Informal economies in Bairro Alto (Lisbon): the nocturnal tourist city explained through a street dealer's life story

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The historical neighbourhood of Bairro Alto is the city's most iconic nightlife destination, especially for tourists visiting Lisbon (Portugal). The expansion of commercial nightlife in this area has been accompanied by the increasing presence of informal economies in the public space during the hours of evening and night, specifically street vendors, and street drug dealers. Based on ethnographic immersion carried out between 2010 and 2020, this article presents the life story of a drug dealing gang leader who operates in a particular street in Bairro Alto. His life story demonstrates how street drug dealing in the Bairro Alto tourist nightlife constitutes a central strategy for the economic survival of John and his boys as well as an informal, alternative and effective mechanism of socioprofessional inclusion amidst a wider social reality highly characterized by class-based and ethnic-based institutional(ised) exclusion.

KEYWORDS: street drug dealing, ethnography, informal nocturnal economies, Bairro Alto, Lisbon.

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LISBON, THE CAPITAL OF "DOING WHAT YOU CAN'T IN YOUR OWN CITY AT NIGHT"

The first time I went out in Bairro Alto was on the first day my best friend (also a recently granted postdoctoral researcher in Portugal) and I arrived in Lisbon as two European, white, middle-class, highly educated migrants. It was Monday 11th January 2010, an extremely cold and rainy night. At 11 p.m., Bairro Alto was packed with people and it took over half an hour to get to Atalaia Street, more specifically to the world famous, tourism-oriented Brazilian live music Portas Largas Bar; on any morning, this would take less than a couple of minutes. In comparison to the nightlife in Barcelona in north-eastern Spain – where I carried out my doctoral research between 2005 and 2009 –, three main aspects caught my attention during my first night out in Bairro Alto. The first stemmed from the sheer number of adolescents between 12 and 16 years old displaying clear signs of drunkenness; I can even still recall the image of a very young female (apparently around 13) lying on the floor unconscious and unresponsive, her clothes clearly revealing she had already vomited profusely. The second aspect that impressed me was the appreciable number of white and black youngsters dressed in typical Afro-American hip-hop clothing who were openly dealing drugs in the middle of the street. The third facet was the impunity with which a group of policemen assaulted a small group of black youngsters on the upper side of Diário das Notícias Street before going away without making any arrests. After the end of my first night in Lisbon, mostly spent in Bairro Alto, my friend and I returned to our temporary headquarters, Olissipo Hostel, holding the strong conviction that the Bairro Alto nightlife was a rough diamond requiring ethnographic exploration.

Looking back over the last two decades, the expansion of the night-time leisure economy in Bairro Alto spans two clearly differentiated phases. The first began in the second half of the 1990's and continued throughout the following decade. This was primarily fuelled by an interplay between gentrification, studentification and the early touristification of the neighbourhood, ongoing especially in the second half of the 2000's. The second phase took place in the post-crisis period (2014-2019), thus, in the years running up to the global outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and featuring mainly the dramatic touristification of Bairro Alto nightlife (Frúgoli Jr. 2013; Nofre *et al*. 2017a; Malet-Calvo, Nofre and Geraldes 2017; Malet-Calvo and Ramos 2018; Nofre and Malet-Calvo 2019; Paiva and Sánchez-Fuarros 2021; Rêgo and Almeida 2022).

From a broader geographic perspective, one may securely argue that the night-time leisure economy has gained in relevance in designing both urban marketability and the tourism promotion strategies of a host of cities worldwide. Correspondingly, there is a growing number of authors examining the

