

The London School of Economics and Political Science

The Curation of the Street Food Scene in London

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Declaration

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Abstract

This research is an ethnography about the curation of the street food scene in London that looks at processes of cultural calculation to make markets and to assemble marketplaces. The main research question that is guiding this thesis is how is the street food scene in London being curated? This inquiry follows previous research in cultural economies in different scenes of cultural production like advertising, fashion or music (Du Gay and Pryke, 2002; Slater, 2002a; Entwistle, 2006, 2009; McFall, 2002, 2009, 2013; Ariztía, 2015; Negus, 2002; Law, 2002; McRobbie, 2016; Arriagada, 2014; Arriagada and Cruz, 2014). I am focussing on the idea of curation as analytical vehicle to understand the work of cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu, 1984) as a process of value generation, in which they culturally calculate markets (Callon, 1998; Callon, Méadel and Rabeharisoa, 2002; Slater 2002a) and assemble marketplaces (Farías, 2010; McFarlane, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c) by putting together knowledge, people, objects, aesthetics and other materials that configure the scene. This ethnography focusses on the working practices of market organisers, particularly from a company that I will call EAT-LONDON and four food traders who work in these and other markets. Nine months of fieldwork were conducted, working at offices, markets and food stalls across London. Through this empirical work with actors in the street food scene, rich data was obtained with the purpose of analysing how markets are formed in cultural economies, and how markets create place. Curators are actors that shape the social using their embodied and social knowledge to separate businesses, audiences or places based on the distinction of this cultural scene (Johnston and Baumann, 2015; Naccarato and Lebesco, 2012; Cronin et. al., 2014). The practice of curation reveals how economic calculations are also configured by cultural distinctions and how place is assembled and emerging from multiple actors' relationships and negotiations of value.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Street food markets have proliferated rapidly in London in the past ten years, in places such as squares, streets and spaces in between buildings bringing a new and more refined food offer, and transforming and animating places in the city. In this thesis, I show how crucial it is to think of street food markets as an important sociological phenomenon. I consider that these contemporary cultural forms have been neglected from sociological analysis, and I demonstrate their value from a cultural economy perspective, focussing on the curation of markets and place. This thesis explores the idea of curation as a concept that ties together elements of cultural calculation, taste and placemaking. These are the essential elements needed to explain the process of making markets and marketplaces in London.

Curation has become a ubiquitous term that is used to refer to a varied range of activities and tasks with many different purposes, carried out by actors in many different fields. It has become a code word, or a buzz word synonym for editing or aggregating any sort of cultural content. Etymologically, “curation” means “to take care of the soul” (Gaskill, 2011, p.2) and curators generally work to care for cultural production in the art context. Traditionally, the work of curators involves the display of cultural items, the translation and contextualisation of these materials for specific imagined audiences, serving as “arbiters of taste and quality” (Gaskill, 2011, p. 3). From its traditional meaning and use in the art sector, there is also curation of numerous other things, like social media content or more broadly called digital curation aimed at creating for example music playlists, film curation for festivals, curated commerce, among many others. The internet gave the word additional notoriety with enormous amounts of information and content needed to be selected and organised.

This phenomenon has been picked up by media commentators. For example, Anthony Gardner writes for The Economist that “‘Curating’ used to mean caring for part of a museum collection, now it means all sorts of things’ (November/December 2013). He claims that “the rap star Kanye West invites his Twitter followers to “curate your life””. Or David Balzer claims in The Guardian that ‘Reading lists, outfits, even salads are curated – it’s absurd’ (The Guardian, 18 April 2015). Thomas Frank writing for The

Baffler defines a curator as an arbitrator of what's good and bad, of what to include and what to exclude; "They make judgments. They define what is legitimate and what is not" (Frank, 2017) as professionals with a position of certified authority. In Balzer's book *"Curationism. How curation took over the art world and everything else?"* (2015), he argues that "the curator as we know her emerges with a twist of autonomy, through the vital concept of connoisseurship: a display of taste or expertise that lends stylized independence to the act of caring for and assembling" (Balzer, 2015, p. 27). It has been claimed that curation has lost its definitional purpose and comes to be defined as an activity that could entail almost anything, can be carried by anyone in almost any industry or field. Rosenbaum (2011) says curation in its many forms is a synonym of quality, but that "now quality is in the eye of the beholder" (Rosenbaum, 2011, p. 3). Curation is a diverse activity, conducted by amateur or professional curators that add value through "qualitative judgement to whatever is being gathered and organized" (Ibid.)

Balzer revises the genealogies of curation and how the term has changed its meaning in different historical contexts. The title of curator as *caretaker* has been given to priests, experts on collections like the Cabinet of Curiosities from the Renaissance, to contemporary curators of museums, galleries and exhibitions. During the 1960s and 1970s the figure of the curator was brought in to make sense of a more diverse art scene, and to professionalise the management of collections, "The curator must understand the avant-garde aesthetically and commercially, combining the two to turn something that is new and thus vulnerable into something that is nothing short of invincible." (Balzer, 2015, p. 45). Nowadays, not only the art scene needs curators, but also major companies, cultural organizations, businesses or charities (Balzer, 2015). These institutions need a model that allows them to create or select their products and services, and manage them professionally and carefully for their public.

This definitional debate over what is curation, or what curators do, can be made more complex, as little attention has been put towards understanding curation in its context. The colloquial and loose popular use of this concept does not engage with the particularities of curation as practice and how these practices shape the social. Curation seems evocative of an artsy, creative activity, masquerading how the making of judgements for inclusion, and consequently exclusion of elements can shape and

define fields or create markets. In this research, I will discuss the idea of curation in a very precise and specific way, giving the concept a contingent and contextual definition that emerges from an ethnography of the street food scene in London.

This research specifically understands curation as the work of cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu, 1984) in a process of value generation in which cultural calculation (Callon, 1998; Callon, Méadel and Rabeharisoa, 2002; Callon and Muniesa, 2005; Slater 2002a) is carried out. Cultural calculation makes markets and marketplaces, assembling knowledge, people, objects, aesthetics and other materials that configure the scene. The aim of this research is to understand the curation of the street food scene in London by looking at a process that uses taste and cultural capital to make distinctions and economic and cultural calculation to create markets and marketplaces. The main research question that is guiding this thesis is *how is the street food scene in London being curated?* This line of inquiry follows previous research in cultural economies in different scenes of cultural production like advertising, fashion or music (Du Gay and Pryke, 2002; Slater, 2002a; Entwistle, 2009; McFall, 2002, 2009, 2013; Ariztía, 2014, 2015; Negus, 2002; Law, 2002). This research looks ethnographically at the work of market organisers, particularly from a company that I will call EAT-LONDON¹ and four food traders who work in these and other markets. This 9-month ethnography entailed working at offices, markets and food stalls across London, as well as conducting qualitative interviews with market organisers in different companies, freelance organisers and a food blogger. Through this empirical work with actors in the street food scene, rich qualitative data was obtained with the purpose of analysing their working practices to create markets with specific qualities and to create places using markets in different locations in London.

In this research, curation is used as a 'sensitizing concept' (Blumer, 1954), an idea that emerged inductively from conversations and interviews with the participants in this research, and that has then been sociologically conceptualised to grasp meaning from the empirical world. The word curation was used by market organisers when talking about their work to describe their role in the performance of diverse tasks. For example Alan, a market organiser, mentions in an interview *"I'm doing everything from marketing, bringing sponsors in, so that we could actually afford to do these things,*

¹ The names of the companies and research participants have been changed to protect their anonymity.

*picking traders and **curating** these weekly night markets*". He explains that his role also relates to picking food, *"when we were **curating** Vibes Feast in the beginning you have to think about the type of food, it can't be just stuck in buns, there's lots of stuff in buns"*. Additionally, in their Facebook page, EAT-LONDON describes themselves as a company *"creating a new kind of street food market for London: a **curated** crew of talented traders, serving exciting menus in the city's most iconic spaces"* (EAT-LONDON, Facebook page). Market organisers work as curation is also mentioned in policy reports. In a report from Cross river partnership, market organisers' role is described as *"**curating** the goods on sale in a market"* (Cross river partnership, 2014, p. 40).

