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# Street Vending the Metropolis: Proximity, Distance and Emotions between Migrants and Tourists in Paris

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## **Abstract**

This paper focuses on the role played by migrants in the informal economy in the emblematic tourist sites of a Global North metropolis, paying heed to their interactions with tourists. It investigates the acceptability of the migrants' presence by probing the distance or proximity of tourists to migrant vendors. Our key hypothesis is that these subaltern assert a certain right to the city by mastering interpersonal distances with others and changing the dominant meaning attached to major tourist sites. This research draws on in-depth fieldwork carried out in four of Paris's most famous attractions: the Eiffel Tower, Notre-Dame, Montmartre, and the Louvre. It is based on ethnographic observations, 75 interviews in five languages with tourists, and 29 interviews with actors in the informal economy, often street vendors. Analyzing this research material has allowed us to conceptualize a wide range of strategies by which migrants negotiate their place in the city. We highlight three modalities of proxemic relationships between tourists and migrants that shape the multi-scalar emotional experiences of these sites. These complex (im)possible proximities help us better grasp how a translocal and progressive sense of place is at stake, in the very heart of a global city.

Key words: migrants, proximity, metropolitan public space, interaction, informal economy

## **Résumé**

Cet article étudie le rôle joué par les migrants de l'économie informelle dans les sites touristiques emblématiques d'une métropole dite des « Nords », en se concentrant sur leurs interactions avec les touristes. Il interroge l'acceptabilité de la présence des migrants en évaluant la distance ou la proximité entre les touristes et les vendeurs migrants. Notre hypothèse majeure est que ces subalternes affirment un certain droit à la ville en maîtrisant les distances interpersonnelles et en modifiant les représentations dominantes associées aux principaux sites touristiques. Cette recherche se fonde sur un travail de terrain approfondi réalisé à propos de quatre monuments parisiens majeurs : la Tour Eiffel, Notre-Dame, Montmartre et le Louvre. L'investigation s'appuie sur des observations ethnographiques, 75 entretiens en cinq langues avec les touristes et 29 entretiens avec les acteurs de l'économie informelle, souvent des vendeurs de rue. L'analyse de ce matériau a conduit à conceptualiser une large palette de stratégies par lesquelles les migrants négocient leur place en ville. Nous mettons en évidence trois modalités de relations proxémiques entre les touristes et les migrants qui façonnent les expériences émotionnelles multi-scalaires de ces sites. L'étude de ces (im)possibles proximités permet de saisir la relation progressive et translocale au lieu qui s'y joue, en plein centre d'une ville globale.

Mots clés : migrants, proximité, espace public métropolitain, interaction, économie informelle

## Introduction

The recent rise in geopolitical tensions in the world is contributing to making migratory experiences an increasingly essential factor in our societies. Migrants have arguably received much attention at borders, be it from the press or academics, but also increasingly in metropolitan areas (Price and Benton-Short 2007; Coletto 2010; Antonopoulos et al. 2011; Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2011; Basok et al. 2015; Berroir et al. 2016). This research helps to show that a significant facet of migrants' relationship with host societies is negotiated in these spaces. Research in the social sciences has shown the importance of cities as resource spaces for migrants. Fewer studies, however, have paid heed to the migrants' participation in the daily assemblage of urban spaces. Migrants' experience of the city stems from both their vulnerability and their agency, through multiple adjustments in their ordinary interactions, notably in public spaces. The main idea of this paper is to grasp how, by managing distance, migrants' relationships with otherness and places emerge in urban public spaces.

The COVID-19 health crisis has greatly highlighted the issue of distance and has contributed to placing space at the centre of social science analyses. It thus reinforces the observation made by Doreen Massey (2005) that "space matters." In 2020 and 2021, city dwellers in various countries have experienced fine readjustments of their interpersonal distances and integrated density constraints so that their urban mobilities and interactions are deemed acceptable with respect to reconfigured health policies. In previous experiences of the city, finding the right distance was already a daily concern for all urban actors (Goffman 1959), but it was, and has been, especially so for (undocumented) migrants. In their strategies for accessing the city, migrants with or without legal status have been using distancing codes for decades to avoid the police and limit their visibility, while carrying out their activities, and self-organizing their interactions with other actors. Mastery of distance-related issues shapes the acceptability of their relationships with cities and public spaces. This paper proposes to assess the different degrees of acceptability of migrants in the city, regarding the various forms of distance they employ.