multiple range of multifaceted relationships between urban tourism and "the night" economy that have triggered profound transformations in the social, cultural, and economic fabric of central areas of our cities (*e.g.*, Schmid 2017; Smith *et al*. 2018; Eldridge and Smith 2019; Pinke-Sziva *et al*. 2019; Zmyslony and Pawlusiński 2019; Nofre 2021). Crucially, the expansion of both the so-called alcotourism and party-tourism (Selänniemi 2003; Diken and Laustsen 2004; Hesse *et al*. 2012; Thurnell-Read 2012; Sönmez *et al*. 2013; Tutenges 2013, 2015; Holleran 2016; Bethmann 2018; Iwanicki and Dłużewska 2018; Carlisle and Ritchie 2021; Mach *et al*. 2022) has been prominent in many cities and regions across the globe, acting as a driver of spatial, economic and cultural change, especially in central urban areas. In the case of Europe, David Bell (2008: 293), already in the 2000's, noted that a number of cities had begun providing "ambivalently sanctioned liminal zone[s]", emerging as attractive city-break destinations where tourists could "recharge and therefore re-enter society relaxed and refreshed" (Bell 2008). In this sense, Diken and Laustsen (2004: 99) argue that recourse to alcohol-fuelled nights emerges "as a kind of hedonism enjoyed on a massive scale in which the citizen is transformed into a 'party animal', a reduction which is experienced as a liberation from the daily routine of the 'city' or civilization".

The nightlife in Lisbon, the capital of Portugal, is no exception to the group of cities that have promoted "crazy nights" (Nofre and Malet-Calvo 2019) as a central factor in their tourism attraction strategies. In this sense, the dramatic expansion of the tourism-oriented night-time leisure economy in the old neighbourhood of Bairro Alto over the past decade (2010-2019) has transformed the area into a leisure-themed urbanscape – or "a pleasurescape of transgressive sensuousness and carnal sociality" (John 2001: 48). In some ways, one would rightly argue that Bairro Alto nightlife represents an "intensity machine that fabricates emotional energy for the masses" (Tutenges 2012: 132) – similar to what the author describes in the case of Sunny Beach, in Bulgaria. In the nights of Bairro Alto, tourists, international university students and locals drink in order to socialize, sharing time, space and experiences with their peers with some hoping for an "unforgettable" night. Thus, the nightscape in this historical neighbourhood of Lisbon city centre appears as an affectively charged nightlife environment (Duff 2008) in which the lived (and commodified) experiences of partiers emerge as an alternative and joyful mode of existence through producing and simultaneously reproducing a simulated, carnivalesque, evasion of the routines of everyday life.

During the "crazy nights" of Bairro Alto, the norms and social structures of everyday life are transcended and challenged (Jaimangal-Jones, Pritchard and Morgan 2010) through celebrating "a new reality of joy" (Beyers 2016: 357) in which the hierarchies of everyday life are profaned and overturned. Such profanation favours the production, reproduction and consumption of a

hyper-festive, carnivalesque, nocturnal atmosphere in Bairro Alto (Nofre and Malet Calvo 2019) in which thousands of party-tourists loudly chat, drink XL *caipirinhas* or beers outdoors all night long, and chant in a hooligan-like style "under the balcony of an elderly neighbour, an octogenarian woman, who looks at them [young tourists in their early twenties][1] and then insults them because she and her husband can't sleep" (a very common incidence recorded during my fieldwork ongoing since January 2010).

However, amidst this ocean of festive hedonism, a dense affective-emotional cloud, an unmanageable number of memories and life stories, pervades invisible to the eyes of any night owl. It is precisely this dense web of invisibilities that underpins the great attraction to any ethnographer eager to grasp in detail just what lies beyond that which is merely visible. Correspondingly, this article represents an ethnographic immersion into what I term the "B-side" of the nocturnal tourist city and thereby providing a contribution to one of the least explored aspects of the tourist city and particularly of its nightlife. Responding to what Auyero and Jensen (2015) argue regarding the need to focus on the lived experiences of inequalities, I place the analytical focus on one of the actors in this "B-side" of Bairro Alto's touristified nightlife. Simultaneously, I take into consideration what Järvinen proposes about life stories research when recommending focusing on the perspective of the present without losing sight of the past, and "emphasiz[ing] the interactionist dimensions of life histories but also pay[ing] attention to the self and its ongoing projects" (2004: 45).