Organisers have used the word curation to describe their work in various occasions, but the definition of its meaning was not explained to me in the field. From fieldwork, I could observe how their work as curation includes a diversity of tasks. These tasks include the organization, administration, distribution and mediation between food production and consumption to create, protect and keep the boundaries of the street food scene. In this research, the idea of curation is used to develop a cultural economy analysis from an ethnographic, micro-economic perspective of the working practices of market organisers and street food traders to make markets and places.

The concept of curation has been used before in academic research in the study of digital media (Higgins, 2011) and in food markets, like in Joosse and Hrac's study (2015) about the curation of local food in Sweden. In this study, Joosse and Hrac's claim that curatorial practice has usually focussed on cultural products such as art, music and fashion and that the curation of food choices gets little attention in the social sciences. They claim that curators *"interpret, translate and shape the marketplace by sorting, organizing, evaluating and ascribing value(s) to specific products"* (Joosse and Hrac's, 2015, p. 205) in which the spatial dynamic of this process is highly relevant. Although the effort has been put into understanding the intermediation role in a range of curatorial practices, not enough attention has been put into looking at curation from the everyday working practice of these actors. In this research, I consider curation as the intertwined and simultaneous process of making markets as cultural and spatial forms.

Curation in this research is used as an analytical vehicle to investigate the micro-economic activities of making a business in the street food scene. The thesis focusses

on analysing the working practices of specific actors, mainly market organisers, and their relationship with other actors in the scene. For example, the relationship with food traders who perform curatorial choices by trading at these markets, or other actors who are relevant for the making of markets and place like landowners, Councils and developers. In this case, the analysis of curatorial practices will be circumscribed to the working practices of market organisers and food traders in the making of markets and marketplaces. The ethnographic material collected is rich in findings on this activity. Given the research question guiding this thesis, evidence on the working practices of other actors involved in this process, or the role of customers in these markets, was not explored. This research on the curation of street food markets puts emphasis on the empirical material of cultural production, asking what market organisers do in their everyday jobs, and how street food traders perform the curatorial decisions of organisers at market sites when trading.

Market organisers as curators shape and enclose the street food scene using their embodied knowledge and assumptions about the social to define who can participate as traders, partners or audiences, and how. A study of how these curatorial distinctions are employed to create markets and place reveals how organisers' previous knowledge and assumptions about the social are connected with the way they perform their jobs. An ethnographic account of their working practices is useful to compare and contrast the differences between their discourses about the street food scene as an open and democratic field of cultural production, and their working practices. In this case, ethnographic material and interviews are used to analyse how the narratives of the scene contrast to how their work shapes and defines the boundaries of it. Their practice of curating markets and places works as a process that discriminates people from participating, establishing qualities that need to be fulfilled in order to take part in these markets, and trade at these places.

The distinction that the curation of the street food scene creates is similar to the idea of culinary capital (Johnston and Baumann, 2015; Naccarato and Lebesco, 2012; Newman and Burnett, 2013; Cronin et. al., 2014) to create cultural distinction in this field. Market organisers use their embodied knowledge of the scene and their cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) to make taste distinctions that result in disciplining the street food scene based on their business decisions. These actors have a relevant role in

creating markets and places by qualifying goods and services, and creating networks of value with their selected partners, traders and audience, limiting the opportunities for open participation.

1.1. Markets and cultural calculation

In the study of curatorial practices, this thesis intersects with the fields of economic sociology and in particular the study of market performativity (Callon 1998; Callon and Muniesa, 2005; MacKenzie and Milo, 2003), by following previous work on the cultural economy (Du Gay and Pryke 2000; Entwistle, 2009; Slater, 2002a, 2002b; McFall, 2002, 2009; Law, 2000; Negus, 2002). This thesis also connects with the study of marketplaces in urban sociology and urban planning, moving beyond the literature on planning and policy recommendations to engage in discussions of placemaking and marketplaces as urban assemblages (Farías, 2010). I will briefly explain how this research connects, complements and departs from these fields of study and proposes a study of the making of markets and places in the case of the street food scene.

In economic sociology, the specific field called “the sociology of markets” refers to the study of social exchanges under capitalism in diverse cases such as companies, labour markets, commodity markets or the role of economic actors like suppliers, workers or consumers. It also looks at “the role of local cultures (i.e., local in the sense of belonging to a particular market), systems of meanings insofar as they influence what products are, and the role of morality in the generation of particular kinds of markets” (Fligstein and Dauter, 2007, p. 106). The literature on this subfield has focussed on different explanatory mechanism for understanding markets, like the analysis of networks, institutions or market performativity.

In this research, I follow the approach of performativity in the study of markets more closely. This kind of analysis “views economic action as a result of calculative processes involving the specific technologies and artefacts that actors employ” (Fligstein and Dauter, 2007, p. 107). This approach is closely connected with the study of networks, as in actor-network theory (ANT) and the work of Bruno Latour (2005) and Michel Callon (1998; 1999; 2007), in which the role of artefacts, materials, and techniques as

agents in the process of calculation, is of great importance. This approach on market performativity emerges as a critique of the predominant modes of studying markets in sociology, which opposes the way markets are defined and studied in neoclassical economics. Callon has argued that “the sociology of markets has worried too much about critiquing the neoclassical view that markets are anonymous, one-shot exchanges, and not worried enough about the role of economists (and others) in the creation of cultural tools that actually enact the market” (Fligstein and Dauter, 2007, p. 118). In this approach, economic action is studied as a form of calculation, or the calculative practices of actors to determine the quality of goods, as well as the relationship between these actors. In this sense, the performative approach to the study of markets introduces the idea of culture, or cultural understandings to interpret how actors come to calculate and create markets (Fligstein and Dauter, 2007).

My analysis of curation as the making of markets follows ideas from Callon and colleagues (Callon et. al. 2002; Callon and Muniesa, 2005) on market performativity. Specifically, my understanding of curation is more closely linked to Callon’s definition of qualification in the economy of qualities and to cultural calculation (Slater, 2002a). Curation of markets refers to a process of cultural calculation that market actors perform using their interpretative and cultural knowledge to singularise goods, create cultural categories and connect these with potential customers. Therefore, an analysis of the making of markets from practice is needed to grasp the complexity of the process of qualification or cultural calculation and value generation of these markets.

This research also understands the curation of markets as instrumental to the generation of place. Although Callonian approaches have had almost no interest in the qualification of place, I am proposing that curation also entails the calculative practices of organisers to stabilise markets as cultural and spatial entities with distinctive qualities. An analysis of curation as cultural calculation of markets and place is fruitful in revealing the techniques and materials that are used to create specific cultural and economic forms. It is also productive to identify which actors are called to participate in this process, what are their priorities and purposes, and in this sense their role, and the skills they employ to make this happen (McFall, 2009). This analysis of the curation of markets and place escapes generalisations about the economy or markets, instead focussing on the specifics of a market case study, its formation process and how it is

performed. The analysis also focusses on the role of human actors; the empirical material for this research concentrates on the working practices of market organisers and food traders, the techniques, skills, and knowledge they use for their work, and their relationship to other actors in the field.

My understanding of curation relates to previous discussions about the economy, and its connection with culture. In this sense, this research follows the idea of the cultural economy (Du Gay and Pryke 2000; Entwistle, 2009; Slater, 2002a, 2002b; McFall, 2002, 2009; Law, 2000; Negus, 2002) to situate the curation of the street food scene in London. In particular, this research contributes to the area of study of the making of markets in cultural economies which has not been extensively explored (Entwistle, 2009) and could be expanded by looking at different fields of cultural production. Additionally, there is little research that develops a cultural economy approach to the study of street food markets or food markets more generally. This thesis contributes to filling that gap, proposing an analysis of the making of markets that deviates from the use of standard economic models to focus on the sociological elements of an economic process.