The space given to migrants in cities has above all been studied by focusing on their symbolic and material appropriation of urban spaces considered as marginal, in camps, or in ethnic enclaves (Hiebert 2000; Hyndman and Walton-Roberts 2000). This study shows that the presence of migrants is also asserted in the very heart of cities through the informal tourist economy in particular, which is an integral part of the functioning of the most recognized metropolitan places. Immigrant status is indeed a key feature of the informal street vending activities in the Global North; many studies show how migrant street vendors suffer from various forms of discrimination (Coletto 2019; Recchi 2020). The moral assignment of these street vendors with informality should not preclude us from relating them to both the formal and informal economies, beyond prevalent dichotomic viewpoints which have shown their limits (Chen 2006). This continuum between formal and informal activities is particularly developed in relation to tourism (Timothy and Wall 1997; Middleton 2003), with informal activities in lodging, services, and other businesses, such as souvenir vendors or pedicab cab drivers (Michaud 1991).

The acceptability of migrants is studied here in terms of the views tourists have of migrants and the (non-)proximity established between migrants and themselves. The interpersonal proximity is conceived as a construct accepted by the different parties, based as much on physical closeness as on symbolic vicinity (Urry 2002). The challenge is, therefore, to provide a micro-geographic understanding of these phenomena that tend to be neglected in overall approaches to migrant spatialities. The interpersonal distances analyzed here unfold in the four most-visited sites in Paris (ParisInfo 2019): the Notre-Dame Cathedral, the Sacré-Coeur Cathedral of Montmartre, the Louvre, and the Eiffel Tower. At these sites, an original form of acceptability of migrant workers is played out in their interpersonal

interactions with tourists, sketching out a singular moral geography. We use the notion of moral geographies to highlight the potentially diverging moral judgments made by various actors regarding specific social and spatial situations (Setten and Brown 2009). These geographies refer to whether or not people, activities, and attitudes are appropriate or out of place, and how various actors cope with such judgments. In this paper, interpersonal distances are envisioned as being key to grasping these moral geographies.

How does the migrants' search for the right distance from tourists engage variable modalities of interaction and reveal their specific capacity of being in the city? Addressing this question provides an embodied reading of migrants' skills in order to better understand their spatialities and their agency in terms of metrics, or, as Lévy (2003) puts it, of *mètrise*. The *mètrise* is understood to be the ability to estimate distances, to measure them, but also to master them, to finely tune them on different spatial scales depending on the context. *Mètrise* is a word play as its pronunciation is identical to *maîtrise* (mastery in French) and derives from *mètre* (meter). Our key hypothesis is that, by mastering interpersonal distances with others, these subaltern (Spivak 1985) tend to assert a certain right to the city and to influence the dominant meanings linked to major metropolitan tourist sites. Our argument is that analyzing the (im)possible proximities between migrants and tourists will contribute to a better grasp of what a progressive and extroverted sense of place (Massey 1993) means in the heart of global cities.

The following section contextualizes the urban practices of street vending vis-à-vis informal and legal or illegal trade. These practices can be better understood by studying various forms of relations to place and otherness, where proximity and emotions are at stake, as discussed in the next section of the paper. We then discuss our methodology for investigating relations between migrants and tourists, including its deontological and ethical dimensions. The last sections present our results and highlight three modalities of proxemic relationship between migrants and tourists.

### **A relational approach to street vending**

The practice of street vending has mainly been studied in the Global South, as well as, to a certain extent, in Southern European countries (Recchi 2020)—making it particularly worthwhile to study it in other contexts. In various cases, street vending is considered to be illegal and is linked to heavy control and repression, including eviction and arrest (Bromley 2000). In other situations, regulation, however, can be more complex, with arrangements made between vendors and police (Bautès and Taieb 2015), a certain tolerance by authorities for an activity contravening the law only in a minor way (Boels 2014), or a combination of legal ambiguity and intimidation (Devlin 2011). Regular permits are also conferred to certain street vendors in specific contexts, such as on Praça XV in Porto Alegre, in contrast to informal workers in the surrounding streets (Coletto 2010). In France, state regulation prohibits informal street-selling (François 2004). It is considered an illegal exercise of trade as it has not been authorized or declared in a formal way and can be punished by up to six months imprisonment and a fine of €3,750 (about C\$5,550, Légifrance 2021).