A CHANCE ENCOUNTER AND AN ETHNOGRAPHIC IMMERSION

This article examines one of the, at first sight, invisible phenomena existing in the Bairro Alto nightlife through the life story of John[2] – the leader of a street drug dealing gang operating in a particular street of this historical Lisbon neighbourhood. The presentation of John's life story in this article aims at avoiding the punitive, criminalizing, stigmatizing and moralistic views that flood the current academic, institutional, media and societal debate on this (il)legal economic activity around the globe. Far from it, this article highlights the importance of street drug dealing to John and his team as this accounts for a strategy central to their daily economic survival as well as an informal, alternative, and effective mechanism of socio-professional inclusion within a social

1 During my ten-year ethnographic study of the Bairro Alto nightlife, I found that loud hooligan-like chants are mostly performed by French, German, and Italian tourists aged in their twenties. Surprisingly, when actual football hooligan types from any European football team visited Bairro Alto at night, they also used to chant, but far more sporadically.

2 All street names, protagonists and other recognizable elements of this ethnographic study have been completely anonymized.

context deeply characterized by institutional(ized) marginalization, racialization, and exclusion.

My ethnographic study of Bairro Alto nightlife extended from January 2010 until the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic (February 2020).[3] More specifically, from 11th of January 2010 to 31st of July 2010, continuous exploratory ethnography took place, *i.e.*, covering every night throughout this period, from 11 p.m. at night until 2:30/3:00 a.m. From 1st of September 2010 to 31st of October 2013, I conducted my ethnographic sessions during the same schedule from Wednesday through Saturday, with some Sundays or Tuesdays when coinciding with my ethnographic study of Erasmus student nights and pub crawls. From 1st of November 2013 to mid-February 2020, my ethnographic sessions were reduced to Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 11 p.m. until 1:30 p.m., as during this period I was also developing ethnography on the spatial and social impact of the touristification of nightlife in the Cais do Sodré neighbourhood. Throughout all this period, I was fortunate to meet a significant number of people who were neither tourists nor university students. Some were informal night workers from Bangladesh and the Sub-Saharan region selling colourful hats, Minnie ears and cigarette lighters. Two of the regular street vendors were white Portuguese: one into his fifties, with a very peculiar moustache, and a younger man in his thirties. Both would sell bread with chorizo (a classic street food in the Bairro Alto nights) outdoors. Others, much younger than these informal night workers, were (apparently) loitering in the middle of the street. One of them was John, the leader of a small street drug dealing gang operating in Vinha street.

The specific starting point of the ethnography presented in this paper traces its origins to when I was mapping the changing Bairro Alto nightlife (Nofre *et al*. 2017a) as well as an ethnographic study of heteronormative seduction in a small dancing bar on Vinha street (Nofre *et al*. 2017b). I met John when he asked me for a rolled tobacco cigarette during one night in late spring 2013. The first exchanges of small, fragmented, unconnected conversations with him allowed me to intuit a complex world that had remained invisible to my geographer's eyes during the first years of my study of Bairro Alto nightlife. Immediately curious about the less visible aspects of nights on Vinha street, I decided to embark on an ethnographic immersion into how a street drug dealing gang performed its activity every night on a particularly crowded Bairro Alto street. To this end, in autumn 2013, I started spending many hours with John. One night, when asked about my job (my physical appearance and aesthetics ensured I was often mistaken for a plainclothes policeman during my ten years of ethnography in Bairro Alto), I explained my research to John:

3 For more results on this ethnography on the nights of Bairro Alto, you can consult my works published during the last seven years, which are available on my ResearchGate profile.

"Ah! Then you get to meet many girls! C'mon motherfucker, introduce me to some!" [John, April 2014]. Step by step, we began commenting on what we were seeing, what was going on in the street, relationships with the locals, with the police, the types of tourists. The rainy nights of autumn and winter, with the streets almost empty and without potential customers, were when I was able to best develop John's life history. In the middle of those less crowded, calmer evenings, there was also space to talk about football, politics, and our (sometimes shared) dreams.

As time progressed, I began to take a greater scientific interest in academic studies dealing with street drug dealing in urban contexts. However, the case of John and his crew of street dealers constituted a very different case study from the street drug markets in Oslo (Sandberg 2008), Dublin (Marsh 2019), or Uyo, in Nigeria (Nelson and Ramirez 2022), among other interesting case studies published around the time of writing. On the one hand, the relationship between street drug dealing and violence (Skolnick *et al*. 1990; Bourgois 2003), the concepts of street culture (Jacobs 1999), street capital (Sandberg and Pedersen 2011), and the street code (Anderson 2000) related to drug dealing emerged as too rigid to be applied to the case of John and his boys. On the other hand, what I observed during the ethnography I set out below is that violence did not form part of their "way of being on the street", nor did their practices constitute any resistance to the capitalist city, nor even did they constitute an expression of confrontation with white Portuguese society. Crucially, being in (or beyond) the margins of a predominantly white society does not necessarily mean expressing resistance or confrontation. The ethnography detailed below on John and his team arises as a very particular case study amidst the dominant criminological approach to street drug dealing gangs.

