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Channelling mobilities: migrant-owned businesses as mobility infrastructures

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ABSTRACT

Migration infrastructures have usually been identified with stable socio-material arrangements controlling migration (e.g. airports and detention camps), stressing highly stratified power geometries and hierarchies. Recent debates about arrival infrastructures, however, have highlighted the informal, ephemeral and improvisational character of 'bottom-up' infrastructures. Departing from a widened understanding of infrastructure, this paper looks at migrants' businesses as urban infrastructures assembling various kinds of mobilities. In particular, we address small businesses established by Senegalese migrants in Brazil, and Brazilian-owned cafés in Portugal. We approach these businesses as urban infrastructures where different forms of mobilities overlap and interact, exposing various trajectories and scales of circulation. While the businesses in Brazil cater mainly for Senegalese and other migrants' needs (money transfer, ICTs, and job offers), the Brazilian-owned coffee shops in Portugal function as sites of co-working and sociality of tourists, digital nomads, and other urban creatives. Building on ethnographic fieldwork in the cities of São Paulo and Caxias do Sul (Brazil) and in Lisbon (Portugal), this paper makes innovative connections between migration research, mobility studies and urban theory. We discuss the infrastructural production of transnational and local mobilities and how these businesses both result from and facilitate the existence of mobile lifestyles.

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Introduction

There is no mobility without infrastructure. From a banal walk in the neighbourhood to a summer trip to another continent, we journey along streets, bike lanes, railways, or airports. We stop at traffic lights, at passport control, and we might use available systems of navigation to find our way as we go. All this is infrastructure. Infrastructure has been usually understood as the architecture for circulation (Larkin 2013), as material systems facilitating the flows of all kinds of stuff, such as goods, data, or people. In migration studies, infrastructures have largely been identified with stable socio-material arrangements that shape migration (airports, detention centres, immigration facilities, etc.), revealing highly stratified power geometries and hierarchies, and operating along official logics of control and selectivity.

Recent approaches have looked at infrastructures of migration as forms of mediation, that is, as what lies between potential migrants and the act of migrating. These intermediaries may include state and non-state actors, recruitment agencies, informal brokers, and smugglers (Alpes 2017; Cranston, Schapendonk, and Spaan 2018; Lin et al. 2017). As Xiang and Lindquist (2014) argue, the

development of migration infrastructures has turned migration into an object of intensive regulation and intervention, which does not necessarily translate into more migration. Infrastructures may not only facilitate migration, as they can also stop it, inhibit it, or force potential migrants to resort to other migration strategies.

Scholars have usually referred to the idea of migration infrastructures as mediation to describe specific migration patterns as one-way, one-time displacements. Infrastructure, in this sense, is a system that conditions people's movements from A to B in a specific moment in time. In this paper, we would like to depart from a different understanding of infrastructure. Borrowing from contributions across mobility studies, critical urban theory, but also from within migration studies, we propose to look at shops, restaurants, and cafés established by migrants as mobility infrastructures. We call these shops mobility infrastructures not because they serve as episodic facilitators of migration, but because they are both the product of and the socio-material elements sustaining mobile forms of life.

A comparison might be elucidative here. Tourism infrastructures, for example, have usually been understood more broadly than as mediation forms. When we think of tourism infrastructures, we hardly only think of travel agencies; we also think of hotels, restaurants, tourism offices, information centres, souvenir shops, etc. All these spaces assemble tourism mobilities in particular ways and sustain tourism as a social experience. Likewise, mobility infrastructures also assemble various types of circulation (products, people, ideas, money). In this paper, we demonstrate that these migrant-owned businesses are not only the outcomes of particular migration trajectories, as they are also the very sites where other kinds of mobile practices and ways of life intersect and overlap.

More specifically, we turn to migrant-owned businesses established in Brazil and in Portugal. In Brazil, we analyse small businesses owned by Senegalese migrants in the cities of Caxias do Sul and São Paulo. These restaurants and small shops act as junctions for the various mobile trajectories of Senegalese nationals and migrants coming from other countries. These spaces are nodes in the circulation of all sorts of goods and merchandise and have become central places for the community life of Senegalese migrants in Brazil. As we illustrate in the article, the social and material movements that intersect in these businesses are shaped by social, economic and political factors on different scales, ranging from the local urban context to national and international levels. In Portugal, we look at two cafés established by Brazilian migrants. Both cafés are central elements of their owners' migration plans and are embedded in particular ways within Lisbon social and commercial geographies. These cafés also assemble various kinds of mobile trajectories (migration, diaspora, tourism), but also unveil the stratifications within mobile lifestyles (middling and privileged migration, 'expats', Erasmus students, etc.) and the ways they establish spaces of convergence in a context of accelerated urban change.

By bringing these two very unlike cases together, we aim at contrasting different infrastructures which, although catering for very different publics, do provide the socio-material basis for sustaining mobile patterns and lifestyles. Contrast is not comparison (Knowles 2013); it is intended to unsettle, but also to highlight emergent social formations. We demonstrate that looking at these migrant-owned businesses only through a migrant entrepreneurship lens falls short from grasping the complex mobile circulations they set in motion and ignores the multiplicity of social and material functions that these businesses perform. This paper is based on two different research projects which, nevertheless, have identified the need for a recalibration of the notion of migration infrastructures and their connectedness to other mobility forms.