Debates on the cultural economy argue that culture and the economy are not separate realms, but interdependent in the making of markets. This analysis understands market formation as a form of cultural calculation (Slater, 2002a) of dispersed and diverse elements that creates a cultural and economic form. When market actors perform cultural calculation, they use economic, as well as interpretative and cultural knowledge, to define things in the market (Ariztía, 2014). This framing of goods for the market not only relies on rational economic distinctions, but these are interdependent and merged with cultural categorisations or operations of meaning. My analysis of the curation of markets uses the idea of cultural calculation by looking at how markets are being made from the specific and contingent working practices of actors from a detailed ethnographic perspective. With this ethnographic approach, I was a participant observer of the working practices of market organisers in their everyday jobs, looking at how their decisions and actions qualify markets as specific objects and places. The focus is on looking at the cultural calculations that these actors make to qualify street food markets as cultural and economic forms.

Du Gay and Pryke (2002) mention that the study of the interconnections between economy and culture also includes looking at the processes of culturalization of the economy, to explore the ways in which cultural aspects or symbolic meanings are relevant for conducting economic activity. In this research, the study of street food markets aligns with this debate by researching the embodied knowledge that market organisers use to curate markets and places, and the consequences of this practice. These actors as cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu, 1984; Smith Maguire and Matthews, 2012) attach meanings to their street food markets in order to create a brand experience that distinguishes these places from other places for food consumption. This labour process entails not only making taste distinctions in their field of cultural production, but producing and reproducing asymmetries in the creative sector. In this case, this research reflects on the generation of labour inequalities in the street food scene, especially in relation to including and excluding participants such as traders from working at certain markets.

The curatorial work for the generation of markets includes the specification of qualities that food traders need to have and perform to participate in these markets. For example, under the imperative of adequately performing a type of affective or emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983; Entwistle and Wissinger, 2006), or the imperative of being creative (McRobbie, 2016) to maintain business relevance, some traders are invited to participate and others are excluded. These definitions of qualities and values in the street food scene also respond to the business interests of organisers, in alignment with potential partners, such as developing companies, landowners and Councils. This analysis of the curation of street food markets touches upon the context that allows this curation to happen. In this sense, it engages with the politics of value generation in the scene by disclosing: which actors can define what is valuable; who participates in these networks; and the purpose of markets being created and places being used.

1.2. Marketplaces

It is not only the study of the abstract idea of the market as the “social institution of exchanges where prices or exchange equivalencies exist” (Plattner, 1989, p. 171) that is relevant to an understanding of the curation of the street food scene. This research also engages with the study of marketplaces, or the interactions that are localised in a time and place, where a group of social actors exchange products and services, build relationships, and create cultural meaning (Slater, 1993). Both anthropological approaches, and certain approaches in economic sociology, study markets emphasising in their ‘embeddedness’ (Polanyi et. al., 1957; Granovetter, 1985) in the social. From this perspective, markets are analysed as economic forms that are not autonomous, but “as inseparably intertwined with a wide variety of social, political, ritual, and other cultural behaviors, institutions, and beliefs” (Bestor, 2001, p. 9227). For this research, the curation of the marketplace is relevant to understanding the spatial dimension of the making of markets, and how these curatorial decisions can create and transform how place is used and experienced.

From this perspective, the study of marketplaces entails going beyond the pure economic forces that create markets, and moving towards “wider ethnographic contexts that see marketplaces as specific locations and social frameworks” (Bestor, 2001, p. 9227). These frameworks are characterised by economic exchanges, but also serve other purposes, like places for political expression and participation, gatherings of diverse groups, or nodes in a network where information flows. Ethnographic studies of markets vary significantly, with a focus on local, regional or global contexts; on the retail structures and roles of consumers, producers or traders, or in the kind of commodities that are being transacted. At a local scale, these studies look at the relationship between markets and cities, where marketplaces are usually the centre for economic, social, and political activity. This environment created by markets is crucial for understanding urban life (Bestor, 2001), not just in spatial terms, but in connection with wider issues around values, norms, and forms of social relationships in specific societies.

Following these ideas, marketplaces can be analysed as spaces for conviviality and for generating social bonds. A marketplace is not only a meeting of people buying and

selling products, but "being an embodied event, it always has a specific cultural character, and involves a multitude of social actions and relations" (Slater and Tonkiss, 2001, p. 10). Marketplaces have "social centrality" and represent the place for public life in localities, in terms of places for socialising and for spectacles (Slater, 1993). Marketplaces are also intertwined with urban governments in a complex relationship with regulatory institutions that police and prohibit some of its functions. Some authors also identify them as "liminal spaces" (Slater and Tonkiss, 2001) or places where some social norms can be overturned, and where a sense of freedom, fun and desire emerges, "hence carnivalesque disruptions are events of the marketplace" (Slater and Tonkiss, 2001, pp. 10-11).

Market culture is characterised by people freed from restraint, following their individual desires "who are legitimated in their pursuit of leisure by a collective sense of public gathering" (Slater, 1993, p. 198). But at the same time, markets are contained spaces that can't escape regulation through government intervention, which ensures provision for their cities. There is also an internal regulation of the market "from the earliest medieval markets, stalls were set up in numbered places, allotted in advance, registered and paid for with the local authorities. Most importantly for the crowd, the market was a place of regulated supplies, prices and quality assurance. Officially, markets have always been regulated through on-the-spot policing of prices and quality" (Slater, 1993, p. 204).

An analysis that focusses on empirical markets allows for the reconnection of the idea of a market with culture, as it reveals agency in the emergence of markets. "A market must itself be culturally reproduced as a meaningful event in order to be an embodied actual market (rather than an abstract economic construct)" (Slater, 1993, p. 188). In this case, market formation is not exempt of cultural content, culture is not outside but it is part of it (Slater, 1993). In this research, both market and place are inseparable elements in understanding the curation of the street food scene. In the study of marketplaces, this research follows the idea that marketplaces are made by a set of economic and cultural calculations by actors in the field. This research is interested in marketplaces as social spaces in urban life, that are formed and shaped in connection with social norms, regulation and conviviality. The analysis of the curation of markets as places links the idea of cultural calculation with the making of place, negotiations of

value with other urban actors, and the practical arrangements needed to create marketplaces.

This research focusses on the analysis of marketplaces as social spaces in urban life with a diversity of actors and processes involved in the making of place. In this sense, my approach differs from conceptualisations of market making or placemaking from an urban planning perspective. In this field, most studies of markets are focussed on delivering general policy recommendations for the generation of urban space, without engaging in any depth with actors' practices of creating marketplaces. In this context, food markets have been called a tool for urbanism and the regeneration of cities (Parham, 2015; Wessel, 2012; Siu, 2013; Newman and Burnett, 2013; Bell and Binnie, 2005; Bell, 2007). Food markets are a popular solution for transforming place, "food markets are seen to be both the symbolic and material heart of the city" (Parham, 2015, p. 72), as dynamic cultural settings that transform or enliven urban space. These markets are useful for bringing people together, generating space for conviviality or attracting a different set of activities to unused, abandoned or places in path for regeneration. Additionally, the policy conventions and recommendations describe these initiatives as a possibility for increasing local entrepreneurship, and opening commercial opportunities in deprived areas. Policy and business reports claim that markets have positive effects in London's high streets. Markets increase commerce and employment, and could contribute to bring more footfall to an area. They could also function as incubators for new businesses that want to embrace "markets alongside bricks and mortar and e-commerce" (Cross river partnership, 2014, p. 4).

