream as absent. The temporary migrant is the one who considers herself out of home, out of place, but eager to find a welcoming place for herself.

These tensions and contradictions mentioned shape and create the artistic performances of street musicians. These performances are an artist's own ways of being and existing in the world and, to some extent, suggest an escape or retreat from the everyday life in this age of global capitalism, commodification and neo-liberal work (Robinson & Spracklen, 2019; Spracklen, 2021a, Spracklen, 2021b; Spracklen & Robinson, 2020). When a musician presents their musical repertoire on the streets of a city, they invite the people around them to stop traveling to their goal to enjoy the art for a few moments. The experience within the city represents the enjoyment of free and open-air leisure: "cities are, par excellence, a cultural phenomenon, integrated into this principle of giving meaning to the world" (Pesavento, 2007, p. 14). Toward this end, "street music unquestionably influences the city and vice versa" (Clua et al., 2020, p. 561).

This paper, then, is guided by these two research questions:

- a. how do musicians appropriate the streets and public spaces in cities to develop their art and to construct their social identity? And
- b. to what extent do work and leisure intersect the performance of these artists?

To answer these questions, it was necessary to immerse ourselves in the daily lives of two cities – Barcelona and Rio de Janeiro – that present street art, especially busking, as a defining features of their cultures. Both cities attract migrants to work and we know from our personal knowledge from visiting them ourselves that there are many migrants in both cities who busk. Barcelona, capital of Catalonia, is the most visited city in Spain. This country occupies the top positions in terms of tourist flow in Europe and in the world, according to statistical data gathered by the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism - *Movimientos Turísticos en Frontera* (Frontur, 2014). In the case of Rio de Janeiro, despite the various contradictions that deepen the social inequalities, poverty and violence in this city, it maintains its reputation globally for being a city of festivals, events and leisure. According to data released by the Ministry of Tourism, it is the city with the largest flow of tourism in Brazil, both domestic and foreign (MTur-Ministério do Turismo, 2013).

Our paper, then, sets out to understand the social practice of musicians who play in the streets and public spaces of Rio de Janeiro and Barcelona: how they think of their art and how they negotiate their leisure and work identities; how they appropriate social space; and how they deal with the commerce of their art. As Bennet and Rogers (2014, p. 454) argue, “despite their global omnipresence, street musicians have seldom been the focus of contemporary scholarly research on music-making and performance”. There are some theoretical and empirical studies based on the particularities of musicians who develop their art in the streets and public spaces of different cities (Bennett & Rogers, 2014; Black, 2014; Bywater, 2007 Clua et al., 2020; Green, 2020; McNamara & Quilter, 2016; Robinson & Spracklen, 2019). However, none of these searches for an understanding of street music, artists, work and leisure. This fact was one of the challenges that prompted the doctoral research of the lead author of this paper, developed in the Interdisciplinary Graduate Program in Leisure Studies at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil. It was conducted as a contribution to this discussion about the role of busking and the intersection of work and leisure, filling a gap in the scope of studies dedicated to this topic.

The next section of this paper outlines our critical lens and aligns our theoretical framework. Then, we outline methodology for the research. The following section is then dedicated to a discussion driven by the fieldwork and the voices of the musicians, which are critically evaluated through our theoretical framework. We then conclude with a critical account of the art, the musicians, their leisure and their work.

Theoretical framework

We align ourselves with the work of Bauman (2000, 2009), who argues that human society has become an expression of the condition of liquid modernity. Bauman’s work is influenced by Habermas (1984, 1987) and others from the Frankfurt School who have shown how modern capitalism was created in the public sphere of Enlightenment, through communicative rationality, but this rationality itself was transformed into instrumentality. Bauman is also influenced by post-structuralists such as Lefebvre (1992, 2000), who argue that it is almost impossible to reclaim the dignity of humanity in a world that is constantly in flux. For Lefebvre (1992, 2000), cities especially are spaces of constant struggle and negotiation. This is especially true in the post-industrial, post-work, neo-liberal, post-modern world in which we live now (Lipovetsky, G. & Serroy, J., 2013; Maffesoli, 2006; Snape et al., 2017; Spracklen & Robinson, 2020). Sennett (1998, p. 9) argues:

It is quite natural that flexibility should arouse anxiety: people do not know what risks will pay off, what paths to pursue. [...] Flexibility is used today as another way to lift the curse of oppression from capitalism. In attacking rigid bureaucracy and emphasizing risk, it is claimed, flexibility gives people more freedom to shape their lives. In fact, the new order replaces new controls rather than simply abolishing the rules of the past – but these new controls are also hard to understand.