Despite my academic background in urban social geography, the anthropological gaze that I developed during my ethnographic immersion was greatly influenced by works that adopt clearly alternative approaches to the criminological-punitive research that has hitherto dominated so-called "gang studies". Fundamental to the objectives of this article and underpinning its theoretical background is the study by Windle and Briggs (2015) of a street drug dealing gang in suburban London. Fascinatingly, the authors argue that London's Red Gang "should not be viewed as a drug dealing organisation. Rather it is a composition of individual drug dealers who cooperate out of mutual self-interest" (*ibid*.: 1170). Crucially, in the case of John and his crew, this article demonstrates how the search for such mutual self-interest emerges in response to "their daily struggles for subsistence and dignity at the poverty line" (Bourgois 2003: 12).

During the development of my ethnographic immersion around John and his lads, I also gained the opportunity to meet and share many nights with the self-entitled "lonely wolves" operating in Bairro Alto's nightlife, young street

drug dealers acting independently of any gang. I applied the "walking methodology" (*e.g.*, Kusenbach 2003; Pink 2008; Clark 2017; Horgan, Fernández and Kitching 2022) in some instances, accompanying them on their street routes as they attracted their clients (commonly drunken tourists) and acting as English-Portuguese interpreter between them and the tourists. In doing so, given the Bairro Alto's outdoor party environment, the number of stimuli appearing before our eyes one after the other as we walked along – whether attractive female tourists, the sporadic police operations in the middle of the street, live music flooding the street or crossing paths with people already familiar – on various occasions allowed our informal conversations to move in often unexpected directions (Jones *et al*. 2008) and vital to gaining the opportunity to access their complex personal life trajectories. This is the case of B., who appears at the end of the next section. B. really caught my attention. He displayed a great deal of wisdom in spite of his still young age. B. always wore a jacket, even during summer, so that the secret police could not photograph the image tattooed on one of his arms. This way, he made it difficult for the police to carry out a line-up should he ever get arrested.

Finally, I would like to say a few brief words about the procedures for recording the information collected during my fieldwork. In the case of both John and B., the verbal data and fieldwork observations were never written down on the spot. At around 2:30 a.m., I would go to a small dancing bar located a mere 50 meters away where the DJ was one of my housemates. At the bar, I would grab paper napkins and ask P. or G. (the bartenders) for a pen. I would write down whatever ethnographic notes I had collected that night on these napkins. Occasionally, I recorded the notes on my fieldwork cell phone, a prepaid Nokia 1208. Once at home, I stored the napkins in a box, alongside the day's annotations, and with the cell phone notes rewritten on a piece of paper that I also placed in that box.

VINHA STREET: FLOATING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CROWD

Vinha street in Bairro Alto is a lively street on Friday and Saturday nights. Many hundreds of tourists and locals gather, peaking in numbers between midnight and 2:30 a.m., to chat and drink in the middle of the street, wander up and down or go into one of the many bars Vinha street to dance or listen to live music. The chromatic tones of the bar signs, the configuration of a street sound ambience due to the mixture of live music (or YouTube playlists) of the bars and pubs, the flowers peeking out from the balconies of some of the historic buildings on this street, and the extremely jubilant and festive atmosphere that oozes through the crowd in Vinha street amount to a clear analogy with the carnivalesque nightscape of New Orleans' Bourbon Street. Amid this apparent sensory-emotional chaos, dozens of taxis, garbage trucks and private

cars blow their horns on finding themselves blocked in by hundreds of people conversing loudly, shouting and singing as if in a football crowd, while young street dealers tout for tourists. However, while visitors and tourists may be defined as privileged users of the neighbourhood during the evening and night hours, many locals (mainly non-white adolescents, teenagers and youngsters with street gang looks) are barred from entering most nightlife venues in the area despite having frequented Bairro Alto at night for years. Some belong to street drug dealing gangs.