Movement and infrastructures: multiple perspectives

Infrastructures are everywhere, but we usually only hear about them when they fail to work (Elyachar 2010). When urban infrastructures are disrupted, people are left without light, in the cold, immobile, thirsty or in the dirt (Graham 2000). The wires, pipes, and conduits which bring us electricity and water, or carry sewage away are often physically invisible, following unknown pathways inside walls

or underneath the city's surface. As Latham and Wood (2015, 303) argue, by emphasising their degree of invisibility or taken-for-grantedness, much of geography has treated infrastructures as 'simply the backdrop or context to where the real action is'.

However, not all infrastructures are invisible or buried deep in urban matter. The recent COVID-19 crisis has bitterly made evident that it was, to a significant extent, an infrastructural crisis, as hospital beds and ventilators were often insufficient to treat the sudden surge in the number of patients. The crisis has shown that public health is also an infrastructural issue. The same may be held about transport, trade, communication, all dimensions allowing modern urban life to exist as we know it. In this sense, mobility infrastructures play a crucial role for the functioning of contemporary cities: they allow things, people, money and information to circulate, travel and migrate. The very idea of infrastructure draws on images of built networks allowing, controlling, and regulating flows of mobile stuff over space (Larkin 2013).

The mobilities turn in the social sciences has set the ground for a renewed interest in mobility infrastructures. The opening editorial of the *Mobilities* journal claimed that 'mobilities cannot be described without attention to the necessary spatial, infrastructural and institutional moorings that configure and enable mobilities' (Hannam, Sheller, and Urry 2006, 3). In fact, the new mobilities paradigm (Sheller and Urry 2006) has been structured around the mobility/moorings dichotomy, in which infrastructures were understood as the immobile devices shaping different kinds of flows. This framing, however, contributed to shaping our imagination of infrastructures as often 'formal, fixed, inert or locked-in' (Adey et al. 2014, 184).

Inspired by material studies, critical urban theory, and science and technology studies, scholars such as Adey (2006) and Merriman (2016) have questioned the terms upon which the binary of mobility/moorings was established. Two claims are especially relevant for this discussion. One rejects the rigidities of the dichotomy and advances a 'more relational argument around questions of movement, stillness and rhythm', argued Merriman (2016). Movements, he says, 'may have very different qualities, temporalities, rhythms, materialities and affective resonances, which cut across and resonate through things we know and separately identify as infrastructures, environments, vehicles and bodies' (idem). A second claim complicates the ontological status of infrastructures by proposing that they are themselves dynamic, contingent, in process, and in movement (Merriman 2016, 84). In other words, moorings may be mobile too (Adey 2006, 86); they are complex achievements, not purely technical, and their material compositions are far from straightforward (Latham and Wood 2015, 301).

These two claims illustrate the widening of current understandings of infrastructure. We are witnessing, as Amin (2014, 137) suggested, the rise 'of a new genre of thinking that narrates the life of a city through its material infrastructure'. These emergent approaches have explored issues ranging from how infrastructures are inhabited (Latham and Wood 2015), the shops and commercial facilities of infrastructural consumerism (Graham 2000), the ways intimacy is sustained through infrastructures (Wilson 2016), to the relationship between water infrastructures and urban metabolisms (Gandy 2004). Moreover, some scholars have even stripped the notion of infrastructure from its solid material underpinning and approached not pipes, roads or buildings, but *people* as infrastructures (Simone 2004), arguing that we create webs of sociality that can be relied on for finding a job, taking care of the children or when need be.

Migration studies have not gone indifferent to the question of infrastructure. Yet, until recently, infrastructure was hardly regarded as a central aspect worthy of in-depth investigation. This previous lack of interest is surprising since migrants' movements from one country to another always requires mobilising existing infrastructure (Düvell and Preiss 2019). According to Xiang and Lindquist (2014) the importance of infrastructure in migration has increased in recent years. Indeed, they argue that migration is more than ever mediated through technologies, institutions, and actors, which facilitate or condition international movements. Examples for what they call spaces of mediation are state apparatus, recruitment agencies, migrant networks, NGOs, and ICTs, to name just a few, which, although in different forms, channel, direct and control international mobility. The authors highlight

that the development of migration infrastructure often conditions mobility, most obviously in the form of regulatory mechanism like border controls. However, recent research also demonstrates how migration infrastructure in form of migration brokerage and recruitment agencies may provide access to international mobility in an environment of restrictive regimes of mobility (Alpes 2017; Carling and Haugen 2020; Jung 2021). People's access to infrastructure (or their lack of access) produces unequal migration categories and socio-legal hierarchies (Lin et al. 2017), showing that while the examination of infrastructures alone cannot explain migration processes, it helps to unpack specific social processes in which migration is embedded.

Infrastructure does not only influence the movement of migrants. Migration aspirations, for instance, are largely shaped by images and information transmitted via different channels, e.g. family networks or media, which depend in some form or another on infrastructure (Dekker and Engbersen 2014; Bakewell and Jolivet 2016). The sending of remittances to relatives in the country of origin would not be possible without the support of formal or informal (financial) networks (Blanchard 2013; Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo 2005). These are only two examples of the multi-faceted ways in which different aspects of migration are related to and/or depend on the existence of infrastructure.

Additionally, new approaches based on the concept of arrival infrastructures analyse the role of infrastructures on the early stages following migration. Arrival infrastructures can be defined 'as those parts of the urban fabric within which newcomers become entangled on arrival, and where their future local or translocal social mobilities are produced as much as negotiated' (Meeus, Van Heur, and Arnaut 2018, 1). They include a wide range of actors, such as state or religious institutions, NGOs, or social networks and are often concentrated in neighbourhoods characterised by great levels of diversity and a high number of immigrant newcomers. In these areas, newcomers can access resources that ease the arrival and settlement process, which may include information on housing, the local labour market, language courses or processes of documentation (Hall, King, and Finlay 2017; Hanhörster and Wessendorf 2020). However, Felder et al. (2020) point out that arrival infrastructure may also create inhospitable environments and enhance forms of exclusion, e.g. by directing and locking newcomers into low paid jobs (Hanhörster and Wessendorf 2020).