The precarity of work is a reflection of what Sennett (1998) calls corrosion of character. For Bauman (2000, 2009), human society is undergoing a change that can be summarized as follows: a) the metamorphosis of the citizen/subject of rights into an

individual who seeks affirmation in the social space; b) the replacement of collective solidarity structures by others involving dispute and competition; c) the weakening of social protection systems, generating a permanent environment of uncertainty; d) the responsibility for any failures to be attributed to the individual; e) the end of long-term planning, completely separating power and politics.

While Blackshaw (2010) introduces the concept of liquid leisure, in this paper we will combine the Baumanian liquid with the Habermasian theoretical framework of communicative and instrumental leisure created by Spracklen (2009, 2011, 2015, 2021b) Spracklen argues that leisure is something fundamental to human nature: it is the product of human contemplation, intelligence and social relations. That is, leisure is an outcome of communicative rationality. Throughout history, leisure has been controlled or constrained by rulers who have grown suspicious of humans thinking for themselves. In high modernity, much of what we think of as leisure became instrumental leisure, constructed by elites and global capitalism to perpetuate hegemony. In this century, as the world has become liquid, leisure and work still remain contested between instrumentality and communicative rationality. At the same time, the intersection between work and leisure has become blurred, as Rojek (2010) argues: as leisure becomes labor, and labor becomes leisure. This framework, then, is our crucial lens for making sense of the practice of street musicians.

Methodology

Different methodological strategies were employed in this qualitative research. Initially, we reviewed the policy literature and undertook a formal analysis of relevant research, to better understand the field and to shape our research methods.

Field research, guided by ethnography, was conducted in the two selected cities by the lead author. This developed over a period of two years, with 12 months dedicated to the collection of information in Rio de Janeiro and 12 months in Barcelona. In the first stage of field research it was created using the method *flâneurese dans la metropolis* (Baudelaire, 2014). Flaneurism consists of wandering through the streets of a metropolis to observe the city's movements, tracing the method of Baudelaire in the footsteps of his interlocutors: "if the wanderer unwittingly becomes a detective, socially this transformation suits him very well since it justifies his idleness" (Benjamin, 1997, p. 38). In this sense, several circulation spaces in the chosen cities were visited to find and map the research subjects in the exercise of their art. It was considered if the street musicians had fixed points to play in Rio de Janeiro and Barcelona, or if they moved around from place to place in a regular or unpredictable way. This search was essential to map the places in which they perform.

In the second stage of the research, the sites where the observation would be conducted were selected. The choice of these spaces was supported by the regular appearance of musicians and the large circulation of people in these places. In Rio de Janeiro, these points were the *Arpoador* waterfront, the old center of Rio (São José and Lavradio streets), and three squares with metro stations: *Largo da Carioca*, *Largo do Machado* and *Praça Saens Peña*. In Barcelona, the observation sites were the area around the cathedral in the historic center of Barcelona, Park Güell and squares in the Gracia area (*Plaza del Sol*, *Plaza de la Vila de Gràcia* and *Plaza de La Revolució*n). A fourth observation site was incorporated in both cities due to the high incidence of musicians

playing in metro trains. Thus, in Barcelona we observed line L4 and in Rio de Janeiro, line 1.

Using our wanderer method, the ‘anthropological shift’ (Falcão, 2017a, 2017b) was the strategy that made it possible to observe and follow the development of the musicians’ art, the occupation of the space, the relationships/tensions established/experienced, and the beginning and end of the musical performances. In this sense, the observation time was determined by the subjects’ practices, and required a strategic positioning at the different sites.

The third stage of the research was triggered after approaching the street musicians who showed openness to contribute to the research, by granting an interview. The interviews were conducted according to the subjects’ availability and the location defined by mutual agreement between the parties. The choice of semi-structured interview (Marconi & Lakatos, 1999; Minayo, 2001) was due to the possibility of using a previously prepared script that sought to reach, or at least direct, the questions to the research objectives. This script was flexible, but involved the following topics: subjects’ origins; the choice of the city to play in the streets; the definition of being a musician (life history); the relationship of this social practice with their own sustenance; to what extent this practice permeates leisure; difficulties and easiness for the occupation of public spaces and what meanings this social practice has for the subjects.