Food spaces or gastronomic quarters can include different retail offers, like market stalls, cafés, restaurants, bars, with good accessibility "creating human-scaled walkable areas that relate in density and texture to the surrounding townscape" (Parham, 2009, p. 92). These food quarters are defined as important parts of the public realm. Some studies highlight their importance in enhancing social interaction between diverse publics (Watson and Studdert, 2006) and revitalising spaces with food, especially good quality buildings that have been through a long period of decline. Parham (2009) recognises that the growth of food quarters can contribute to increasing gentrification (Zukin 1982; 1992), although not enough research has been conducted to explain how these two phenomena are related. There are also divergent opinions on where the

urban transformation, occurring due to the growth of food quarters, could create positive outcomes, like convivial spatiality (Parham, 2012). The use of food markets for regenerating urban areas in the UK is based on the idea that attracting investors will attract a middle-class public, and transform places by creating new consumption destinations (Parham, 2009). In this case, some of these food quarters function as places marketed for regenerating sites.

These policy recommendations about markets and place (Regeneris Consulting, 2010; Cross river partnership, 2014; Colin Buchanan, 2008) rarely recognise the diversity of mechanisms through which markets create and transform place. In this thesis, the curation of markets is seen as instrumental to the making of place, which is defined and disciplined to perform the qualities that organisers and other actors established as the legitimate way to set up marketplaces. These street food markets are not necessarily open to everyone to participate, but are curated to target specific audiences to their locations; they rarely create local business opportunities as most traders involved in these markets are invited following an intensive recruitment process. These street food markets thrive depending on organisers' strategies, expectations and connections with landowners, developing companies or Councils. If these markets are tools for transforming place, this is highly dependent on the specificity of the working practices of market organisers when curating markets and place. This research looks at market organisers as placemakers by analysing their working practices to create marketplaces as economic and cultural forms, with specific qualities like location, size, organisation, aesthetics, and that can perform a brand experience for their markets.

Similarly to the study of markets in the context of urban planning and policy recommendations, studies on the creative industries and urban space also look at this phenomenon as an input for cultural policy. In the literature that studies the relationship between creative or cultural industries and urban space, most studies concentrate on creative districts or creative hubs (Pratt, 2009; Dovey et. al., 2016; McRobbie, 2016; Virani, 2015), or gentrification by cultural consumption (Zukin, 1982; Gonzalez and Waley, 2012) or potential contributions of these settings to either cultural policy or urban development policies (Landry, 2000; Oakley, 2004; Pratt, 2009; Evans, 2009; Flew, 2010; Dovey et. al., 2016). In this previous research, the focus has

been put on looking at the impact of the creative sector in the development and growth of cities. However, my approach to analysing the spatial dimension of cultural economies is based on an understanding of the practicalities of making place with markets, and the specific negotiations of value, and practices that organisers engage with to create places with specific qualities. In this research, the curation of place is seen from the practices of actors in the field, as a localised practice. Instead of looking at placemaking from a planning perspective, my research contributes to the phenomenon of 'making place' as a specific practice that is made by actors as part of their everyday jobs. This practice involves actors' use of taste, knowledge of regulations, governmental organisations, and urban policies and planning, among many other aspects.

Following the introduction of the idea of assemblage to urban studies (Farías, 2010, 2011; McFarlane, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c), this research looks at the curation of marketplaces as contingent and emerging from the configuration of heterogeneous and dispersed elements. In this case, marketplaces are curated through the cultural calculation of dispersed space, objects, symbols, participants, and aesthetic forms that are put together and stabilise to generate a place for the trading of street food. The analysis of the curation of marketplace investigates a practice that creates specific and localised urban forms. An ANT perspective on the formation of place considers that the city is produced from multiple and localised associations or assemblages that are made in practice, recognising the role that human and non-human actors have in this process. From this perspective, an analysis of the curation of marketplaces looks at these sociotechnical elements that are put together to create and stabilise a marketplace. An ethnographic approach to marketplaces as assemblages is used to understand the practices and operations carried out to make place, and the context in which these associations are possible. In this sense, this analysis of marketplaces as assemblages includes looking at the politics of the curation process, such as the hierarchies and inequalities present in the negotiation of value between different urban actors; and the use of taste distinctions to select and arrange material and sensorial elements to create marketplaces as brand experiences.

1.3. Context and setting

With the revival and proliferation of street food markets in globalized cities in the North, eating on the street has become a common practice or socially acceptable activity with a sustained development of gastronomic business on the street (Parham, 2012). According to Siu (2013), the presence of food trucks in the United States has grown while the perception of them has changed. Once perceived as 'low culture' affordable food for the working classes, "they have been transformed into something modern, hip, cutting-edge, and mainstream" (Siu, 2013, p. 232). The author suggests that the use of media technologies and the popularity of food in the entertainment industry have contributed to this change. Regular TV shows depict the work of the food trucks, and social media provides information about traders and events, promoting the scene in the media and popular culture.

Other authors argue that the development of this industry is a response to the economic crisis and the need for "income-generating opportunities" (Newman and Burnett, 2013, p. 236) for young unemployed people. Further still, some cite the street food movement's role as an urban planning resource, aimed as a means of enlivening public spaces. Street food as urban strategy "has been promoted as a mechanism for ensuring the presence of local, healthy, and "ethnic" foods in urban areas; to that end, some cities have implemented rules designed to ensure that vendors sell foods that conform to such goals..." (Newman and Burnett, 2013, p. 236). In this case, street food is seen as tool for attracting tourists and contributing to the promotion of alternative or more 'positive' ways of selling and consuming food.

Additionally, other authors consider that these markets showcase independent businesses resisting the monopolisation of eating practices by large corporations, as a "method of resistance to both cultural and economic hegemony... providing an alternative to the homogenising tendency of imported foods or multinational chains..." (Newman and Burnett, 2013, pp. 234). In this sense, these markets have been labelled as "hipster markets", recognizing that they tend to be visited mostly by a subcultural group with a particular orientation towards consumption that "rejects mainstream consumerism ethos as part of a collective stylistic statement" (Cronin et. al., 2014, p.

3), in this case the selection of food is an expression of resistance to the domination of mass-produced goods.

The setting up of these markets usually entails a careful arrangement of aesthetic elements, from refurbished vans or accommodating indoor markets in abandoned spaces. The set-up of these markets could be a mix between second-hand, refurbished and derelict urban elements that are being transformed into food consumption destinations. These aesthetic and sensorial elements along with the diversity of cuisines and the pop-up phenomenon has given this kind of food market a style or brand that differentiates their offer from other markets or retail spaces; which “lead the way in establishing new market protocols in which experiential qualities become key elements in the processes of loyalty building and brand identification” (Mörtenböck and Mooshammer, 2015, p. 475).

Furthermore, actors involved in the production of these street food markets (organisers and food traders, and the audience that attends such events) have been described as food enthusiasts or *foodies* (Johnston and Baumann, 2015). These *foodies* consider that “quality, rarity, locality, organic, hand-made, creativity, and simplicity all work to signify specific foods as a source of distinction” (Johnston and Baumann, 2015, p. 3). *Foodies* have emerged in opposition to the “high-culture food snobs”. In this group, cultural distinction emerges from the tension between the democratic inclusion of food choices or diversity, and the exclusion based on connoisseurship of cuisines and ingredients. They are able to distinguish ‘good’ and ‘bad’ food, and have a disposition and aesthetic appreciation of food or “culinary capital (Naccarato and Lebesco, 2012).

The kind of food and the different forms and shapes that these markets have is diverse, and it is not possible to generalize a clear standardized definition of what they are or exactly what they resemble. However, to describe the case study of this research, foodie or hipster street food markets are characterised by a diverse offer of cuisines and preparations from food traders. This offer includes different ethnic, regional or local cuisines and many American style food, such as burgers or hot dogs with more sophisticated ingredients or fusion versions of these dishes. In terms of the differentiation of these markets from other retail offers, both market organisers and food traders that participated in this research, claim that their aim is to offer quality

and fresh, sometimes organic ingredients, with creative and innovative preparations in a set up that contributes to socializing.