Migrants' businesses can be understood as specific forms of migration infrastructure. However, for long migrant entrepreneurship has been primarily analysed either from a socio-economic perspective (Kloosterman, Van Der Leun, and Rath 1999; Baycan-Levent and Nijkamp 2009), often describing it as an economic survival strategy or as a means of individual and collective social mobility (Jones, Ram, and Villares-Varela 2019), or from an ethnic and cultural viewpoint, highlighting the importance of cultural and social capital and transnational networks for its development (Portes 1995). Despite their importance for the circulation of goods, people, values and habits (Rives 2010), migrant-owned businesses have hardly been understood as infrastructures that channel other kinds of mobilities. One exception is the work by Hall, King, and Finlay (2017) that highlight the impact of migrants' shops on urban development and the everyday life of migrants in Birmingham and Leicester (see also: Hall 2015; Hillmann 2011). They examine the ways migrants participate in city-making despite under-resourced and discriminatory urban contexts by highlighting the dynamic intersections of cultures and economies in multi-ethnic streets in the UK. These super-diverse streets (Hall 2015) create a specific context of transaction economies, which depends both on local and migratory resources. Through these exchanges and interactions, a migrant infrastructure emerges in marginal parts of the city. These infrastructures are unstable and constantly in process of change. They can be understood as loose socio-spatial configurations, resulting from the 'throwntogetherness' of people and places (Massey 2005; Legendijk et al. 2011).

Other studies describe the *infrastructuring work* (Meeus et al. 2020) provided by migrant businesses, although not always alluding to the notion of infrastructure. In their study about Punjabi migrants in Lisbon, McGarrigle and Ascensão (2017), for example, show the multiple modes in which migrants' trajectories are entangled with businesses that were established by earlier migrants in the city. Work contracts in these businesses (mostly small grocery stores) allow Punjabi migrants to apply

for temporary residence in Portugal. However, due to low salaries and long working hours in these shops, many Punjabi continue their trajectory to countries with better economic conditions after receiving legal documents in Portugal. The continuous arrival and departure of Punjabi who use migrant shops as entry points in the Schengen zone indicate the establishment of a migration infrastructure, that simultaneously directs and channels the movement of Punjabi in the European Union and eases arrival through labour market integration in Lisbon and legalisation in the EU.

In their study of so-called Afro-shops in Berlin, Taube and Borja (2011) also illustrate how these shops not only function as providers of ethnic goods and services, but are central for the community life and serve as 'bridges' between different localities. The authors describe them as places of communication and information, as social centres, where African migrants meet, hear about occurrences in their countries of origin or possible work opportunities. Furthermore, they are spaces where an African identity is formed and redefined, crossing ethnic or national borders. In the following section we will explore the infrastructural work of migrant-owned small businesses in Portugal and Brazil. We focus on how these socio-material constructions are a product and a facilitator of different kinds of mobility.

Senegalese businesses in Brazil: intersections and anchor points of Senegalese mobilities

Senegalese immigration in Brazil is a recent phenomenon which occurred mainly during the second decade of the 21st century (Jung 2019). While asylum requests in Brazil grant Senegalese migrants temporarily with a work permit, formal employment, social mobility, and economic success remain limited, especially due to the ongoing economic crisis that started in 2014 (Jung 2021). Studies about economic activities have focused mainly on informality, e.g. Senegalese street hawkers (Heil 2017; De Césaró and Zanini 2018) or on formal employment, notably in the cold storage and (halal) slaughter sector (Herédia, and Tedesco 2015; Tedesco 2017). Self-employment outside street trade has been widely ignored until now, probably due to the small number of Senegalese migrants who own businesses in Brazil. However, as we demonstrate in the following, these businesses take a central position within the mobile trajectories of migrants (mainly Senegalese) as well as the circulation of goods, values, and information. We argue that despite their small number, looking at these businesses enhances our understanding of Senegalese movements within Brazil and allows us to capture the mobile lifestyles of many Senegalese migrants in the country.

This section is based on four periods of fieldwork, each lasting from two to four months, conducted between 2017 and 2019. Using different ethnographic methods in the form of recorded interviews and informal conversations with owners and customers as well as (participant) observations, seven businesses owned by Senegalese migrants were studied in two very different urban contexts: the big metropolis of São Paulo, and the two medium sized cities Caxias do Sul and Passo Fundo. The last two are in Brazil's southernmost state, Rio Grande do Sul, and are important industrial and agricultural sites. All three cities have relatively big Senegalese communities, but are also important for other forms of mobility and circulation of Senegalese nationals in Brazil. The research was part of a wider doctoral project about Senegalese migration to Brazil. Within this project, migrant businesses played a central role as places where access to the field was negotiated and contacts with Senegalese immigrants were established. However, by spending time there, talking to the owners and customers, observing the movements at different times, the infrastructuring work of these businesses started to become more and more visible and consolidated a research focus in itself. All interviews and conversations were held in Portuguese or French. The names used in this article are pseudonyms.