Against this backdrop of varying degrees of legality and illegality, scholars have highlighted a certain agency of vendors investing in urban public spaces to undertake informal activities, focusing on their tactics and strategies (Meissonnier 2006; Monnet 2006; Eidse et al. 2016). In this perspective, ambulatory trade is envisioned as “an urban income-generating activity” (Boels 2014, 670), and authors often stress the heterogeneity of such an informal economy in relationship to the types of activities engaged in and the vendors' nationalities. Their attention draws on the segmentation of vendors by nationality, activity, and migratory status. Scholars also focus on the variable internal relationships and the organization of vendors' activities, often related to their origins. International

migrants in the Global North and internal migrants in the Global South indeed constitute a significant fraction of informal workers (Recchi 2020). Research highlights the strong specialization of sellers by products, such as Nigerian street entrepreneurs selling CDs in Greece (Antonopoulos 2011). Other studies attest to a specialization by spaces of selling activities, notably for informal activities nested in places of formal activities, such as in flea markets or on beaches (De Bruin and Dupuis 2000; Nelken 2006).

By considering ambulatory trade as a relationship engaging both types of globalized actors, this paper attempts to provide a more encompassing understanding of migrants' presence in the city based on a detailed empirical work on interactions between vendors and tourists. This approach of ambulatory trade fully illustrates the intimate involvement of tourists with the production of services provided by informal workers. These interactions have rarely been investigated as studies on the informal tourist economy have more classically pinpointed the internal inequalities among sellers, their selling tactics, and their repression as mentioned above (Middleton 2003; François 2004; Sall 2010). Symmetrically, research on tourism has also tended to overlook the relationship between tourists and migrants, the encounter with autochthonous and sedentary inhabitants being strongly emphasized (MacCannell 1973). Accordingly, the contribution of migrants to the tourist economy has been highlighted regarding the development of tourism in ethnic neighbourhoods (Rath 2007), with the rise of policies valorizing the diversity of their urban inhabitants. Their role in the tourist economy and the social diversity of city centres remains largely unexplored (see Tonnelat 2007 or Berroir et al. 2016 for exceptions). This paper aims to fill the gap by connecting the study of migrants with the investigation of tourists and by questioning the meaning of their co-presence.

### **Two globalizations tested by proximity and emotions**

Migrants and tourists represent two figures of globalization theorized by Alejandro Portes (1997): globalization from below for migrants and globalization from above for tourists. The copresence of these actors generates games of distance and emotions, which are fully present in the relationship between the two globalizations and help to uncover the agency of migrants in their relationship to places and tourists. To analyze this relationship, this paper considers the connections between the theoretical findings on the social structuring of urban space and theories about emotions, proxemics, and mobilities.

Since the work of the Chicago School, theorists have agreed on a simple definition of the city as being a space of high density and diversity, which allows social and spatial interaction to be maximized (Park et al. 1925; Wirth 1938). It is also a human environment of encounters between strangers (Sennet 1977). The "right to the city" (Lefebvre 1968) embodies the concept of the city as being both a resource and a melting pot where peoples and cultures mix. These issues are particularly acute when considering the place of migrants in cities and their interactions with other urban actors.

It is indeed in public spaces that people literally get close in cities, providing the most possibilities for interacting. It has been argued that cities are "open-minded public spaces" favouring encounters between individuals of different origins, classes, cultures, and religions (Berman 1986). They are also allegedly free from any form of appropriation—"spaces in which intruders are accepted" (Joseph 1984, 41; author's own translation)—yet these overly-idealized visions of cities have been exposed in a large number of studies. Cities have a dual nature, being both open and oppressive. Manuel Castells (1989) has put forward a theory of the dual city, while Saskia Sassen (1991) considers global cities as fragmented between citizens who are integrated and those who are excluded. This urban polarization is particularly evident in the contrast between two globalizations, usually assigned to different spaces—from the margin to the centre. The controls imposed on public spaces tend to constrain

encounters between citizens by limiting access and the use of spaces, as found in the supervision and discipline imposed on crowd gatherings (Sennett 1977; Harvey 1992; Smithsimon 2008).