The musicians who contributed to the research develop their art in public spaces: streets, squares, metros and the historic centers. Most of these musicians are migrants: in Barcelona, of the thirteen respondents, only one is a Spaniard, from the city of Cádiz in the Andalusian region. The others are from Latin American countries (6), Europe (4) and Asia (2). In Rio de Janeiro, four musicians are foreigners (three from South America and one European) and four are Brazilian, one of whom was born in the city of Rio de Janeiro. In addition to these musicians, two professionals related to this social practice in Rio and Barcelona were also interviewed. Whenever authorized by the respondents, the interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The respondents’ anonymity was preserved, being identified pseudonymously in the research by bird names, adding in parentheses the city/location where they were approached, their age and nationality. All ethical procedures were respected, and the university’s ethics committee responsible for the study approved the complete research protocol.

The interpretative analysis of the data occurred, above all, through the articulation between what was observed in the fieldwork, the local political regulations, the interviews, and the bibliographical research. In particular, the analysis is framed by our theoretical framework that draws on Bauman (2000, 2009), Spracklen (2009, 2011, 2015, 2021b), Habermas (1984, 1987) and Lefebvre (1992, 2000). The findings of this analysis are presented below in the Results and Discussion section. After the following section, we return to answer the question and try to make sense of the meaning and purpose of busking – and the new leisure and the new work in liquid modernity.

Results and discussion

Through the analysis, three themes emerged: street musician social practice in context; musicians in the gig economy and the performativity of art and communicative leisure

choices; and the interstices of work and leisure in street musician art. We discuss these in turn in the rest of this section.

The street musicians' social practice in context

Both Barcelona and Rio de Janeiro are cities with very high tourist flows, which is an attracting factor for street musicians. The musician's migratory movement is directly related to the economic dynamics of the chosen city/country and, to some extent, the degree of dissatisfaction experienced in the country/city of origin. In general terms, the fact of being migrants from different places did not present itself as a problem among the musicians who played in the two researched cities, but it highlights certain restrictions based on the migratory policies in force in each country. The basic condition for street musicians in developing their work and art is the possibility of occupying the public space. Bywater (2007) argues that public space is a prerequisite for street artists' performances, and they fight for the temporary possession of this territory. The appropriation of the public space, even temporary, consists of a social claim that exerts cultural pressure, transforming the conceived public space into lived public space. In other words, playing in the street is part of the constant struggle for the right to the city (Lefebvre, 1992).

In Rio de Janeiro, a Municipal Law (n° 5429/2012) encourages street music, which allows for a more democratic occupation of the space. The musicians themselves determine when and where they will play. In this city, unlike Barcelona discussed below, they have the ability to undertake *communicative* leisure (Habermas, 1984, 1987; Spracklen, 2009, 2011, 2015, 2021b), making a choice when, where and what to play. However, that does not eliminate disputes over territories and the need for self-regulation by the users of the space. The musicians are calm and show a high degree of flexibility to deal with this situation, as observed in the fieldwork and as the interviewee named Grebe (RJ/street performer, 28 years old, France) commented. In this musician's interview, when the topic *choice of spaces to play* was addressed (the Lefebvre, [2000] assumption about how subjects appropriate and re-appropriate the city) it was reported:

Oh, our favourite spots? It has to be places where many people go by, and preferably without haste. (...) when I arrive at the spot and someone is playing. (...) I ask if he will play for a long time. Depending on the answer, I wait or look for another place nearby. However, if I notice that the person is also enjoying the place and the time is similar, I try to talk and make a deal.

Seagull (RJ/metro, 24 years old, Brazil), who frequently plays in the metro in Rio de Janeiro, states that there is no problem in relation to the choice of wagon, except for security. She tries to stay in the first cars because she can see if there is a policeman in the station. She watches carefully if he will enter the metro train, because the authorities repress this practice at the margins of the institutionalized culture. If there is someone playing there, the alternative is to change wagons. For her, it is good when she meets another musician and they end up playing together. She says "Whoever is in the street is always meeting each other. Furthermore, when we meet and have a connection, something good always happens. Everybody likes it and we have fun!"