The examined cases are typical examples of migrant businesses that offer specific services demanded by their co-ethnics and other migrant populations, including Senegalese food restaurants, a hairdresser, and small shops where migrants can, among other things, send remittances or call their relatives. Besides obvious services like haircuts, selling meals, or providing financial

transactions, these businesses perform different functions that are not connected to their economic activities, but to individual characteristics of their owners (e.g. knowledge of the immigration legislation, experience from a prolonged stay in Brazil, or being a member of the local Senegalese association committee or another immigrant NGO), as well as to the location of the business. In the following, we analyse the different facets through which migrants' enterprises act as intersections for different forms of mobility. For this purpose, we will focus on one shop in Caxias do Sul and two Senegalese restaurants in São Paulo.

The first example is a shop, located in a building at one of the main squares in the centre of Caxias do Sul, an area where many Senegalese street hawkers try to sell their goods. The owner Assis (man) arrived in Brazil in 2009 after spending six months in Buenos Aires and was one of the Senegalese pioneers who moved to the biggest city in the Serra Gaúcha. It would not be exaggerated to call him an 'institution' of Senegalese immigration in Brazil. Since 2015 he has been active for the local Senegalese association and this activity was one reason for opening his own shop in 2015. Between 2014 and 2016, Senegalese migrants arrived in greater numbers in Caxias do Sul. Due to his role in the association, he had to participate in many meetings with the city administration and local NGOs and this started to interfere with his employment at a local metal processing company. He was already selling international calling cards during his free time, which facilitated his decision to open a shop. During one interview he said: 'My first goal was to have something that is mine. There I can go out and take care of something else. [...] I will be able to travel whenever I want'. He saw the shop as an opportunity to be more mobile and control his time. It is interesting that now he increasingly considers the shop as a limitation for his own mobility. He said once that he would have already left Brazil if there would not be the shop.

Caxias do Sul, a city founded by Italian immigrants in the 19th century, with a predominantly white population (82,8% of the population declared themselves as white and 3.3% as black according to the last Brazilian census, in 2010), had not experienced the arrival of international migrants for a long time. There was a lack of infrastructure for specific migrant practices, such as money transfer or internet cafés. 'We used to send money at the Banco de Cruzeiro (a Brazilian bank) on the other side there. And there, just so you have an idea, when we sent money, it took a week for you to get the code that you had to send to your family. Nobody knew anything'. Consequently, there was a demand for this kind of service. In the beginning, his shop offered only services like sending remittances and international phone calls. After just a few years he started to sell products like sneakers, clothes, and caps. He travels every two or three months to São Paulo to buy products for his shop. During the two years of fieldwork, the variety of products and services sold in the shop increased and the layout of the shop became much more professional. However, it is much more than simply a shop.

It is possible to observe various kinds of mobility that intersect in the shop and articulate different spatial scales and temporal dimensions. The daily coming-and-going of customers is the most obvious mobile pattern at the shop. Additionally, some Senegalese street hawkers use the shop as supply when they do not possess the product desired by a client or simply to restock their articles for sale. Others store their goods in the shop during lunch time or overnight. In the absence of other specific infrastructures, the shop has become an anchor point for their mobile economic activities in Caxias do Sul. It can be conceived as a specific form of infrastructure supporting Senegalese street hawkers in their precarious and informal work (Heil 2017; Macedo 2019). This becomes even clearer when we consider the partially hostile attitude of other business owners towards street hawkers and their attempts to pressure the city council to take stronger action against informal street trade.

Each first weekend of the month, after receiving their salaries, Haitians visit the shop to send remittances to their relatives (see [figure 1](#)). The small business is not only an important centrality for the Senegalese community, but has also gradually become a point of contact between different ethnic groups, including Brazilians. Assis describes his shop as follows: 'Everything is right here. I call it a bazaar store. Of course, it is something for me, like my job, all of that, but it is also a meeting place. A lot of people meet here'. This interview passage hints at the importance the shop has for



Figure 1. Haitian migrants sending remittances in the shop, Caxias do Sul, April 2019 © The authors.



Figure 2. Valsa, May 2020 (by courtesy of the association).

immigrant communities in Caxias do Sul, but also to an increasing number of Brazilians who visit the shop to buy something or just to have a chat with its owner. Even Brazilian mobile hawkers come by occasionally and try to convince Assis to buy their products and sell them in the shop. While these transactions take place, the television transmits the speeches of important marabouts from the Murid fraternity, a Sufi Muslim brotherhood in Senegal, or Assis, not without a touch of nostalgia, plays some music clips from Argentina. During the 2018 Football World Cup, Senegalese street hawkers squeezed themselves in great numbers in the small shop to watch the matches of their national team. The shop is simultaneously a place where Senegalese customs and values are

transmitted and reinforced, and new contacts and social bonds within the community and with other ethnic groups are established. Moreover, in an urban environment where Senegalese immigrants suffer from racism, ranging from prejudice about life in Senegal to acts of physical and symbolic violence (Macedo 2019), the shop and other Senegalese businesses in the area function as everyday enactments of sanctuary (Darling & Squire, 2012).

The shop also functions as an arrival infrastructure and this both on the local and national level. Immigrants of different nationalities, mainly Senegalese, Haitians and Ghanaians, who reside in Caxias do Sul, visit the shop to get information about legal procedures of immigration, the documents they need for legal employment contracts or the location of institutions in the city. Furthermore, there exists a circulation of Senegalese migrants from different Brazilian states who come to Caxias do Sul in pursuit of their legal documentation in the country. Due to a smaller workload and (according to migrant informants) a better understanding of the procedures, the velocity of the bureaucratic processes appears to be higher in cities like Caxias do Sul than in bigger cities, something already identified by other authors as an important reason for the settlement of Senegalese in municipalities in Rio Grande do Sul (Tedesco and Grzybovski 2011). During one day of fieldwork, two Senegalese migrants, who had come from the 1,700 km-distant Goiânia, visited the shop and collected the final information before going to the local Federal Police to demand their residence permits.