Street drug dealing is a not-publicly-recognized-but-valuable point of attraction for positioning Lisbon as an appealing "party city" with its vibrant, extremely crowded, apparently beyond-the-boundaries nightlife in Bairro Alto. "Here you can do at night what you can't do in your own city without getting fined or anything like that" is one of the most recurrent responses of non-Portuguese tourists when asked what they like best about going out at night in Bairro Alto [author's fieldwork notebooks, January 2010 – February 2020]. While street drug dealing is absolutely prohibited by national laws, it arises as a fundamental facet to promoting "party tourism" in Lisbon and, in practice (and paradoxically), tolerated both by the local tourism lobby and other institutions. In turn, street drug dealing is the only effective economic means many racialized youngsters from the Lisbon suburbs have in order to earn money. For B., a 17-year-old Roma adolescent from Amadora (a suburban town in northern Lisbon), bringing money home every Friday night is mandatory: "I've recently become a father, with a 3-month baby. My mum and D.'s mother (D. is B.'s 3-month baby) say I need to bring 300 euros home every Friday night… they force me to get this dough no matter what. Man, I've tried to work as a carpenter, welding assistant, but it's impossible. I'm gypsy, you know? They don't let me work but I still need to make money. That's why I'm here but I don't wanna be caught by the police, because I'd go to jail. I know that. And that's because I'm like a lone wolf but, anyway, I know they will catch me someday…" [B., 17 years old, independent street dealer on Vinha street, June 2017]. Following his comments, I asked about his relationship with other street dealers as he was dealing in the same area where a consolidated gang was also acting. "No, no, all's good with John [the gang's leaders]. He's known me since I was child and he knows my problems and my need to bring money home. My coke, my hash, my herb… I've got another supplier, but we're not competing… John is a really good man. He's like my big brother, you know, but I wanna be in this shit alone" [B., June 2017]. After three months talking to B. almost every night – sometimes accompanying him on his routes across all of Bairro Alto and even occasionally becoming his interpreter with tourists – I last saw him in late June 2017. I suspect he was finally caught by the police and imprisoned.

A MAN WITH A GOOD SOUL

John is a black African descendant in his mid-forties at the time of writing the first version of this paper (Spring 2022) and was born in a neighbourhood close to Bairro Alto. Since his childhood, and especially during his adolescence, he "used to go up to Bairro Alto every day to play on the street after the school-days" (John, April 2016). This explains how John knows very well a lot of the lifelong residents of Bairro Alto, including the sons and daughters of the neighbourhood: "I had this girl/boy in my arms when s/he was a baby. Look at how s/he's grown up!" is a recurrent John sentence when he returned a greeting from one of Bairro Alto's youngsters. When beginning my ethnography, John lived with his sexagenarian mother in a suburban town located around 20 km north from the Lisbon city centre. In the mid-1990's, he and his family left the city and moved to a social housing flat located in the then expanding suburbs of Greater Lisbon. However, he continued to frequent Bairro Alto during his adolescence as well as in later years. His brother (around three years younger) left the maternal home many years ago. At the time of conducting this research, John's brother was sharing a flat with his girlfriend. An unexpected visit by John's brother at one of the bars John and his team used to store their jackets left him profoundly thrilled after years of not seeing each other: "Man, I wanna be like my brother, look at him, [he's] prepared, clean, well-dressed, with a beautiful woman. I need a woman, Jordi, I wanna have a family" [John, June 2018]. On that night in early summer 2018, John stopped dealing and we spent the rest of the night talking about life, women and John's dreams of having a normal life.

I met John for the first time on Vinha street in late spring 2013. I recall he was extremely drunk, almost unconscious. He was lying his back against the façade of the building adjacent to today's Bond Bar, which is located in front of the Dr. No Bar: these two bars, located almost opposite each other, define the area where John's gang usually operated. I talked to John for the first time some weeks after my first encounter and it was then I realised he was not drunk but under the effects of smoking crack. He asked me for a rolled tobacco cigarette while staying close to the entrance of a former tiny takeaway restaurant, later converted by its owner (a Hindu man in his early fifties) into a tourism-oriented drinking bar (Bond Bar). From its opening days through to ending this ethnography, the bar was always popular for three major factors: playing loud music from YouTube reggaeton playlists coupled with their videos on a big TV screen; serving the cheapest drinks in the whole neighbourhood (0.5 l of beer for € 1.10); and being packed with females, whether tourists or Erasmus university students in their early twenties (or younger) all night long: surely the dream of most heteronormative male hunters.