The Venezuelan musician named Booby (RJ/street, 32 years old, Venezuela) says that there is no scheduled place to play in Rio de Janeiro, so there is no such problem. “If there are some musicians, where I had thought, I choose another place nearby, so that I can catch the same movement of people. However, it can’t be a place where people are in a hurry because you need time to stop and listen.” Generally, tourists, as well as residents open to enjoy some leisure moments, are the interviewed musicians’ audience.

Managing the space and time of performances, in social interactions with other musicians and/or artists in public spaces, is a smooth alternative of self-regulation among musicians who play in Rio de Janeiro. It should be emphasized that these musicians have no delimited spaces to develop their art. Therefore, it is possible to treat the occupation of the street as a place for interactions, gatherings and confrontations, and not public space as a government-dictated and regulated venue.

Barcelona has a different dynamic. In the capital of Catalonia, the occupation of public spaces is regulated by the institution responsible for city management (City Hall). All musicians interested in playing in the streets must be registered in a project called *Music al Carrer*. This project regulates the practice in the historic city-center by granting a formal permit - a carnet - to play in 23 delimited pitches. Every month, a draw is held with musicians present to define the days and times when each registered musician can play at a pitch in the city for a period of two hours. Attending the meeting does not guarantee that each musician has a pitch to play in Barcelona, but if they do not participate, they are excluded from that month. The order of those drawn determines the order of the choices of the pitches, and the most desired by the musicians are those with the highest flow of tourists. Consequently, they are also those most watched over by urban policing. This exists in other cities. Green (2020) working in Mexico suggests these licenses are a political instrument that end up marginalizing non-monetary exchanges between street musicians and the interested public: as commercial interests of bars and restaurants are privileged, many street musicians are left on the margins of the city. McNamara and Quilter (2016) in Melbourne and Sydney show how contemporary laws regulating the social practice of street musicians are widely supported by these artists.

Following the system adopted in Barcelona, each musician knows in advance where they will be able to play, on which day and at what time. However, musicians who have established bonds of friendship inform each other when they know that someone will be absent, and thus opportunities usually open up for another musician to take over the vacant pitch. In one of the interviews, it was mentioned that there was a situation in which a stranger had tried to play in the area and musicians themselves reported him to the urban police. Thrush (BCN/center, 45 years old, Romanian) said “How can someone arrive without knowing anything and think they can play wherever they want? Here in the Gothic Quarter you must have permission and we do not accept adventurers playing. (...) many musicians here already.”

Thrush makes it clear that the process for occupying the public spaces in Barcelona does not go through a process of communicative negotiation, in stark contrast to the dynamics verified in Rio de Janeiro. All are unanimous in stating that they are dissatisfied with the structure of the project that regulates the music played in public spaces in Barcelona. However, the attitude that one observes is of subjects in their own way

trying to preserve the right to play in the historic center: a temporary right, acquired by a few musicians.

In some places with a high flow of tourists, such as around Barcelona Cathedral, control is stricter, but in others there is greater flexibility. This is the case in Park Güel. This tourist attraction is popular because it houses the modernist work of architect Antonio Gaudí, which was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1984. In Park Güel there is no permission to play. Thus, police actions that prevent or interrupt performances are frequent, with many seizures of musical instruments. Despite being forbidden, music is present there, informally organized by the musicians themselves. Manakin (BCN/Park, 51 years, Mexico) reported the following: “Park Güell is big and you can find a place to play. (...) Up there in the park it’s beautiful, the view, the tranquillity. However, tourists do not go there! I go up there when I want to play alone, the songs I write.”

In short, considerations that move between communal solidarity and individualism were seen in the public occupation of the main tourist attractions surveyed. Unlike what was observed in Rio de Janeiro, the dispute for a place to play becomes fiercer in Barcelona when some musicians feel invaded or prevented from enjoying their right to play. The best places are those where more people circulate, especially tourists, enabling greater financial gain. The work of busking can be instrumental, even if musicians prefer to see their art as a form of resistance and space-making, as Lefebvre (1992, 2000) suggests.

Musicians in the gig economy: the performativity of art and communicative leisure choices

All of the musicians who participated in the research are composers and include songs of their own on their playlists. Many musicians post their songs on social media as a way of promoting their creative work to potential and existing fans. But most songs on their playlists are songs that have been hits in the charts: cover songs that bring in money from tourists with popular taste. The respondents state that these songs are indispensable: ‘they may not be good to play, but they are good for your pocket,’ stated Sparrow (BCN/Park, 32 years old, Argentina). None of our musicians reflect on the tension in performing these well-known songs without seeking permission from copyright-owners, and both cities encourage busking: performers make money from their ambiguous creative work in this liminal space (Green, 2020).