1.3.1. Markets in London

A study requested by the Greater London Authority about retail markets in London shows that in 2010 there were 162 retail markets in London; 43 of them were farmers markets and specialist food markets in which food trucks or vans usually proliferate. Farmers markets are described as selling “high quality food” while “specialist food markets” are those selling “speciality food” such as “occasion French or Italian food markets” (Regeneris Consulting, 2010, p. 11), the best example of these being Camden Lock, Columbia Road and Portobello Road Market. The ones that have grown more rapidly are farmers’ markets and specialist food markets. According to a study by Cross River Partnership (2014), since 2008 the number of markets in central London has increased from 71 to 99; this growth has been particularly strong in the private sector with more than 20 new markets being administered by private companies. On the other hand, markets managed by Councils have increased slightly, with some of these markets now being transferred to private management. Despite this growth, some authors claim that markets in London are in danger, with lots of them being closed, moved, or regenerated with lack of public investment by local authorities (Watson, 2009, p. 1577).

There are several markets in London that commercialise hot meals and drinks. As an example, there are various locations across the city (see Figure 1)² such as Street Food Union Market and Berwick Street Market in Soho, Southbank Centre Food Market, and The Real Food Market in King’s Cross. Other examples include the KERB markets in different locations such as King’s Cross, The Gherkin, Canary Wharf, Paddington and Camden; Street Feast Market Dinerama in Shoreditch, Giant Robot in Canary Wharf and Model Market in Lewisham; Council managed markets such as Leather Lane Market (Camden Council) or Whitecross Street Market (Islington Council); and markets

² Map created with my own data of markets active as per June 2017.

in residential areas that serve local communities on the weekends like Brockley Market or Tottenham Green Market, among many others.



Figure 1: Street food markets in London

Most of these markets are seasonal and configured as pop-up temporary spaces. According to the Centre for Economic and Business Research, pop-ups are “a temporary shop, stall or brand experience used to sell goods and services for a limited period of time. The term pop-up includes everything from market stalls and street food vendors, to fashion shops, galleries, cafés and bars” (Centre for Economic and Business Research, 2014, p. 8). Although it is difficult to find figures about the pop-up phenomenon, given its temporary nature, this document states that the business turnover contributed £2.1 billion to the UK economy and this is projected to grow 8.4 per cent in 2015. This study shows that “the most popular pop-up shops to visit and spend money in are farmers’ markets, food and beverage shops and fashion stores – over 40% of people who have visited a pop-up store went to a farmers’ market in the last 12 months” (Centre for Economic and Business Research, 2014, p. 6).

Watson and Studdert (2006) recognise the importance of keeping markets open for the community and identify factors that could enhance markets as social spaces, such

as, for example: including features that attract more visitors, as for example, like having a greater variety of products that “fit” with their community’s taste; offer spaces for gathering around food or drinks, like cafes, food trucks, seating spaces. Access to a market site and transport links are also important, as well as an organised and engaged community of traders that could support the market’s development. Other elements are also identified in this report, like the layout of the site and its infrastructure so people can move around and walk through easily, protected from the weather conditions. as Professional management was also seen as useful in determining the strategic direction for the market (Watson and Studdert, 2006, p. viii).

Additionally, Cross River Partnership highlights the importance of “curating the goods on sale in a market” as well as “shaping its sense of place- shopping in a market is something to be experienced. Materials, lighting and facilities all shape character and identity” (Cross river partnership, 2014, p. 40). They mention the need for the correct infrastructure to generate successful markets, such as electricity, water supply, storage, waste management, facilities, among others. They also mention that “this puts a premium on design that is resilient, compact and functional. Aesthetics and cost are important, too, of course” (Cross river partnership, 2014, p. 40).

The Retail Market Alliance (2009), in a report launched by the All Party Parliamentary Markets Group in the UK, claims that markets perform a ‘public good’ and contribute to “the social, environmental and economic well-being of the nation” (Zasada and Retail Markets Alliance, 2009, p. 20). These markets generate local employment and start-up opportunities, generate a ‘sense of place’, offer fresh products with less environmental impacts and can contribute to regeneration, economic development, tourism and community cohesion (Zasada and Retail Markets Alliance, 2009). Regeneris Consulting (2010) claim that markets have a key role in place-making and “can contribute significantly in increasing the appeal of town centres, a key focus for economic development efforts in London”. (Regeneris Consulting, 2010, p. 7). Watson and Studdert (2006) highlight the importance of markets in generating social relationships and building community, and they could contribute to “local choice and diversity in shopping as well as the vitality of town centres and to the rural economy” (Watson and Studdert, 2006, p. 1).

This research focuses on the work of market organisers and food traders in a group of markets in London. These street food markets are managed by a company or organisation that works as an intermediary between the landowners and the food traders. These market organisers are usually in charge of finding venues, picking traders, creating events, legal issues like obtaining permission and overseeing the set-up of the market, as well as promotional activities and marketing. They pick which traders can join their markets and charge them a pitch fee, that could be a flat rate or a percentage of their intakes per trading day.

These street food markets can be set up in different locations (Figure 1) and at different times such as lunch times on weekdays, or indeed once- or twice-a-week; or all day at weekends, or monthly markets that run through the whole year and other seasonal night markets. Most of these markets are outdoors, in private spaces with public access, although they can be located indoors or in semi-covered areas during the winter “and operate in the style of a hawker centre” (Parham, 2015, p. 106), like the cover markets in Singapore or Malaysia. In addition to their changing temporality, some of these markets also change locations each season depending on the availability of space and agreements with private landlords or developing companies. More details on the ethnographic work carried out working with market organisers and food traders can be found in Chapter 3.

1.4. Thesis structure

This thesis is divided into eight chapters; this introduction, a conceptual framework, a methodological chapter, four substantive empirical chapters that discuss the thesis argument with the data collected in the field, and the thesis conclusion. I will describe in detail the structure and content of each of the following chapters.

In **Chapter 2**, I propose a revision of the conceptual framework that is guiding this research. In this chapter I expand the theoretical discussion presented in the introduction, by examining and discussing three major themes in relation to the research aim and question: cultural economy, market performativity and making place. I explain how these theoretical ideas connect with my conceptualisation of curation.

The aim is to look at previous theoretical work on the study of markets and marketplaces, and to analyse the extent to which these ideas are productive to unpack the curatorial practices of creating markets and place in London's street food scene.

First, I examine the literature on the cultural economy (Du Gay and Pryke, 2002), and how this debate has expanded our understanding of the ways in which these two realms are intertwined, and how the study of micro-economies and practices is crucial to understanding the making of markets in the creative sector. I draw on work in the fields of advertising, fashion, and music, which depicts more specifically the kind of argument I follow with the idea of curation in cultural economies. I also examine the work of cultural intermediaries and their role as market actors. I argue that it is the use of taste and embodied knowledge (Bourdieu, 1984; Entwistle, 2009) as specialist skills that these actors use to perform their roles curating markets and place.

Second, I discuss the idea of market performativity, qualification (Callon, 1998) and cultural calculation (Slater, 2002a). Here I explore how my conceptualisation of curation is inspired by the idea of qualification. I refer to the work of Callon and colleagues (Callon et. al. 2002; Callon and Muniesa, 2005), and its limitations. I introduce a critique of how this form of analysis could contribute to expanding our discussion of the making of markets when it is applied to the field of the cultural economies or cultural industries. For this purpose, I argue that the idea of cultural calculation is more appropriate to conceptualise curation, as it focusses on how economic and cultural decisions are intertwined in economic activity.