Bond Bar's owner made a lot of money during the first two years of its operation and so decided to acquire the bar (today's Dr. No Bar) located

almost opposite. In fact, the history of the tiny space occupied by the Dr. No Bar effectively represents a miniature capsule of the recent urban history of Bairro Alto nightlife. In early 2009, the owner of a renowned Lisbon LGTBQI+ club, located in the former harbour area of Alcântara, on the city's western side, acquired this venue located on the ground floor of a two-story residential building, which dates back to the 18th century, and opened a gay bar called Sean Bar. After the Troika's financial intervention in Portugal in 2011, Sean Bar's owner rapidly renamed her venue the Ursula Bar (2011-2015). A few years after the Troika's intervention in Portugal, Ursula Bar was renamed as Joseph Bar (2016), but it would not last long: the city's rapid touristification from the mid-2010's onwards and the positioning of the city as a gay-friendly touristy city led the Ursula Bar's owner to rebrand her tiny bar with the name of the original club she ran in Alcântara. Opening this second venue under a commercial brand renowned in Lisbon's LGTBQI+ nightlife ensured more dynamism to the venue even if only for a short time: the dramatic touristification of Lisbon's nightlife led to the spatial displacement of the LGTBQI+ community away from Bairro Alto to other parts of the city without such heavy (heteronormative/cis/patriarchal) tourism pressures.

As I noted at the beginning of the previous paragraph, Bond Bar's owner did benefit from the city's rapid touristification and made an irrefusable purchase offer to C.M., who ended up accepting. Hence, Joseph Bar (formerly Ursula Bar, and Sean Bar) was swiftly renamed as Dr. No Bar (2017 to present) and, together with Bond Bar (both in front of each other), became an unbeatable duet for attracting tourists, Erasmus university students and locals to get their drinks at the cheapest prices in the entire Bairro Alto. However, the success of these two bars is not exclusively due to their extremely aggressive shared pricing policy. John also deserves recognition for the success as, during Bond Bar's first months, he used to ask to drink Somersby for free. A barwoman would serve him as a "show of gratitude" for bringing customers to the bar. John used to be amazingly successful and rapidly perceived that acting as a kind of "public relations" for Bond Bar (as well as for Dr. No Bar) might boost his "own business". While inviting people into Bond Bar, he also took advantage of the opportunity to ask these night owls (sometimes without any discretion): "Hey, my friend, wanna hash, herb, coke?!".

John had a loyal crew of around four to seven males from the racialized suburbs on the northern side of Greater Lisbon. At that time, they were aged between 16 and 20. They never drank beer for two main reasons. Firstly, John's gang does not drink beer when working because they have to be ready for dealing at any time even while sometimes sharing a hashish joint or tapping locals or tourists for cigarettes. Secondly, drinking alcohol increases the risk of violent behaviour and that is an aspect that John is strongly committed to avoiding in accordance with an informal agreement made with the police

some years ago: "I used to deal up there in my neighbourhood but a violent drug war started in late 2000's and dealing became very dangerous. So, I decided to come here to Bairro Alto. It's more peaceful, more tourists means more business, you know? But, in 2008, I was beaten up and injured by a couple of fascist policemen from here, Bairro Alto's police station. I reported them and they were moved away to another police station. You see I have no teeth? It's not only smoking crack; they kicked my face to pieces with their boots. Now, they [the new policemen] are good, they know me, I know them… [they're] good people, they said to me 'if you control the street without any assaults, any violence, and so on, we can turn a blind eye to you' " [John, June 2016].