While these global pop hits are good for raising money, the others have great sentimental appeal. There are also those songs to which the artists give their all, performing them in the effortless state seen in other research on musicians (Bywater, 2007; Bennett & Rogers, 2014; Black, 2014; Green, 2020). This is art as communicative work and communicative leisure, music done willfully (Spracklen, 2009, 2011; Robinson & Spracklen, 2019). When it happens, the tinkling of coins and the rain of notes on the musicians’ hats are sure to follow. When including in their repertoire self-composed music, and performing it well, these musicians feel as if their work and their leisure time and their hours of practice are all worthwhile (Blackshaw, 2010; Rojek, 2010). The satisfaction they feel when performing part of their own repertoire gives back to the musicians the

sensitive and expressive side of art. That is, playing their own music is truly communicative leisure set against the commerce of playing the covers.

In this game between this communicative liquid leisure space (Bauman, 2000, 2009; Blackshaw, 2010; Spracklen, 2009) and the instrumental purpose of busking (Habermas, 1984, 1987; Rojek, 2010), a few of our musicians resist the system that treats them as a commodity. Manakin (BCN/Park, 51 years old, Mexico) pointed out that some of his songs were composed as a criticism of the migration system in Spain. According to him, it is difficult to obtain a document that proves the condition of being legally in the country (NIE/N Foreigners Id. Number). He deals with this issue in two songs, entitled ‘*El corrido de Barcelona*’ and ‘*El Blues de la luz*.’

Kockatoo (BCN/Park, 37 years old, Italy) articulated another way of expressing oneself politically and using the street as a space for Lefebvre (1992, 2000) resistance. His performativity is connected with the “vibration of the different”, something that should not and cannot be understood as purely rational. According to this musician, his performance resembles the bizarre and the grotesque of medieval buffoons. “If you do something different, even meaningless, people like it. I surprise the tourists always, interacting with everyone. I make faces and play rock’n’roll.”

Seagull (RJ/metro, 24 years old, Brazil) feels her musical instrument, the accordion, is part of her body: playing it allows the pleasure performative communicative leisure brings. According to her, the accordion is capable of expressing emotions and it has great receptivity in Rio de Janeiro because people like *farró* a lot. “You start playing it and there are people there to sing... and even to dance!” She alluded to a couple who once started dancing in the underground. “Playing the music of great Brazilian masters such as *Gonzagão*, *Dominguinhos*, and *Trio nordestino*, makes me miss home, my people. In addition, it brings joy to people who are coming back tired after a day’s work.”

In an interview with the *Independent Music Scene* the street musician Lemos (2016), who participates in the collective AME (Metro Artists), states his belief that his interventions in public transport can educate society. He suggests:

Even though I am considered one of the best tambourine players of today, I make my living from street art. I do not do it just out of necessity, but because I believe in taking music to those who have least access to it. It’s a way out, even if in homeopathic doses, of public mental health. The intervention inside the wagons is critical, because most people without access to culture do not have the time for it either.

Although pressed by the neo-liberal ideology of ephemeral cultural production and consumption, these street musicians maintain this social practice as something communicative, partly work and partly leisure in a liquid modern world (Blackshaw, 2010; Rojek, 2010; Spracklen, 2009). In a game that gives voice and visibility to popular culture, these musicians behave as buffoons, troubadours or protestors. Thus, the relationship with the public becomes negotiable, and their occupation of space becomes a democratic imperative that legitimates the ‘right to the city’ (Lefebvre, 2000).

One cannot neglect the fact that musicians who play in the streets and public spaces of Barcelona and Rio de Janeiro, among other cities, have to survive from their art – whether busking complements paid work in the gig economy (Clua et al., 2020; Snape et al., 2017), or whether the musicians are completely reliant on busking as a source of

paid labor (Rojek, 2010). Like everyone else in liquid modernity, they need to fill their hat with coins to pay their own bills. Hence, our musicians need to develop certain commercial strategies (Bywater, 2007): surviving on street art means reinventing themselves at every moment. By turning themselves into merchandise, musicians seek to obtain some income to be able to live off their art. It is to see their talent recognized in the contributions deposited in their hats. Lipovetsky and Serroy (2013, p. 14) assert:

The development of contemporary financial capitalism in no way excludes the potentiality of artist-type capitalism in rupture with the Fordism way of economic regulation. This is not to be understood as a capitalism, which, less cynical or less aggressive, would turn its back on the imperatives of accounting rationality and maximum profitability, but rather as a new mode of operation, which rationally and exploits the aesthetic-imaginary-emotional dimensions for profit and the conquest of markets.