These debates struggle to account for the microgeographical rationales of (non-)effective proximity between actors in the public space, where part of their agency takes place (Vaiou and Kalandides 2009; Frétiqny 2014). The study of interpersonal distances, drawing on interactions observed on a micro-scale, is thus a key to assessing the degree of openness and inclusiveness of public space and the acceptability of otherness. Edward T. Hall's theory of proxemics (1966), with its different spheres ranging from the intimate to the public, is of interest to the research. While the interpersonal distances associated with each of these spheres have been the subject of precise measurements in different activities and cultural contexts, more recent works have shown the importance of adopting a more constructive prism of these distances to avoid Hall's culturalist bias (Munn 1996; Duranti 1992, 1997). These negotiated and, to a certain extent, transcultural distances vary according to the range of cultural, social, and even health codes involved in interactions. Symbolic interactionist approaches have shown how these distances participate more broadly in interaction codes linked to the social and spatial arrangement of public spaces and of the activities that take place there (Goffman 1959). The acceptability of otherness in each person's relationship to space is constructed in the management of these distances and spheres where emotional processes and bubbles are at play.

The geography of emotions makes it possible to think differently about the ability to interact with others by fully considering personal space (Sommer 1969). The latter is simultaneously vehicular, invisible and, yet, omnipresent in relationships with others. Emotions help to grasp the boundaries between oneself and others (Valentine 1993), to structure what is physically acceptable in contacts with others, i.e., what affects each of us and creates a feeling of closeness (Ahmed 2004). Personal space thus appears to be relatively porous and unfolds through performances, in the sense of Judith Butler (1990). It emerges in relation to others and in moments located here and now, elsewhere or in another temporality (Conradson 2007). Emotions produce an intensity that transforms the space to make it a place of contact between bodies and with other places (Duff 2010).

Relational and spatial emotional experiences have been theorized in two main ways: one based on binary categories and the other favouring more of a gradient of affects. An exemplary conceptualization of the first approach opposes thick places, experienced in a positive and intense way, to thin places, which leave little room for personal investment (Casey 2001) and may lead to feelings of rejection or estrangement. Other concepts illustrate the second approach more. One idea is that of sticky places. These are sites that are saturated with affect, be it positive or negative (Ahmed 2004; Laketa 2018), depending on the interactions maintained with the places and with others, which may or may not create a relationship of proximity. A second idea is that of a safe space which inspires a feeling of security by distancing the violence and harassment of minorities and by creating a sense of proximity and belonging, based on mutual recognition between members of the minorities. These safe spaces benefit from being viewed as the product of situated and inclusive interrelationships, though not in a static manner (The Roestone Collective 2014). This perspective is also valid for the previous conceptualizations.

To understand fully how proximity follows from both interpersonal interactions and multi-scale relationships with places, this study mobilizes two notions that highlight the relational and dynamic nature of places and, thereby, reflect the co-construction of place and inter-individual relations: throwntogetherness (Massey 2005) and translocality (Appadurai 1995). The definition of both these notions, however, does not fully integrate the emotional aspects they entail. To emotionalize throwntogetherness is to consider places as constellations of interactions between actors, by integrating all the affects in play in the fairly distant relationships between bodies. Likewise,

translocality refers to various forms of exchanges between migrants and non-migrants, both on a micro-scale and a large scale, and the simultaneous affective relationships of actors occupying different places. Ultimately, throwntogetherness, but also translocality, are two ways of giving a progressive meaning to places and their construction. In fact, places are seen in both cases as being in continuous production and reproduction through interactions, beyond their fixed apprehension centred on their forms and functions. This apprehension has political and social significance as it allows the agency of subaltern connected with the rest of the world to be recognized in the material and symbolic construction of the urban places in question.

### **Investigating interactions between migrants and tourists**

The interactions between migrants and tourists, particularly the acceptability of these relationships by tourists, were studied through observation from 2015 onwards and interviews carried out in the same proportions in the four tourist sites from 2015 to 2017. The four sites studied revealed comparable results; however, slight differences related to interactions between migrants and tourists can be observed between sites. These differences do not affect the modalities of proximity studied in this paper.

We obtained our first data through in-depth direct observation, by producing a research diary and nearly 1,200 photographs. The corpus of photographs has been analyzed through a triple lens. The first lens focused on the spatial configuration and appropriation of public spaces by migrants, tourists, and control actors (law enforcement officers and agents working for private security companies). The second prism centred on the retail activities and the performance of street vendors. And the third perspective addressed the interactions, the forms, and the intensity of the interpersonal relationships between migrants and tourists. Particular attention was paid to the sensitive and extra-verbal dimensions of these interactions.