After hearing "Hey, my friend, wanna hash, herb, coke?!", should the night owl express his interest in buying marijuana or hashish (and I never saw any female asking for drugs on Vinha street), John's team, who used to spend the entire night two steps away from Bond Bar, came into the game: herb/marijuana 20 euros (non-negotiable), hashish 15 (negotiable to 10 euros or even less if the person is from Lisbon). However, in most cases, the herb and hashish were oregano, laurel or dried street grass. In fact, drug consumption is not a crime in Portugal but dealing is subject to severe punishment. Indeed, such deceit also stems from a more powerful rationality: after midnight, tourists are commonly drunk and do not perceive the quality of the "drugs" they then consume. Furthermore, and in addition, the fear of the "otherness" in an unknown city ensures tourists leave feeling absolutely frustrated.

However, should the night owl answer he wanted a small paper bag of cocaine, two specific guys from John's team came into the game: they reassure the client while John goes off to meet his main cocaine suppliers. One is a white local in his mid-forties who controlled a trash bin located in a nearby street where he and John would hide some small bags of cocaine. Should that source sell out, John would go to look for his second supplier, a young man in his late twenties who lived in the same neighbourhood as John. The third source was an informal doorman at another Bairro Alto bar. When the two first suppliers had no supplies in their jacket pockets, the third supplier went up to his flat on Vinha street, where he still lived with his almost octogenarian mother.

Back to the night owl eager to buy a small bag of cocaine, readers will have already imagined that the "cocaine" is crushed paracetamol or just wheat flour. The night owls would sometimes open the small cocaine bag and find there was nothing inside: no cocaine, no paracetamol: just nothing. However, John's boys have already left by the time the night owl comes back to protest, loudly, outraged, even aggressively: it is then John talks to him and explains there's nothing to be done if he (the night owl) has opened the small cocaine bag abruptly: next time, he should open it more carefully. Again, the otherness,

and in the case of John, the non-white otherness of a person who clearly displays his hard reality of crack addiction is the best tool for avoiding violent action by the defrauded tourist. In the Bairro Alto nightlife, the simulated, carnivalesque evasion of the everyday life played out by tourists turns into a subversion of the capitalist city: the black poor wins over the white rich. However, this feeling of winning is only ever ephemeral.

John recalls how hard the immediate years after the Troika's intervention in Portugal were and provoking a crisis for his informal business: "Streets emptied, it was a disaster, the nights were really sad. I only made five euros a night or even nothing. Now [May 2015], it's like before the crisis, it's absolutely packed with tourists! Oh man, you know I had nothing to eat… I had to get in contact with Santa Casa da Misericórdia.[4] They wanted to help me, said they would pay for new teeth, 'cuz I won't get a job if I don't have teeth… and they're also trying to get me a room… don't you have a room for me? I wanna leave my mom's home, I need to, man" [John, May 2015]. As I earlier noted, John used to get his clients by inviting them into Dr. No Bar. He was so successful that the owner asked him to do the same with Bond Bar but while also clearing tables of glasses, cleaning bathrooms and changing beer barrels: 20 euros per night. When he also agreed to clean both venues after closing their doors at the end of the night, John went on to earn 25 euros: public relations, cleaning man, doorman… and the leader of a street drug dealing gang. However, it was this additional 25 euros per night that enabled him to definitively leave his mother's home in 2016. In early 2016, John and the supplier from his neighbourhood went to live together in a cheap guest house room (15 euros per night for a double room) on the upper side of Vinha street. However, the arrival of the tourist season made them leave the room and move to another guest house located in nearby Martim Moniz square, also in Lisbon's city centre. However, the dramatic touristification of Lisbon ongoing since the mid 2010's prevented them from living in the Martim Moniz guest house for any significant period. In summer 2017, the supplier from John's neighbourhood got a waiter's job in an elitist and private club in Bairro Alto, while John went to live in an abandoned, squatted building in Príncipe Real, one of the neighbourhoods surrounding Bairro Alto: "I don't wanna go back home; my mom smokes crack, and I wanna leave it; I wanna leave this fuckin' shit" (September 2017).

The extremely rapid growth in Lisbon tourist numbers, especially during the years prior to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, ensured John gained around 20-30 euros per night by dealing mainly hashish and cocaine, in addition to the 25 euros per night paid by the Bond Bar and Dr. No Bar owner.