Third, in the final section of Chapter 2 I refer to the issue of curation as a form of qualification or cultural calculation to make place. I examine the current ways in which marketplaces are studied from the field of urban studies, and criticise the traditional placemaking approach, which is not particularly relevant or useful to understanding how place is being made from the work of actors in the field. I raise questions about assembling urbanism (McFarlane, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c; Farías, 2011; Blok, 2013), and the idea of urban assemblages (Farías and Bender, 2010) to develop an argument of how place gets qualified, performed and re-qualified in the curation of marketplaces in London. I also revise the extent to which the idea of urban assemblages is useful to explain not only the making and stabilising of place, but also to understand the context in which this curatorial process is possible. The critique is raised in relation to the

context in which these associations are established, and the political issues that curating place raises in the study of street food markets.

In **Chapter 3**, I discuss the ethnographic approach to the study of the curation of the street food scene in London. This methodological chapter explains the guidelines of my ethnographic work in terms of the strategies used to access and understand the field. In this case, I understand ethnography as a dialogical process in which my thick description gives room for actor's theorisations about their practices and their sense making of the context where they are situated. Approaching the field in a dialogical way, implies building concepts through findings in an inductive manner. The theoretical framework of the thesis works as a first approach that illuminates the development of a research question. This question has been formulated as a flexible research strategy that allows the development of other lines of inquiry and themes from the encounters with the participants in the field. In this case, this strategy was highly productive to reflect on and analyse the work of market organisers as curation. I use the idea of curation as a "sensitizing concept" (Blumer, 1954; van den Hoonaard, 1997) that emerges inductively from the field to describe the making of markets and place.

Working in a dialogical, inductive and relational way is a strategy to focus the ethnographic work, attending specifically to three elements in the field: practices, relationships and place. In terms of practices, participation and embodiment are necessary to look at working practices. This ethnographic work is conducted as a 'step-in-step-out ethnography' (Madden, 2010), where my presence in the field is as participant observer performing a job alongside my informants.

In terms of relationships, this research follows an "ANT sensibility" (Mol, 2010) or 'relational ethnography' (Desmond, 2014) approach, by following the actors and their relationships in the field. The discussion about this strategy explains the decision of moving from working with market organisers, to street food traders during fieldwork. The discussion follows the idea of the boundaries of the field, and how these expand once I find myself as an ethnographer, immersed in a series of connected networks between actors. This approach was useful in understanding the actors' associations and interdependence. It is also to look at the field and curation as a dynamic process, where actor's practices shape and change markets and place.

Ethnographic work is conducted in a series of different locations, and the field is being shaped and occurring in diverse localities. The collection of data was in this way changing and adapting to these circumstances. In this case, the locations where the ethnography took place emerged from the working practices of actors, depending on where markets were being set-up and moving to when seasons ended. This discussion explains the difficulty of defining the boundaries of the field, and how looking at practices and relationships in place is more productive than confining the ethnography to a single location.

Following the discussion of these themes, this methodology chapter describes the participants of this research and my relationship with them, as well as the data collection process carried out during in 2014 during nine months of conducting ethnographic fieldwork and qualitative interviews. This description includes details of the pre-fieldwork conducted; the negotiation of access with EAT-LONDON and market traders, and a description of the three stages of fieldwork: working with EAT-LONDON at their office and markets; working with food traders in different markets; and interviewing participants. In these stages, different data collection techniques were employed, mainly participant observation, but also exploratory visits or non-participant observation, informal interviews, conduction of a survey, and desk-based research to review media, social media, reports, and other studies. Finally, the methodology chapter raises issues of reflexivity and my positionality in the field. In this case, obtaining access and the changing of roles and identity are discussed, as well as ethical issues such as intrusion and confidentiality.

For analytical purposes, the following four empirical chapters in the thesis respond to both parts of the curatorial work described above, the curation of markets and the curation of place. Chapter 4 and 5 are more strictly connected with the idea of the curation of markets and the definitions of qualities to pick traders, as well as the performance of the quality of professionalism in these markets. Chapter 6 and 7 are connected with the curation of place and focus on the analysis of narratives of value and place, and the curation of the internal qualities of a marketplace as a brand experience.

Chapter 4 analyses the curatorial practices of market organisers by looking at the task of picking good traders to join their markets. In this chapter, the analysis contrasts the

narratives of market organisers when qualifying good traders for their markets, with the practice of picking and headhunting for traders. The discussion starts by looking at the narratives about the street food scene and market organisers' roles as curators. Informants explain how they started in their jobs and how they perceive themselves as value generators that create a set of standards and values that they aim to promote and protect. Ethnographic material from EAT-LONDON and interviews with other market organisers are then used to explain the cultural calculation process to determine professionalism as a definitional quality of a good food trader. These definitions of quality entail different elements like the quality of the food, a trader's personality and customer service skills, their entrepreneurial vision and ambitions, which intertwines social characteristics such as age, class and educational background.

These organisers' cultural calculations are put to work in the process of recruiting traders to join their markets. Here, curation is explained as a process of cultural calculation through which good traders are identified and selected to fit with organisers' ideas of professionalism. Finding traders to join their markets is a meticulous and subjective selecting process in which organisers look for these qualities on site when recruiting food traders. A process of re-qualification takes place once traders have been selected, and are then constantly evaluated for their performance selling at their markets. The discussion on curation expands to discuss how this curation process as cultural calculation entails the use of previous knowledge obtained 'on the job' (Entwistle, 2009) to make taste distinctions (Bourdieu, 1984). This embodied knowledge is practical and subjective, and based on assumptions about the social that include and exclude traders from participating in these markets. The curatorial process is analysed as a process of cultural calculation that is aimed at determining markets as cultural forms. These markets are made through the subjective disposition of market actors that create hierarchies in the scene. For example, when organisers pick traders according to characteristics such as age, class, cultural capital, education and entrepreneurial flair.

Chapter 5 analyses how the curatorial work of cultural calculation made by market organisers is experienced and enacted by food traders. The chapter shows how this process entails tensions and conflicts when traders work to adapt or resist organiser's demands to trade at their markets. In this case, I show how traders use their cultural

capital and embodied knowledge of the scene to create business strategies that allow them to align their businesses with organisers' distinctions of quality and professionalism. These strategies are mainly focussed on traders' capacity to create a personal narrative about their business. They need to sell the pitch about their career change from a profit-making activity to one that allows them to pursue their passion, and the transformative experience of becoming an entrepreneur. Traders also need to work on their affective labour performance to serve and conduct their business, demonstrating care for their product, in the sourcing, cooking and serving of food. Traders also need to enact creativity to shape and renew their food offer or establish partnerships to bring in new value to these markets. This process is difficult and some traders fail to get in when they don't possess the necessary cultural or social capital of the scene to understand the curatorial process and its relevance; some of them also struggle to keep themselves fit for these markets and to continue being called to trade at these places or events. This enactment of professionalism depicts some of the consequences of the curatorial process as a mechanism for inclusion and exclusion of people to participate in these markets. It shows how values are defined and established by organisers and enacted by traders, consolidating and reinforcing the exclusionary effects of the curatorial work in this scene.

In **Chapter 6**, the analysis focuses on curators' narratives about place as value. Here, I show how markets are instrumental for the generation of place. I argue that the curation of marketplaces reveals that organisers have an important role as makers of place. Organisers have different visions about how their markets can create or transform places and how these are experienced, all of them agree that their markets can add value to the urban landscape, but in different ways. Some organisers have a vision of their markets as a form of tactical urbanism, to activate areas with a renewed symbolic value by creating a new narrative for different locations. Other organisers see their markets as a community building strategy, where markets are being used mainly by Councils, as an add-on for their regeneration projects, where neighbours could meet and socialise. Differently from these ideas, some organisers define their markets as a tool to create commercial spaces, in this case street food markets are seen as a value generation mechanism aiming to enhance the offer of urban development companies; which serves a form of distinction in their real estate offering. Markets are

also narrated as useful for creating entertainment destinations and the generation of brand experiences, in this case the curation of markets creates places for socialising and bringing audiences together.