Street music is one of these forms that ruptures Fordism. Street music comes from a long tradition of access to free and popular leisure (Spracklen, 2011), and is part of the liquid modern urban economy (Bauman, 2000; Blackshaw, 2010; Snape et al., 2017). Buskers are not generally employed or salaried, but work as buskers because they have made the choice to do so. Often, this is in their leisure time away from other demands. Our musicians are happy when they manage to make a round of people interested in listening to them. On one hand, this satisfaction is because the music is attracting an audience, but on the other hand, the artistic performance may generate a monetary gain. Southern Lapwing (RJ/street performer, 52 years old, Argentina), for example, said that he plays in two street bands and that is the best place to earn money. He has managed to work in bars due to his performance on streets. According to him, the street is better than bars: “In the bar they exploit you. They do not want to pay anything for the band, even though we are 5–6 musicians. They want the show to be long, with a good repertoire and often they don’t pay us until a week later.” He concludes, “I prefer the street. If they like it, they pay you. If they do not like it, they go away.”

Many of our musicians understand that the street is a great possibility to be discovered professionally. Several said that they got other jobs with people who saw their performances in streets, subways, parks, etc. Dreams exist for our musicians and they fly high. Art needs admirers and the artist wants recognition. Throughout the research it was possible to verify that, even with the re-signification of street art as something respectable and gentrified (Clua et al., 2020), it continues to be located in a place reserved for the socially underprivileged. Thus, a paradox composes the social reality of these artists and their practices: if there is the glamor of talented street musicians that embellish and enchant the cities, there is also an uncomfortable begging practiced by vagabonds who make their art in the streets in exchange for tips/alms. This liquid leisure form, then, is constantly in danger of putting its actors at risk of being moved on by politicians performing moral panics (Clua et al., 2020; Green, 2020).

As seen, artistic expression, satisfaction and survival are present in the daily lives of street musicians. The interstices of work and leisure in street musician art is the subject of our second research question. How do work and leisure permeate the performance of these artists? When providing leisure to passersby, are street musicians beneficiaries of this same leisure? As music becomes more associated with the entertainment industry, this theme is discussed in more detail below.

The interstices of work and leisure in street musician art

Our musicians find meaning and purpose in the performance of their art. This is work that they find gives them a fulfillment, which allows them to flourish as humans through their communicative rationality (Habermas, 1984, 1987). That they work in a state of precarity is a condition of liquid modernity: the current neo-liberal regime that has transformed skilled labor into the gig economy of minimum-wage, self-employed workers (Bauman, 2000; Rojek, 2010; Snape et al., 2017). At the same time, leisure has become liquid, a space for a struggle between instrumentality and communicative leisure (Blackshaw, 2010; Spracklen, 2009, 2011, 2021b). As work and leisure become liquid they also blur (Rojek, 2010). And so our musicians work when performing, but are also performing something they do in their leisure time and space. At the height of modernity in the form of industrial capitalism, productive work was associated with beneficial social effects and individual virtue. It was attributed to the increase in wealth and the elimination of misery, “but underlying every merit assigned it was assumed contribution to the order-making, to the historic act of putting the human species in charge of its own destiny” (Bauman, 2000, p. 157). If one day the modern dream of progress was presented in the breakdown of routine bureaucracies, with the flexibility proposed by new ways of managing work, today we see the new perverse facet that this flexibility has generated. Bauman (2009) emphasizes that this new condition creates the prospect of social disintegration. With the idea of progress disconnected from shared improvement, and transferred to the individual’s survival, competition among peers is installed: every one of us is forced to act for one’s own interests.

Within this process, the interviewed musicians experienced the constraint of instrumentality, and this constraint shapes and limits their agency: as performers of liquid work and liquid leisure. The more social spaces are hierarchized, ordered, regulated and aestheticized, the more art is transformed into merchandise, and the more the artist tries selling it (or sell himself as art). The less the State manages this social practice, the more the subjects share the precariousness of the work. However, in this second alternative, the opportunities seem to be more accessible to all.