Our second source of data consists of interviews with tourists and with migrants. Semi-structured interviews of about 30 minutes were conducted with 75 adult tourists of all ages, in English, French, Polish, German, and Italian. In addition, a total of 29 interviews of about 20 minutes were conducted in French with various actors working informally: street vendors, rickshaw drivers, artists, etc. A very large proportion of informal workers at these sites comes from the Global South. The street vendors are mostly from the Maghreb region and sub-Saharan Africa and, to a lesser extent, South Asia, especially India and Sri Lanka. By contrast, rickshaw drivers in Paris have migrated from Eastern Europe, predominantly Bulgaria and Romania. The differential participation of migrants in informal activities is part of a social and spatial division of labour within these particularly heterogeneous tourist economies. This division of labour follows the constitution of working groups and networks, in close relation with community affinities and the migratory paths of migrants. It is also linked to social relationships of domination in terms of gender, age, racial discrimination, etc. The social and spatial hierarchy of groups and individuals, who may be leaders or simple hawkers, with or without a residence permit, operates according to the multidimensional social status of these actors, their activities, and the hardships of work. A significant share of the interviewees did not have official papers, placing them in a situation of political informality, illustrating the part played by the State in the production of informal conditions. All interviewees were male and relatively young, being less than 40 years of age, reflecting the profile of informal workers at these sites as a whole.

The topics discussed with tourists were divided into three parts. The first part concerned their travel to Paris, including their frequency of travel and the duration of their stay, as well as their reasons for visiting the metropolis. The second part regarded the interactions contracted with informal workers.

Questions documented the purchases made, the negotiations engaged in with the vendors, as well as whether the presence of street vendors created a particular atmosphere for the tourist sites.

The third part dealt with tourists' opinions on monitoring and surveillance by control actors, as well as their representations of tourist sites. Interviews with informal workers were organized, to some extent, in a similar way. Two sections concerned their working practices and living conditions in Paris, including the length of their professional activity at the site of the interview, as well as factors explaining the sites they used for selling. Another section dealt with the informal workers' interactions with tourists, including their retail strategy to encourage them to buy their products and to adapt their interaction according to tourists' apparent social and cultural traits, such as their perceived nationality. Another section addressed their relations with control actors, including the prevailing norms imposed at these sites and their ability or inability to bypass them.

The constraints of access to informal workers, as well as tourists, and the limited duration of interviews have restrained the collection of discourses on the diversity of representations and experiences regarding both personal space and public space across cultures and societies, an interesting topic of investigation needing to be further analyzed in other research. Without undervaluing the importance of both internal heterogeneity among tourists and among informal workers per se, in this paper we focus our analysis on the heterogeneity of interactions between tourists and informal workers.

An exhaustive analysis of these interview data has been carried out, using a thematic coding based on key words and phrases that emerged from the interviewees, following the principles of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). We have also produced word clouds to provide a complementary insight, illustrating by these quantifications some of the results that had emerged from the previous qualitative analysis. They have been generated from the full verbatim interviews. Tourists' narratives have been separated into two clouds, one focusing on interviews carried out in English and the other for interviews conducted in French, but also in Polish, German, or Italian and translated into French afterwards.

Investigating populations facing particularly difficult working and living conditions raises acute methodological, as well as ethical and deontological issues (Düvell et al. 2010). From a methodological point of view, this empirical study required an extended presence in the field, sustained discussions with the respondents to establish a framework for interviews adapted to each situation, and adjustments to our questions to avoid high response refusal rates. From an ethical and deontological point of view, we have paid special attention to the production and dissemination of sensitive data, limiting it to what control actors already know about informal workers, in order to avoid any harmful disclosure of information.