As mentioned above, the infrastructuring work provided by the shop also revolves around the figure of its owner, which makes Assis part of the infrastructure here (Simone 2004). It is Assis who possesses the knowledge, experience, and contacts that may ease migrants' arrival process and help them in work-related and other matters. However, it is his small shop in the centre of Caxias do Sul which permits him to perform these practices, where migrants can go and ask for advice. In this case, it is evident that the infrastructural work provided and performed by Assis cannot be divorced from the materialities of his shop; migrants know where to find Assis and for what purposes.

The different mobilities and transaction that intersect and take place at Assis's shop every day, demonstrate its importance as an infrastructure for cross-cultural economic and social exchange. There, immigrants of different ethnic backgrounds, including Senegalese, Haitian, Ghanaian and Venezuelan, access and activate resources that may ease arrival in the city or in Brazil, support their economic activities or connect them with their families in their home countries. Access to resources is negotiated through social capital, based on religion (being a member of the Murid fraternity (Babou 2002)), nationality (belonging to the Senegalese diaspora), or race (taking part in a wider community of black immigrants in Brazil), or through economic transactions. In a city like Caxias do Sul, an ordinary city (Robinson 2006) that is not characterized by superdiversity or a big immigrant population, a variety of resources that immigrants need and use are concentrated in a few places like Assis's shop.

In São Paulo, we turn to a completely different context where resources required by immigrants are more diverse and spatially distributed. The two restaurants we explored are owned by Senegalese couples. In times of higher demand, they employed one to two other persons, including Senegalese, Mauritanian, Guinean and Brazilian nationals. The first restaurant is located in the centre of São Paulo in a building bordering the neighbourhoods Santa Ifigênia and República. It is an area where many Senegalese migrants live, whose presence is visible through several restaurants and the establishment of the local Murid Daira.¹ Moreover, it is close to important shopping places like the Rua 25 de Março or the area between the streets Santa Ifigênia, Aurora, Vitória, where Senegalese street hawkers and merchants buy their products.

Mamadou (man) and Coumba (woman), the owners of the first restaurant, have very different migratory trajectories. Mamadou had already lived for four years in Cape Verde before heading to Brazil in 2008. Coumba moved directly from Senegal to Brazil to join her husband in 2013. Mamadou worked mostly in construction during his first years in the country, but it became difficult to sustain his family with the low salaries. In 2017 the couple decided to open a restaurant serving typical Senegalese food for the growing Senegalese community in the area. Coumba's cooking can be

understood here as a specific conjunction of cultural and human capital in a context of predominantly male immigration. In contrast to some other 'African' restaurants in the neighbourhood (Lugosi and Allis 2019), this small Senegalese restaurant does not construct an image of an authentic Senegalese or African ambiance in order to attract a Brazilian middle-class clientele. There are no cultural artifacts which would differentiate this restaurant from any small Brazilian eatery in the area; solely a simple banner by the window identifies the place as a Senegalese restaurant. Customers are almost exclusively Senegalese.

We noted two kinds of customers' circulation. First, there are the regular customers who work or live in the area and come almost daily to eat in the restaurant, mostly for dinner. Second, there are Senegalese merchants and street hawkers who visit São Paulo to buy their articles for sale. Some of them have their residency in the city, but only spend several days a week or per month there. These movements occur mainly at the beginning of the week, from Monday to Wednesday. Consequently, this is the busiest time for Mamadou and Coumba. In the context of these movements, the restaurant is a popular meeting place, which offers a 'taste' of home and where stories about opportunities or occurrences in the community or in Senegal are exchanged and social bonds are reinforced. After buying their products, street hawkers return to their city of residence and merchants spread all over Brazilian territory to sell their goods at markets, mostly in small cities. Some of these Senegalese merchants travel as far as Maranhão, Pará and Amazonas in Northern Brazil, which are more than 2.000 km distant from São Paulo, where they circulate the regional markets.

The second restaurant is in the neighbourhood Brás, in a street with several small businesses owned by other African migrants, mostly Angolans, Congolese and Nigerians. Brás is an important area for textile industries in São Paulo, and a popular shopping zone especially for shoes and clothes. It is also a popular area for Senegalese migrants. Many of them work there as street hawkers and live in the neighbourhood. Restaurant owners Binetou (woman) and Issa (man) met and married in Passo Fundo. Binetou arrived in South America in 2007 and has lived in Brazil since 2009. Issa emigrated from Senegal to Brazil in 2013. They tried to open a Senegalese food restaurant in Passo Fundo, but it did not work. They decided to move to São Paulo in 2016 and successfully opened their restaurant in Brás, which welcomes many customers both for lunch and dinner. Issa tries constantly to add new products to their menu and dreams about opening a second restaurant in the centre of São Paulo and another one in Senegal. Clients are mainly Senegalese migrants, but also from other African countries like Angola, Mauritania and Nigeria, as well as a small number of Bolivians and Brazilians. Senegalese customers are mainly street hawkers who sell their products in other streets of the neighbourhood. During lunch, they often arrive with hand trucks transporting their products in big boxes. Additionally, Issa also delivers the meals in lunch boxes directly to street hawkers who do not want to interrupt their selling. Like Assis's shop in Caxias do Sul, the restaurant has taken a central position in the mobility of street hawkers in Brás. It offers shelter during heavy rains or fiscal inspections by the police, which happens almost on a weekly basis. Repressive actions against street hawkers by the *Guarda Municipal*, a security force answering to the municipality, or other Brazilian police forces embody for Senegalese immigrants not only the financial loss caused by the confiscation of their goods (Heil 2017), but also public humiliation as well as verbal and physical aggressions (Macedo 2019). For the street hawkers, the restaurant functions as sanctuary, where they can escape temporarily the risks of the street trade. In this case it is not the absence of the State, as described by Hall, King and Finley (2017), but the State's policing practices that led to the development of supporting infrastructural practices in this migrant business. Senegalese restaurants in São Paulo are not only spaces of economic activity but need to be conceived as places of socialisation and repose in a highly competitive and partially hostile urban environment. Moreover, meals in both restaurants presented here are not expensive and it is not easy to find cheaper places in their neighbourhoods. By offering cheap meals, the restaurants become essential elements of the survival infrastructure (Datta 2020) of Senegalese and other immigrants in São Paulo.