In Barcelona, the government made evident the understanding that the street musicians’ performance is not labor when it creates a cultural project targeting street musicians. However, the musicians only have obligations: schedules to be followed, places to occupy and procedures to adopt. The State’s regulatory power over the permit scheme and the legal spaces in which musicians are allowed to perform gives it responsibilities: to give the musicians a chance to earn money and for unlicensed musicians to be moved on. The esthetic/cultural marketing of the city uses the images of musicians and benefits from the symbolism of their art to boost tourism (Clua et al., 2020).

In Rio de Janeiro the work relationship follows the same line of informality. The State does not regulate the practice of playing in the street, although in the last decade public policies have been created with financial incentives to subsidize cultural projects, which meant a small step in the recognition of the importance of art in the city. Many musicians and street artists try developing government-funded projects to ensure remuneration. However, the formalities required for registration are complex, and the demand for this registration is much higher than the supply; therefore, most musicians cannot access this funding. Thus, they continue to survive with the contributions

obtained on the streets. In Rio, unlike Barcelona, there are no social security benefits of any kind, since it is not considered that the person is working.

It was possible to understand, in the research, that for the street artist their art will never be only work. As a liquid modern social practice, music in the street continues to exist as a space and form of leisure. For passersby, it is an opportunity to enjoy free, democratic and open-air leisure. In addition, for those who provide it, the musicians, it is an opportunity to express their art. Social practices as leisure activities are seen as constructions of collective subjects in their interaction contexts; that is, festivals, rites of passage, games, music, cooking, handicraft, clothing, art, and so on (Spracklen, 2011). Therefore, they may be understood as individual actions that create sense and meaning such as intentions, values, attitudes, or beliefs (Habermas, 1984).

The street, as a space for coexistence, enables the enjoyment of leisure. A musician, playing on a street corner, square or sidewalk, changes the usual use of the street as a passage proposing a break in the busy daily life of big cities with a playful pause. When the music affects the passersby, and changes the routine of their usual commute as they stop to enjoy the performance, one observes the urban in its complex network of connections and the subjects in their interactions. When appropriating the street, both the musician and passersby create a new organization in the social space/time and turn the passersby into a public and the music/musician into a show.

The fact is that the arts in the streets promote relationships through their interstices: it is not only leisure, nor only work, nor only expression, nor only transgression, nor only consumption. Corroborating Gomes (2014, p. 3), leisure is “a complex social practice that encompasses a multiplicity of playful cultural experiences.” By observing the musicians occupying the streets, it is possible to perceive a sensitive and playful dimension in which artistic expression dialogues with the social body, the subjects of the city.

The practices in the streets are living-spaces generated through subjective corporal experiences (Arantes, 2007). In this ceaseless search to bring art and life closer, the space is brought to life at the same time as the figure of the artist changes. Far from drawing idealized spaces and universes, space becomes a builder of affective territories and relational experiences. Thus, this social practice gathers three aspects: the social space experienced (in terms of the diversity of street uses, in the sense stated by Jacobs, 1992), the right to the city proclaimed by Lefebvre (2000), and the possibility of enjoying a communicative leisure (Spracklen, 2009) that constructs and creates a free space for the subject: leisure that is outside the production/consumption patterns and that is open to anyone who is interested in participating or who wishes to enjoy it.

Leisure and work, then, are set up in paradoxical manner in the social practices of the musicians interviewed in our research. Accordingly, it is possible to state that the more regulated is the musician’s performance space, the more they understand this practice as work. However, the musicians themselves consider that it is possible to enjoy leisure at certain times, playing the songs they like the most or have written. This event occurs when the number of tourists is lower, as observed in Barcelona. The more freedom these artists have, or seek, the more, it seems, their performance is pervaded by leisure, as evidenced in the results from Rio de Janeiro, and in the spaces with less surveillance in Barcelona.

Therefore, the social time/space in which work and leisure are materialized in the daily life of the musicians is directly related to the possible overlapping of one realm

over the other. As Bauman (2000) mentions, nowadays several realms of everyday life are present in relations in a liquid format. This liquid modernity is evidenced in other leisure and tourism research that explores the breakdown of leisure and work (Robinson & Spracklen, 2019; Spracklen, 2021a; Spracklen & Robinson, 2020). That is, it is difficult to set a rigid boundary separating them since the boundaries between work and leisure, as well as between the system and subject, are increasingly porous and interrelated in contemporary society.