### **Hampered proximity or off-limit spaces**

Proximity does not always exist in the interaction between migrants and tourists. This stems from the limited acceptance of migrants' presence in certain situations, related to their activity of street vending. They are indeed subject to the gaze of some tourists (Urry and Larsen 2011) for whom commercial solicitations, or even the mere existence of a crowd at the tourist site, are unwanted. The interaction observed may, in fact, result from a simple co-presence. Numerous accounts by tourists on micro-scales, especially regarding the body, emphasize the number and density of vendors. Words like "a lot," "much," "many," or "*beaucoup*" in tourists' word clouds attest to these experiences (Figure 1). Tourists did not like being touched or followed by sellers and frequently evoked the tenacity of informal actors in their sales strategies to capture their attention, using the terms "pushy" or "grab you," as shown in this interview with a couple of tourists from Florida: "Honestly they [street vendors] are pushy ... [some] literally grab you.... They are crossing the line. We don't mind as long as they don't



come up to you and touch you and follow you around.” Such discourse refers to specific embodiments of migrants, i.e., singular spatial relationships of the body to other bodies and the emotions they arouse (Butler 1990; Thrift 2008; Cattán and Vanolo 2014).

Figure 1 Migrants’ acceptability to tourists.



Interviews with 75 tourists (2015–2017), produced by C. Bouloc.

These experiences are coloured by gender, as an interview with three female friends from Chambéry, in the French Alps, shows: “At the Sacré- Coeur it’s borderline: they take your arm, we have to say ‘no’ to them, they are tedious.... When you’re among girls, it can be a bit scary when there are lots of men like that who come up behind you.” These representations and the sensitive relationships with migrants show the very close attention paid by these tourists to the limits of the proxemic perimeters set out by Edward T. Hall (1966) and to the territories of the self by Erving Goffman (1959). These bodily contacts are experienced as transgressions of off-limit personal spaces and can be observed at the different sites.

In the eyes of some tourists, such trespassing of personal boundaries on a micro-scale that is played out at these sites tarnishes the image of Paris. A young tourist from Phoenix, Arizona reports: “I think they take away the genuine feel of Paris.... They make it feel like a foreign place.” This reproach refers to contrasting social and cultural practices which are not always free from racism.

This hampered proximity also stems from the constrained distance to monuments that is imposed on street vendors. Indeed, a policing practice of sanctuarizing access to monuments transforms nearby spaces into urban fortresses, conceived to be off-limit spaces for migrants. A young Senegalese vendor, who arrived in France a year ago and was working on the Champs-de-Mars, explains this rule: “There are days when they [the police] ... tell us that we must not approach the Eiffel Tower, that we have to stay in the gardens [where there are far fewer tourists].” The repression of their informal activities is particularly strong in these off-limit spaces. The risk of arrest carries major individual consequences, especially for the many vendors who do not have residence permits. It feeds a recurring fear of the various sanctions they may incur. Yet, despite the danger, informal actors regularly transgress the prohibition because the very high concentration of tourists makes these spaces the most favourable to transactions.

In relationship to both tourists and tourist sites, migrants are, therefore, confronted with thwarted emotions, as their activity comes up against the impossibilities of proximity. The off-limit spaces, be they nearby tourists’ bodies or monuments, are a particularly vivid illustration of the role of sticky places that tourist sites play in the daily experience of migrants in cities.

Refusing to accept the proximity to migrants stigmatizes the migrants and pushes them back into their status of both street vendor and migrant. Tourists position themselves as norm setters, criticizing the overcrowding of tourist sites, in which they themselves play a part. It is as if, within this moral geography, their own presence as actors in globalization from above should be more legitimate than the more enduring presence of migrants. The expectations of tourists and police officers to limit crowd density and enforce minimum distances are, however, anticipated, to a certain extent, by migrants who attempt to develop new modalities of proximity.

### **The negotiated acceptability of tolerated proximity**

The interaction between migrants and tourists at tourist sites also involves modalities of proximity of intermediate intensity. They entail both the tourists’ tolerance of migrants’ presence due to their involvement in commercial transactions and migrants’ capacity to overcome the aversion of tourists by playing on tourists’ relationship to space.

By offering objects for sale that satisfy a major demand for tourists, the migrants’ presence is legitimized. As a tourist from Oslo emphasizes, “I think they find their place where people need them; they are good at doing that.” Informal workers are located in close proximity to the tourist sites, whereas regular shops selling the same type of products, like bottled water, love locks to hang on bridges, or models of the Eiffel Tower, are often located at a significant distance from tourist flows. The informal vendors are co-extensive with tourist sites. According to a tourist from Ohio, “You know you are in touristy spots when you see them; they’re close to what you want to see.” Tolerance towards migrants, however, also lies in the recognition of the right to exercise an activity that provides a means of subsistence: “I think it is their livelihood, it is good for them. They need it.” (student from Annecy, France). This acceptance is underpinned on humanitarian and ethical grounds, sometimes tinged with paternalistic and condescending attitudes.