The three small Senegalese businesses presented here attest to the mobilities of their owners and clients. Besides more 'official' infrastructures like Senegalese religious and civic organisations (Heil

2021), it is these businesses where Senegalese migrants access resources that help to sustain their mobile lifestyles. Moreover, they become a central element of migrants' spatial integration and their usage of the city (Buhr 2018). For most types of mobility intersecting there, ethnicity clearly plays a relevant role. These businesses are important moorings for the mobility trajectories of Senegalese migrants in Brazil, both on a local and national scale. They are central for the community, for their daily life, but also for their connection to Senegalese migrants in other Brazilian cities. For immigrants from other countries, the fact that these businesses are owned and executed by other black immigrants is more important than the owner's nationality. Haitians, Ghanaians, or Senegalese share similar experiences of racial discrimination, confront similar obstacles in Brazil and partially require the same services.

Lisbon's new coffee scene: infrastructuring mobile lifestyles

Migrant-owned businesses in Portugal have largely been framed under the 'ethnic entrepreneurship' label. Entrepreneurial migrants are often seen as bearers of positive economic assets to cities (Malheiros, Carvalho, and Mendes 2012; Mapril 2010), not only as they create jobs, pay taxes, and participate in the regeneration of decayed urban areas, but also because they animate city-branding slogans of 'diversity', 'conviviality' and even 'empathy' (Zukin, Kasinitz, and Chen 2016). This celebratory account has traditionally referred to a specific type of migrant entrepreneurship, usually represented by small 'ethnic' stores such as corner shops, mini-supermarkets, repair shops, phone shops, etc. Those businesses are often run by the 'archetypal migrant entrepreneur' (Kloosterman and Rath 2018), found in less-affluent residential neighbourhoods and catering either for other migrants' and ethnic minorities' needs, or for lower segments of the market, where migrants compete on price.

The ethnic framing of migrants' businesses in Portugal has also been used to understand the establishment of 'ethnic food' restaurants, where one can find Brazilian churrasco, Cape Verdean cachupa, Angolan moamba, or Chinese delicacies. Migrants' mobilisation of ethnic resources is imagined to reinforce a sense of 'authenticity', which attracts local middle-classes in search for 'exotic' food (Lugosi and Allis 2019). The territorialisation of migrants' commercial activities has given rise to specific 'migrantscapes' (Gésero 2014) in Portuguese cities, such as the Martim Moniz neighbourhood in Lisbon, sometimes described in tourist guides as Lisbon's 'Chinatown'. Yet, migrants' businesses either located outside 'immigrant neighbourhoods', or not resorting to their owners' ethnicity in such a straightforward way have received far less scholarly attention (Oliveira 2007; Mendes et al. 2020).

The next paragraphs will address two migrant-owned coffee shops in Lisbon which are not located in typical 'immigrant districts', nor do they flag out their identities through 'ethnic branding'. In this sense, they are not examples of how 'ethnic neighbourhoods' are transformed into places of leisure and consumption (Rath 2007). We argue, instead, that these cafés illustrate a broader urban transformation which sets the infrastructural basis facilitating and attracting a growing mobile population to Lisbon. Here we base our arguments on fieldwork undertaken from 2018 to 2020, which included participant observation, informal conversations and in-depth recorded interviews. Fieldwork was initially part of larger EU-funded project, but contacts with local business owners were kept beyond the duration of the European project. Repeated visits to both venues were carried out, and the researcher had the opportunity to observe coffee shops' routines, clients, events, and social media, and to complement observations with *in situ* informal conversations. Some of the preliminary findings have been discussed with participants, who contributed to validate conclusions. All conversations were held in Portuguese, which is both participants' and the researcher's first language. Participants' and their businesses' real names have been used by their own request. The authors have concluded that the research participants in Portugal are not in a condition of vulnerability.

Henrique (man) founded *Benjamin* in May 2018, only seven months after he arrived in Portugal. Named after Henrique's son, Benjamin is a coffee house in the Campo de Ourique neighbourhood,

with a small food menu, including brunch options, avocado toasts, and granola bowls. It is a small business, with 6 tables and 2 staff members. During our conversations, Henrique manipulated with great skill his professional espresso machine, which he learned to do in Australia, where he lived for 8 years prior to coming to Portugal. 'That's where it all comes from, Australia, but also Northern Europe' said Henrique about the specialty coffee scene which only very recently arrived in Portugal. In a country of 'cheap' coffee drinkers, Henrique says that every other day he finds himself explaining to unwary customers the reasons why his coffee is more expensive than the average.