Along with these different conceptualisations of the relationship between markets and place, organisers need to align these visions with other urban actors. Here, establishing relationships with landowners, developers and Councils is highly relevant for finding appropriate locations for their markets. Market organisers use their economic and cultural knowledge to negotiate these definitions of value with landowners, developers and Councils. In this case, there needs to be an alignment of values and business strategies in order to curate marketplaces in different locations. These ideas of place are calculated and evaluated according to the necessities of organisers and other urban actors. Market qualities are determined and adapted to include certain actors as partnering organisations and as audiences.

This chapter focuses on the identification and negotiation of the economic and cultural value of these marketplaces, with urban actors who own or manage the space. The curation of markets as place entails the definition of specific qualities and purposes for these places to transform a location, or to bring in certain groups to these places. This negotiation and alignment of values shows how private actors have a role in changing the urban landscape; how their private interests, decisions and definitions have an important role in defining the options of use of place and value of different locations.

Following the discussion on the curation of marketplaces, **Chapter 7** analyses the curation process in terms of the internal qualities of place. The working practices of market organisers are described, to depict how the making of place on-site works. Organisers use their economic and cultural knowledge to qualify marketplaces in order for them to perform a brand experience. The curatorial work is described in the process of finding venues, setting up markets, sorting out food offerings, creating line-ups of traders, arranging the place with particular aesthetics, sensorial qualities, and atmospheres, and making these decisions according to their assumptions about audience and urban context. All these elements are curated carefully to create a brand experience that will give their markets an identity, differentiating these places from other commercial spaces or food businesses. The curation of marketplaces as brand experience needs to be stabilised and replicated in other locations; these curatorial

decisions are constantly re-evaluated so that these markets can keep their cultural form. This process is not exempt of complications, and the economic rationality to make business decisions, and the practicalities of making place, are accompanied by cultural distinctions to make decisions about style or aesthetics. The curatorial work is a balancing act of these knowledges so as to create markets with particular qualities, to use markets to create place. These curatorial distinctions for making place are carried out to create symbolic boundaries in these marketplaces, attempting to include certain actors like traders and audiences, while excluding others.

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis. In this chapter, I connect the research question with the theoretical discussions and empirical material analysed and discussed in the thesis. I explain the use of the native concept of curation as an analytical vehicle to unpack how markets and places are created in cultural economies. I explore how this conceptualisation of curation that is rooted in the practices from the field, differs from the use of curation in the arts or digital media context. The indiscriminate use of curation to define any organising practice is unproductive in understanding curatorial work as a social practice, with specific meanings and effects in the social.

The conclusion argues for the use of curation as a concept that demonstrates how economic and cultural distinctions are intertwined in the making of markets and place. It shows how markets and place are configured by different people and materialities, and emerge from multiple negotiations of value between actors in the field. In this case, I use the ethnographic material to create a definition of curation that is specific for this field, in an attempt to escape theoretical overgeneralisations about its definition.

This chapter also emphasises the effects of curation in the social, and how the analysis of working practices is useful to reveal and understand the assumptions, inclusions and exclusions that this process entails. The comparison between the narratives of market organisers, their working practices to create markets and place, and their relationships with traders, landowners, developers and Councils shows how the curatorial process works as an exclusionary practice.

The conclusion discusses the idea of the cultural economy, and the usefulness and limitations of the concept of qualification to define curation. It shows how this thesis

follows ideas about market performativity, but attempts to extend the analysis to show the political consequences of curation in the street food scene. Discussions about the cultural economy and the culturalization of the economy are used to describe inequalities in this field that are produced through curation.

The chapter also reflects on the idea of markets as being instrumental for the making of place, and how cultural economies connect with the analysis of space and place. There is a critique to the traditional idea of placemaking that obscures the non-traditional urban actors and their private interests in the making of place. The conclusion also discusses the extent to which the idea of urban assemblages is useful to describe the curation of marketplaces in the street food scene.

This final chapter looks back at the research question of *how is the street food scene in London being curated?* It explains how a definition of curation from actors' practices is a contribution to expand our understanding of the cultural economy, and the making of markets and place in a cultural scene. It also assists in our understanding of the implications of this process for the social. The conclusion then revises the possibilities for further research on curation in other fields of cultural production.

Chapter 2. Conceptual framework

2.1. Introduction

In this thesis, the curation of the street food scene entails a process of value generation carried out by cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu, 1984) in which they culturally calculate markets (Callon, 1998; Callon, Méadel and Rabeharisoa, 2002; Slater 2002a) and assemble marketplaces (Farías, 2010; McFarlane, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c) by putting together knowledge, people, objects, aesthetics and other materials that configure the scene. In this chapter, I review the relevant contemporary literature that informs my research question and argument on the curation of street food markets. In this conceptualisation of curation, I draw on literature from the field of cultural economy and the study of cultural intermediaries in various areas of cultural production; as well as looking at market performativity and the idea of qualification and cultural calculation. Furthermore, I am connecting the curation of marketplaces with ideas of placemaking and the formation of urban assemblages. These areas of debate and its connection with my understanding of curation will be presented and discussed as follows.

Firstly, I begin with the debate on the cultural economy (Du Gay and Pryke, 2002) on which my thesis is positioned. This is crucial because it expands our understanding of the making of markets in the creative industries by looking at business practices from a microeconomic perspective. For this purpose, I draw on insights mainly in the fields of advertising, branding, and fashion about how cultural and economic decisions are made. Research on these areas inform my inquiry on the curation of street food markets, especially the extensive body of work on the role of cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu, 1984) as market actors (Entwistle, 2009; McFall, 2002; Smith Maguire and Matthews, 2012). I show how these discussions about intermediaries and market actors are useful to conceptualise market organisers' use of taste and embodied knowledge, as well as economy and cultural calculations when curating markets and place in the street food scene.

Secondly, I argue that we need to revise the field of study of market performativity (Callon, 1998; MacKenzie and Milo, 2003; Callon and Muniesa, 2005; Muniesa et. al.,

2007; MacKenzie et. al., 2008; Cochoy, 1998, 2007; Cochoy et. al., 2010) to conceptualise the curation of street food markets from the working practices of market organisers. For this purpose, I use the concepts of qualification (Callon, 1998) and cultural calculation (Slater, 2002a; Ariztía, 2015) as analytical tools to describe and analyse the practices of curation of street food markets. To this end, the work of Michel Callon and colleagues (Callon et. al. 2002; Callon and Muniesa, 2005) on the making of markets is vital, but I also bring out its limitations when used to investigate markets in the cultural economy. I introduce the idea of cultural calculation (Slater, 2002a; Ariztía, 2015) as a more appropriate conceptual tool to discuss how economic and cultural decisions are intertwined in the curation of markets in the street food scene.

A third debate necessary to contextualise the curation of the street food scene relates to the making of place. Literature on the cultural economy and market performativity rarely touches upon cultural calculation and placemaking, and for my conceptualisation of curation of the street food scene, a discussion about the making of place is relevant. There is extant literature in urban studies and urban planning on placemaking and markets (Parham, 2009, 2012, 2015; Watson, 2009; Watson and Studdert, 2006), as well as literature on creative industries and cities (Gibson and Kong, 2005; Pratt, 2009; Evans, 2009; Flew, 2010; Landry, 2000; Oakley, 2004; Dovey et. al. 2016; Hesmondhalgh and Pratt, 2005). Discussions in these areas mainly focus on the possibilities for creating or changing urban or cultural policy, and raise issues such as the value of public space, conviviality and sociability or growing entrepreneurial and economic opportunities through placemaking. Although, this work is illuminating to understand how planning institutions value markets and cultural activities and generalise on their effects for urban space, it lacks explanatory power to address how place is made from practice. My understanding of curation placemaking is more aligned with how assemblage thinking or assemblage urbanism (McFarlane, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c; Farías, 2011; Blok, 2013) conceptualise place. I consider the idea of assemblage or urban assemblage (Farías and Bender, 2010) to be particularly important to explore curation as the making of place in practice as a localised urban form. Although this body of work has raised criticism (Brenner, Madden and Wachsmuth, 2011; Tonkiss, 2011), especially for its proposal of a new ontology for

urban studies, I will show the potentialities of using this approach for the curation of marketplaces. I argue that the curation of marketplaces entails the assembling of heterogeneous and dispersed elements that need to be enacted and stabilised to perform a brand experience and identity. The idea of urban assemblages is pertinent to conceptualise the curation of marketplaces in the street food scene as the generation of localised urban form that reveals hierarchies and inequalities in the making of place.