Conclusion

This research's focus is busking in liquid modernity: a contested form of work and leisure that, for several centuries, has taken over the public spaces of many cities. This paper in turn has discussed three aspects that cross over the social practice of street musicians: the tension that the appropriation of public spaces causes, especially in tourist cities; the process of commercializing this art; and the possible interstitial relationship that work and leisure have in liquid modernity.

The musicians, who develop their arts in the streets of Rio de Janeiro and Barcelona, appear in the images of these tourist cities circulating through the media and social networks, seducing potential visitors who seek an esthetic, sensitive and transgressive consumption of cities. These images expose what is wonderful, pleasurable and artistic in these cities with the intention of attracting an increasing number of tourists. In this context, our musicians are also attracted to these cities. They migrated to fulfill their dream of a better life, to live from their art and to be welcomed by a happy and hospitable city that appreciates the street arts. However, many times the reality found in these cities clashes with the images conveyed in the media and social networks. The condition of being a migrant without income forces our musicians to adapt and reorganize their work and leisure lives to the new social, economic and political reality of the chosen city. Actually, the elected city they have moved to is almost never known in detail, both in terms of the social conditions offered and the practiced migration policies.

When arriving in their new cities, one of the greatest challenges for our musicians has been to exercise their art is through occupying the public space. A symbol of urban life, this social space constitutes a game of forces between communicative and instrumental rationality, and between freedom and constraint and between work and leisure. It comprises, on one hand, the networks of power, management and control woven by the capitalist rationale and, on the other hand, by the individuals' daily lives that, by appropriating these spaces, create tension over the everyday. When the occupation of the public space brings up urban conflict, it becomes necessary to think about the relations established between public power, cultural practices, leisure and the dominant modes of production and reproduction. It is necessary to look at the public space as a life stage, as a living showcase, spectacle, place of struggle, subversion of the public order, the place of distrust and affective-existential territory (Pesavento, 1992). In this context, the fruition of the street is marked by tensions, disputes and transgressions that are typical of the urban context.

In Rio de Janeiro, specific legislation allows the musicians' activity in public spaces. In Barcelona, to play in the street, it is necessary to obtain a license from stakeholders

who accredit themselves to the *Music al Carrer* project (a project that regulates music in the city's streets). In any case, the occupation of public space in these two cities is pervaded by tensions and possible transgressions, which are hardly noticed by the tourists and locals who pass by. In Barcelona, again, there was evidence that our subjects understood the practice of playing in the street as work, as a provider of livelihood. When this practice is extremely controlled and regulated, as it occurs in some tourist attractions in Barcelona, it is conceived as precarious work, because musicians do not have any rights, only duties to fulfill. In Rio de Janeiro, a greater expectation of achieving the much dreamed-of quality of life was noted, which was articulated with more alternative ways of living, including in terms of work and leisure. Street musicians make their living from this social practice, but they wish to enjoy it with more freedom. This result is close to the understanding of 'illegal' musicians in Barcelona, who do not have the permission provided by the public authorities to play at different tourist attractions in the capital of Catalonia.

The leisure dimension, which is also visible in the social practice of street musicians, manifests itself in the music performances, in the interactions established with the public and other people occupying the space, and in the virtuosity of the performances. Therefore, the work/leisure relationship of these artists is ambiguous. If the art of playing in the street is not entirely a work, neither is it entirely leisure. It is another type of non-fragmented experience, in which work and leisure merge in the liquidity of contemporary societies (Bauman, 2000; Blackshaw, 2010; Rojek, 2010; Snape et al., 2017).

Musicians deal with the potential commodification of their art, playing songs that are better known and appreciated by the public. However, they play their own songs with excellence and compose lyrics that criticize the capitalist system. The arts, including street music, are expressions of cultures that allow critiques of the condition of liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000), and can give voice to more progressive, radical visions of the way society is constructed. For this reason, they need to be fostered as part of this human development. Busking, then, is a form of work, a form of leisure, and a form of art. It serves its creators, our musicians, as an authentically communicative leisure form when they are performing their own songs (Spracklen, 2009, 2011, 2015, 2021b), but this leisure form elides into the instrumentality of work when their freedom to play is constrained. Our musicians, like everyone else in liquid modernity, have to find a way of paying their bills. In this contested leisure space, their performativity will remain ambiguous for them and their audiences.

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