Although Benjamin is not located in Lisbon's historical centre, the coffee shop is surrounded by apartments available on Airbnb and similar platforms. Henrique explains that some of his clients learn about the coffee shop from their Airbnb hosts or from previous guest travellers who wrote reviews and tips about what to do in the neighbourhood. His coffee shop thus answers to tourists' demands providing visitors with breakfast and brunch options in a stylish setting. Like Benjamin, specialty coffee shops seem to be deeply embedded in tourist economies also in other contexts, as Bantman-Masum (2019) describes about Paris. In her study about commercial gentrification in the 11th district of Paris, she found that most independent coffee shop owners were geographically mobile professionals who, like Henrique, had a first contact with specialty coffee shops abroad before opening their own (2019, 5).

This distinctive kind of coffee shop has become part of the commercial landscape of many Western cities, such as London, Paris, Amsterdam, among others (Bantman-Masum 2019; Shaker Ardekani, and Rath 2017; Alkon, Kato, and Sbicca 2020). In Lisbon, however, they are a fairly new addition to the market. Specialty coffee shops, but also brunch eateries, cocktail bars, and fusion restaurants compose a particular kind of contemporary urban infrastructure, usually considered as pertaining to a 'new' and 'polymorphous' form of public urban culture (Bridge and Dowling 2001). The modernisation of the retail and service sectors in Lisbon happened side by side with the repositioning of the city as a global tourism destination, highlighting the complex interplay between tourism, gentrification, and emerging forms of business development.

'Lisbon has finally woken up', said Henrique, 'now we have to catch up with what is going on out there'. As a business graduate, Henrique is comfortable to talk about the ways the Portuguese market is rapidly changing and how the specialty coffee sector is a foreign concept. 'Our product is foreign, but so is the business itself (...), most of us are foreigners: there are Russians, Danish, me [Brazilian], Australians ...'. These are the nationalities of other coffee shop owners in Lisbon, although the Portuguese have also begun investing in the sector more recently. But Henrique also stresses that his clients, too, are mostly foreigners (around 70% according to his estimations).

'My clients are people who travel, that's how I define them' he argued. Indeed, his definition captures well the dynamics of the business: Benjamin is frequented by tourists, foreigners living in Lisbon, and also by Portuguese customers who 'have already tried specialty coffee when they travel'. In this sense, his café is not avoided by local residents, as tourist facilities generally are (Cocola-Gant and Lopez-Gay 2020), but rather attracts a particular kind of clientele, Portuguese or not, but one whose lifestyles are increasingly mobile. More than national origin, being a *habitué/e* of specialty coffee shops seems to relate to the consumption practices of a new transnational middle-class that, depending on the context, may also be a global gentrifier class (Bridge 2007).

On the other side of the city, as one walks up the Penha de França hill, it is not hard to distinguish from the crowd those young and modern who are probably also going to Valsa. Located on the top of the hill, Valsa is 'not a café, but also a café' as its owners describe it. Nika (woman) and Marina (woman) have legally registered Valsa as a cultural association, which makes it a place where cultural activities happen while customers may enjoy a cup of coffee, a beer, or a snack. Having no previous experience as business owners, Nika and Marina invested all their savings into making their venture come to life. A friend gave them the cultural association hint, they rented the place, and, in May 2018, Valsa opened its doors to the public.

Nika and Marina have known each other since childhood in a coastal city near São Paulo, Brazil. After graduation, Marina moved to Portugal in 2016 to complete her master's degree, while Nika

worked in Brazil for a hotel chain. Following a big disappointment with the corporate world, Nika decided to come to Portugal too, landing in Lisbon in February 2018. They had talked about setting up a convivial space for people to gather, watch pocket concerts, host debates and, of course, eat and drink local/artisanal produce. Three months after Nika's arrival to Portugal, Valsa was up and running and soon entered the 'cool' circuit of Lisbon venues, recently featured at the Time Out magazine among other trendy websites.

Every month, Valsa publishes a programme of the activities taking place in the association. Yoga lessons, afternoons for toddlers' interaction, poetry readings, and astrology workshops are among the usual events hosted in cooperation with artists, musicians, and other urban creatives. Nika and Marina also serve coffee from a local roastery in Lisbon, artisanal beer, kombucha drinks, and slow fermentation pizza. The furniture occupying Valsa's 60 m² is quite adaptable and is constantly assembled and reassembled to make room for a co-working space in the afternoon, and for small concerts and presentations in the evening (see [figure 2](#)).

Since its opening, Valsa has attracted a creative urban crowd. It has always been a LGBTQ+ friendly spot and promoted a number of feminist and queer meetings. When talking to Nika and Marina a few months after Valsa's opening, they argued that 'sometimes people get the wrong impression about our place. We are not a Brazilian café; there's no *pão de queijo* here (a traditional Brazilian pastry), no Brazilian drinks'. Yet, since its opening, Valsa has visibly become a central infrastructure for a growing number of Brazilian artists and people working in the cultural sector that are either temporarily in Portugal, or have fled Brazil due to the recent implosion of State-sponsored programmes for the culture sector (to which the extinction of the Brazilian Ministry of Culture in 2019 is a symptomatic example).

The 'diaspora' of Brazilian culture and art professionals in Lisbon (Duarte 2021) is largely responsible for animating the intensive activity programme hosted by Valsa. Artists from Brazil and from other nationalities have found Valsa to be a platform to continue showcase their work and ensure an extra source of income, while engaging with local audiences. Nika argued that although Brazilians remain Valsa's main public, foreigners from other countries (notably from France and Italy) come right next, with groups of 'expats' and digital nomads (professionals working remotely and not tied to any particular location) using Valsa for co-working meetings and storytelling events. Still, those who perform and those who attend Valsa's cultural activities are usually somehow connected to the art world, concluded Nika two years after the opening of the association.