*Figure 2 The spatial arrangement of selling stalls by migrant vendors.*



*Photograph taken by J.-B. Frétiqny in 2017.*

Such negotiated acceptability depends on tourists' values and their relationship to the objects sold by migrants, as well as on the sellers' assertion of their agency. To some extent, migrants tend to anticipate the expectations of tourists and the police in terms of the distance and density of their presence, so through self-organization they distribute their activities spatially to not appear overcrowded. Observations show the care taken in the adjustment of migrants' locations, in order to find the right distance between themselves, but also in relation to the material configuration of the site and the tourists. The positioning of their stalls allows them to be part of flows without obstructing tourists' passage (Figure 2).

*Finely attuned interactions engaged by migrants with tourists.*



*Interviews with 29 informal workers (2015–2017), produced by C. Bouloc.*

Migrants create market relationships with tourists, favouring proximity. They shape the tourist experience by providing tourists with a wealth of advice, guiding their access to the city, like vendors who suggest placing love locks on Paris's latest fashionable bridges. Once initiated, the interaction is finely customized by migrants, according to the types of tourists being addressed. Vendors use targeted techniques, manners, and languages, depending on the tourists' nationality, as shown in Figure 3 where the equivalent in French of the following words are mentioned extensively: "type," "techniques," "manner," "languages," and "nationalities." Migrants act as mediators of the tourist site, facilitating the experience of a cosmopolitan hub, a place of throwtogetherness, where forms of distance and cultural proximity are experienced. Accordingly, a Dutch guide explains that she feels differences in the interaction of vendors with groups of tourists depending on their nationality, noting that "Americans, Canadians and Australians are easier to approach," suggesting transcultural complexities in the construction of proximity.

This tolerated proximity with migrants is considered acceptable by tourists through the prism of the activities to which these migrants are assigned, the interactions being closely related to the services or products provided (Figure 4). Some tourists see these activities as an expression of the commodification of sites, which they denounce. These modalities of (non-)proximity more generally draw contrasting moral geographies of either charity or the dominance of market transactions.

Figure 4 Engaging a trading relationship entailing negotiated proximity.



Photograph taken by C. Bouloc in 2015.

### **The translocal site and the transcended proximity**

In this third modality of proximity, the actors of the two globalizations identified by Alejandro Portes (1997) actually establish contact. To a certain extent, this is unprecedented in studies as tourists and vendors have mainly been examined separately, despite their co-presence at certain sites.

Migrants willingly engage in discussion with tourists, as evidenced by the words “contact,” “talk,” “discuss,” “explain,” and also “nice” and “happy” (Figure 3). Compared to the distancing previously identified between tourists and migrants, here smiles and applause are present. In this reversal of bodily relationships, proximity and tactile contact are actually being sought. For tourists, this register of positive emotions is the most intense, as demonstrated by photos taken with selfie sticks, for example. For a brief moment, the two globalizations tend to merge on the tourists’ initiative. By their body language and the practice of taking selfies, they ritualize and immortalize their encounter with migrants, referring to a strongly displayed affective proximity (Figure 5).

Such proximity is sought by certain tourists who consider informal workers to be an integral part of the identity of the place and, therefore, of the tourist experience. An Australian tourist for example, when asked, “Do you think that they help to create a particular atmosphere?” responded with, “They do; they are part of Paris.” The intensity of these relationships, nonetheless, varies according to the types of informal workers. It is particularly marked for artists, yet is even present, albeit less frequently, with sellers of souvenirs, selfie sticks, beer, wine, or champagne. These intensified interactions of proximity contribute to changing the meaning of these sites by shifting the values and representations they convey. Many informal workers display their migratory identity, which is staged at tourist sites. Rickshaw drivers adorn their vehicles with their national flag. Bracelet weavers use the colours of their country of origin’s flag. Some artists may proudly display their nationality during their shows, such as Iya Traoré, football player and freestyler, who indicates his Guinea-Conakry nationality on the poster and the T-shirt that accompany his performance. There are many manifestations of translocal or transterritorial practices (Appadurai 1995; Price and Benton-Short 2008; Cattán 2012). These actors connect places, collectives, values, and feelings on a large scale (Walton-Roberts 2003; Brickell and Datta 2011). The relationships of proximity woven at a micro-scale are intensified by this projection on a much larger scale, which brings into play the territorial moorings of these actors. Indeed, the

proximity between actors can be qualified as transcended, in as far as it situates the experience of a place on the scale of migrants' and tourists' varied identity horizons.