4 Santa Casa da Misericórdia is a Portuguese charitable institution founded in 1498 with the mission to support the sick, the disabled as well as abandoned new-borns.

For John, this was the means to get a room or even a small, rented apartment: "Now I could pay 350 euros monthly for a small flat or a room nearby Bairro Alto. But, you know, it's a racist society, I'm black, with no teeth… who wanna live with me? Who wanna rent me a house? Who wanna trust me? The only thing I have is that squatted building. It's really cold, there are no walls, nothing, but it's the only place I can stay at right now… Policemen know us and they said to us that if we don't make noise, if we don't bother the neighbours,[5] everything is all right" (September 2019). After a couple of weeks of not seeing John, I asked Dr. No Bar's barwoman about him, and she told me he had been jailed again but for completely unknown reasons. This was October 2019 and the pandemic-related sanitary restrictions imposed in March 2020 would mean an unpredictable, definitive and sad ending to my ethnographic immersion into a street drug dealing gang operating in Vinha street, in Lisbon.

UNCOMFORTABLE REALITIES

This article has demonstrated how, in the case of John, drug dealing in the Bairro Alto nightlife, represents a strategy for his economic survival that the state paradoxically does not provide him with despite his status as a marginalized, racialized, and stigmatized individual. For John and for his crew, street drug dealing emerges as an informal, alternative and effective mechanism of socio-professional inclusion in a social reality strongly characterized by class-based and ethnic-based institutional(ized) exclusion.

The case of John (and his boys) displays a range of specific particularities detailed throughout the article that places it beyond the boundaries established by the excessively rigid relationship that academia (in global terms) has long since maintained with illegal activities, social marginalization, violence, and crime. Within this framework, what John and his team were doing on Vinha street has nothing to do with street drug dealing, either as a globalized form of subcultural opposition to structural exclusion and oppression (Fraser 2015), as a source of symbolic capital accumulation, or even as a "street capital" favouring violent street culture (Sandberg 2008). Moreover, John and his crew were never part of any huge and complex drug economy (Sandberg and Pedersen 2011). Thus, John's attitude, as demonstrated in the nights spent on the street, cannot be considered in any way as a criminal lifestyle closely interlinked to the cultivation of "cool" (Ilan 2015). In fact, and importantly, the interplay between (i) the micro-spatial-temporal context (tourist nightlife

5 Príncipe Real is commonly perceived as an extension of Bairro Alto, although the area is also Lisbon's gay (not lesbian) district with several gay bars and clubs, antique shops, and art galleries. This also has been the preferred destination for transnational multimillionaires investing in real estate since the end of the last financial crisis in Portugal (2008-2014).

in Lisbon's Bairro Alto), (ii) the increase in poverty and social marginalization among Lisbon's non-white working class suburban population, especially in the wake of the Great Recession (2008-2014), and (iii) the adoption of non-aggressive street drug dealing practices as a (non-violent) self-emancipatory strategy align with what Banks, Lombard and Mitlin (2020: 226) argue about the "agency of marginalized populations whose informal activities are often criminalized and otherwise de-legitimized". Interestingly, Hudson (2020: 167) notes that "illegal activities and practices are seen as licit, pivotal elements of alternative 'survival strategies' […] in cities and regions in both the Global North and South".

What has been set out in this article highlights two research questions for further studies on street drug dealing in the nightlife of the tourist city. On the one hand, the issues surrounding whether street drug dealing in the tourist city nightlife still remains a marginal and illegal activity or has become an activity "integral to the performance of capitalist economies and their geographies" (Hudson 2019: 11), and the conspicuous interplay between "the legal" and "the illegal" in the tourist city's nightlife emerge as a vibrant research topic that deserves further examination. On the other hand, this "swan dance" between "the legal" and "the illegal" might go so far as to suggest that marginalized individuals deploy effective skills as an adaptation response to secure their daily survival in the aggressive, racializing and stigmatizing tourist city. Thus, what has long been termed "urban informality" acquires a more formal status, emerging as a new expression of resilience understandable as an affective, cognitive, relational and behavioural process (Feixa and Sánchez-García 2022). In this sense, the dark side of the tourist city appears as a topic of special relevance to better grasping the set of visible and not so visible phenomena that characterize daily life in the city.

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