Valsa does function as a convivial space. It brings people together, usually transient individuals, who both frequent and contribute to keeping the association dynamic. Mobility has long been a crucial aspect for artistic and other careers in the cultural sector (André, Estevens, and Gabriel 2017), and Valsa channels those mobilities into a lively setting, taking part in the maintenance of artistic mobile cultures. It functions as the socio-material construction creating the grounds upon which various mobile professional trajectories may interact in Lisbon. But more than a leisure space, Valsa's collaborative system allows those artists and other professionals to showcase their professional work and maintain a mobile lifestyle or a career based on mobility.

The two examples from Lisbon shed light on how places like coffee shops may work as infrastructures facilitating the production or the maintenance of different mobile practices and lifestyles. Lisbon is not only a touristic city; it has been attracting other kinds of transient populations (McGarrigle 2021), from digital nomads and 'expats', to bohemian lifestyle migrants and Erasmus students (Malet Calvo 2017; Korpela 2019). The infrastructures making the city attractive to these groups (such as specialty coffee shops and co-working spaces) also highlight, in the cases of Benjamin and Valsa, the urban impact of relatively privileged migrants as mobile entrepreneurs.

Conclusion

The new mobilities paradigm (Sheller and Urry 2006) has taught us that mobility and dwelling are not opposites, nor is mobility an exceptional part of the work of carrying out our livelihoods. On the

contrary, mobility is a central aspect of dwelling practices. The case studies we presented in this paper are a testament to how lives are being lived in mobile ways. The mobile lifestyles we discussed here are diverse: they entail mobile forms of labour such as street vending, but also encompass remote work, such as the work of artists, translators and other digital nomads. Moreover, they are not limited to work-related aspects of life, but also include mobility linked to leisure and consumption as we have shown in the cases of Benjamin and Valsa, or as strategies to deal (faster) with bureaucratic procedures or to sustain communal practices, as we have seen in the case of Senegalese businesses in Brazil.

In all these cases, mobile trajectories are entangled with urban infrastructures that facilitate – or even enable – the maintenance of mobile lifestyles. These places (restaurants, shops and cafés) provide the *infrastructuring work* (Meeus et al. 2020) of mobile practices: they back them or support them in various ways. It is perhaps pointless to wonder what came first: mobile lifestyles or mobility infrastructures. What is at stake, though, is that they are deeply connected to one another, to the extent to which one can hardly address them independently. Just as mobile lifestyles are diverse, so are their qualities, their rhythms and the infrastructural materialities through which they resonate. They entail particular circulations and temporalities which are crosscut by race, privilege, status and lifestyle. As we have shown, these businesses are embedded in wider economic, social and political contexts. They do not only depend on the local, urban environment, but are also embedded in international flows of migration, e.g. Senegalese migration to Brazil or the emergence of a Brazilian diaspora of artists living in Portugal, or global circulations of tourists and lifestyle migration. The ways in which these businesses affect mobilities and the kinds of mobility they affect are, therefore, highly contextual. Despite the significant differences between our empirical case studies, we provided evidence of the infrastructural work performed by migrant-owned businesses in sustaining mobile practices. These functions may be more or less connected to national or ethnic affiliations and networks of support, but may also appeal to specific lifestyles and consumption habits.

Although the businesses presented here all result from and facilitate mobile lifestyles, the kinds of mobility they sustain and result from differ strongly. By bringing them together, we did not aim to minimise the ways in which privilege, precarity, status, and global racializing categories shape mobilities, but, on the contrary, we pinpointed how unequal mobile lives are entangled into unequal socio-material infrastructures. Mobile trajectories of shop owners and their clients are shaped by global regimes of mobility (Glick Schiller, Nina, and Salazar 2013). Unequal access to labour market, financial capital, residence permits, and international movement determine the divergent functions of the mobility infrastructures we studied. Mobile lifestyles of Senegalese merchants and street hawkers in Brazil cannot be understood as a result of the same circumstances driving the mobilities of digital nomads in Lisbon.

The peculiar ontology of infrastructures is that they are matter enabling the movement of other matter. As Larkin (2013, 329) suggests, ‘the duality of infrastructures indicates that they (...) cannot be theorized in terms of the object alone. What distinguishes infrastructures from technologies is that they are objects that create the grounds on which other objects operate’. In other words, addressing these businesses only as a result of their owners’ entrepreneurial strategies would obscure all the other mobile trajectories that co-constitute these places. In response, by framing these businesses as mobility infrastructures, we believe to be able to capture both the ways they result from mobilities – as they are deeply embedded within the migration trajectories of their owners – but also the ways they create the grounds on which other mobilities operate.

We understand mobility infrastructures as socio-material formations where various forms of mobility are channelled, often continuously. We choose this term in order to overcome the temporal limitations of arrival infrastructure and hereby shed light on the longer-term influence of these businesses on the maintenance of an array of mobile practices and lifestyles of migrants and non-migrants too, ranging from street-vending to digital nomadism, and from travelling sales to urban tourism. The contrast between the empirical examples from Brazil and Portugal show that arrival needs might mean very different things for Senegalese street vendors in Caxias do Sul or for

bohemian lifestyle migrants in Lisbon. Yet, the businesses presented here have proved to remain central nodes beyond the temporality of arrival; they have shown how precarious migration and work practices, but also relatively privileged forms of mobility and travel resonate through specific socio-material infrastructures.

Note

1. A Dahira is a local association of members of the murid brotherhood. Although it can roughly be defined as a praying circle, a Dahira often performs wider social and political functions. Several authors highlight the importance of Dahiras as central organizational structures in contexts of Senegalese immigration (Babou 2002), including as arrival infrastructure in Rio de Janeiro (Heil 2021).

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