This shift from a negotiated proximity, based on acquisitions, to a transcended one, associated with effusions, is conditioned by certain factors. The acceptability of such tourists' proximity to migrants depends on their artistic and cultural performances, as well as on a certain exoticism, making it possible to go beyond the negative migrant stereotypes attached to informal workers. Exoticism refers, indeed, to both the pleasure of confronting mythified otherness and elsewhere (Urry and Larsen 2011) and of "experiencing the sight of a reassuring version of this confrontation, true to our fantasies" (Staszak 2009, 46). Various interviews insist on the exotic atmosphere that emanates from the site, such as in the words of a tourist from Vendée in western France: "I think that's part of the charm too, this traveling bazaar." Translocality also takes on its full meaning in this statement of a tourist from Peterborough, England: "I think people would be disappointed if they wouldn't see something like that." The interweaving of the two globalizations at work in this proximity of strong emotional intensity is reflected, without it necessarily being part of a safe space.

*The construction of a translocal proximity.*



*Photograph taken by J.-B. Frétigny in 2017.*

## **Conclusion**

This paper offers a new angle of approach to the migrants' access to the city by giving salience to the arrangement of interpersonal distances. By developing a relational approach of street vending, we focus on the social and transcultural heterogeneity of the interactions between tourists and migrants, in relationship to these tourist sites and other places. Such interactions have rarely been studied in contrast to internal differences found in each type of actor. This could be further taken into account as a follow-up to this study. The examination of the interactions established in the four main tourist sites in Paris shows that migrants from the informal economy tend to find their place in the city by being in close bodily contact with tourists. These interactions tend to play out in similar ways across these sites, suggesting that the role of the metropolitan Parisian context tends to be particularly consistent.

The migrants' mastery of their proxemic relationship with other urban actors is a key condition for their acceptability in metropolitan public spaces. In the first modality of proxemic relationships between these two types of actors of globalization, various transgressions of tourists' interpersonal borders by migrants on a micro-scale are experienced negatively by tourists, producing a hampered

proximity. By contrast, rather than a simple co-presence, the two other modalities show a conjunction of more positive interactions between these two globalizations. The tolerated proximity points to accepted interactions associated with trade, even if migrants remain assigned to the precariousness of their work and to their migratory status. In the case of transcended proximity, reciprocal connections occur on an emotional and affective level. Tolerated and transcended proximities are closely based on a logic of mediating cultural differences in relationship to place, which comes from throwntogetherness. They are also based on the unexpected translocal connections of these places, involving, on one hand, tourists' places of origin, into which migrants project themselves by adapting their interpersonal relationship codes, and, on the other hand, migrants' places of origin that they somehow include in their relationship to tourists. In these games of distance and proximity emblematic of both throwntogetherness and translocality, emotions emerge as much in the humanitarian recognition of a right to subsistence, as in the valorization of otherness, which is marked by a quest for reciprocity.

The study of the interactions between the actors of the two globalizations emphasizes the conditional acceptability of the migrants' presence. Migrants mobilize a wide range of resources to engage with tourists' emotional bubbles. Their performances act as mediators to establish relationships of proximity.

With respect to the debates about dual cities and the place given to migrants in the city, this paper uses a micro-geographic, proxemic, and multiscalar approach to interpersonal relations to highlight a migrant's presence in urban centers of cities. At the scale of migrants' living spaces, predominantly assigned to urban margins, these central sites act as laboratories for thinking differently about migrants' urban moorings, as well as the fabric of urban societies. By their presence and their translocal practices, migrant street vendors indeed contribute to reconnecting these iconic places with the cultural and social diversity of the metropolis, as well as with its political and ethical dimensions in the broader relationship between the Global North and the Global South. This study shows the full role of distance as a condition for the emergence of signifying sites of contact for migrants on a material and symbolic level within the public space. This is a major issue for migrants in gaining a right to the city.

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