2.2. Cultural economy

From the early 2000's there has been an emphasis on demonstrating the role of culture in understanding economic practices. In this regard, the debate on the relationship between culture and the economy has been raised as a new theorisation that overcomes this binary opposition and focuses on how these two realms intertwine, or how economic life has always been cultural. In this sense, the debate has focussed on analysing the cultural knowledge that is employed to make business decisions (Slater, 2002a; McFall, 2002). In the cultural economy discussions, markets or economic institutions are economic and cultural forms because these are being made by both economic and cultural knowledge and calculation (Slater, 2002a). In this sense, the research question on how the street food scene in London is being curated and the argument proposed in this thesis follows previous work on the cultural economy (Du Gay and Pryke, 2002) that looks at economic activity as a practice that is already cultural. It also engages with the importance of looking at microeconomic practices from an ethnographic perspective to reveal the mechanisms through which decisions and calculations are made.

In this thesis, I examine market organisers' working practices as microeconomic practices from an ethnographic perspective. In their work curating markets and place, economic and cultural knowledge is being used to make business decisions. This understanding of curation as an economic and cultural practice follows previous research on cultural intermediaries in fields such as advertising, branding, or fashion (McFall 2002; Moor, 2012; Entwistle; 2008). As with the work of these professionals,

my research on the street food scene curation as a working practice involves the use of cultural and economic elements to create businesses as markets and marketplaces.

According to Du Gay and Pryke (2002), a cultural economy perspective implies a reversal in how economic institutions and markets have been investigated; from looking at them as pre-existent objects to understanding them anthropologically by looking at how discourses constitute and frame them. Economic life is made not only through these discourses and beliefs, but also through practices that frame economic activity. McFall says that the categories of 'culture' and 'economy' are usually defined as abstract concepts, and "as properly separate and opposed 'spheres' or 'domains' of existence" (McFall, 2002, p. 534), as for example, in the proposition of the Frankfurt School about the commodification of culture and the development of the 'cultural industries' in this sense, where culture has been colonized by capitalism. McFall works towards a distinction of the dimensions of culture and economy not as separate realms, but as entangled in practice. Law (2002) proposes that because economic relevant activity has always been cultural, then the toolkit of cultural analysis can be used to study the material practices and the discourses that form economic activity. In this case, Law is focussed on studying practices, in investigating "the ordering of materially heterogeneous socio-technical economically relevant relations, their enactment and performance. It also becomes an investigation of the constitution of relevant forms of agency and subjectivity" (Law, 2002, p. 25). For this reason, the study of working practices of cultural intermediaries like designers, advertising and branding agents, as well as market organisers is relevant to look at the circulation of products and services, and how these actors perform economic activity.

For this research, the focus on curation is being put into the work of market organisers as cultural intermediaries. These are key actors to understand how curation is performed through their narratives and practice to make markets and marketplaces. In the following empirical chapters, I analyse market organisers' working practices from their discourses about the scene and their everyday jobs of organising, administering, selecting elements and putting these together in the markets they create. The working practices of market organisers serve as an example of how the attachment of meaning to certain products plays a role in how economic activity is conducted. These

intermediary occupations are a good case to examine the use of economic and cultural knowledge in practice to perform economic activity. “Rather than being solely an ‘economic’ or a ‘cultural’ phenomenon, service work is a contingent assemblage of practices built up from parts that are economic and non-economic (but always already cultural) and forged together in the pursuit of increased sales and competitive advantage” (Du Gay and Pryke, 2002, p. 3).

Research on the cultural economy proposes to focus on ‘hybrid’ disciplines like marketing, advertising, and accounting, to describe how these ‘make up’ the economy as well. The interest is on identifying ‘the economy’ as an object that can “then be deliberated about and acted upon” (Du Gay and Pryke, 2002, p. 2). For example, McFall uses case studies from the field of advertising, which is “precisely the sort of institution which, in merging economic objectives with cultural knowledges, acts to combine the economic ‘system’ with the cultural ‘environment’ in new ways” (McFall, 2002, p. 536). She claims that advertising practitioners not only use aesthetic distinctions for their work, but cultural knowledge as the introduction of meanings and values to their working process. In McFall’s research on advertising practitioners both economic and cultural dimensions merged in their working practices. McFall follows anthropological discussions about the interdependence of both realms which proposes that “economic practices are culturally defined whilst cultural meanings are shared and disseminated through economic activities in any recorded society” (McFall, 2002, pp. 547-548). In this idea, culture constitutes economic activity and this is clear when we look at it as material practice and not as abstract things.

In this thesis, I argue that the curation of street food markets works in a similar way to these hybrid disciplines, where market organisers as cultural intermediaries use both economic and cultural knowledge to perform economic activity. In the case of this thesis, market organisers have a strong inclination to manage relationships in the market, between products and consumers when curating markets and place. Organisers use their position in the field, taste, cultural capital, practical knowledge about organising markets as well as economic knowledge to make business decisions, when picking traders to join their markets (see Chapter 4) or finding venues to set up their markets (see Chapter 6 and 7). With this research, I argue that the curation of

street food markets is an example of how economic activity is performed through cultural distinctions. With the study of street food markets, it is possible to conceptualise curation as the performance of economic activity with the use of cultural knowledge, and market organisers as advertisers, or marketers are key actors in bringing these two realms together.

2.2.1. Cultural intermediaries

Until recently, there has been little research on the role of intermediaries in the food industry (Ocejo, 2013) or related services. Most recent research on cultural intermediaries has focussed on traditional areas of cultural production like music, art, fashion, and occupations like advertising, design and branding. However, in the past few years there has been a growing interest in looking at these intermediary occupations given the development of an industry based on 'lowbrow' taste in cuisines. There has been a rise in the value of artisanal and local products as a critique to corporations, with a concern for economic, political, moral, environmental and health issues. There has been also a change in occupational identity in workers in this sector that work to add value and meanings to products and lifestyle services. My research contributes to this line of inquiry by looking at market organisers of street food markets as cultural intermediaries that perform a role of taste making and market framing through their working practices.

In the making of markets and place, curation is performed by actors whose working practices resemble the work of cultural intermediaries in terms of their use of taste and cultural capital in making business decisions. In the case of market organisers, they perform curation by using their knowledge of the street food scene, or previous cultural capital and taste, to make economic decisions about the choice of food, traders, place, style and brand of their markets. In this research, the use of cultural capital is relevant for the performance of curation as it is being used to generate distinction for these markets, and to differentiate them from other forms of food retailing or street food trading.

In the contemporary study of cultural intermediaries two main theoretical inspirations have guided research in this field. There has been research that follows the work of

Pierre Bourdieu (1984) and attends to the role of these professionals in attaching and creating meanings and symbolic value in cultural production (Hanquinet and Savage, 2015). And there is another body of work that deals with the study of cultural intermediaries as market actors and “professional qualifiers of goods (Callon et. al., 2002: 206).” (Smith Maguire and Matthews, 2013, p. 15). Although, these approaches derive from different ontological perspectives, they are useful when combined to make sense of the generation of markets and marketplaces as both economic and cultural entities. In this research, I combine these approaches to focus on organisers’ professional expertise through curation, as a value generation process that requires cultural capital, taste and embodied knowledge, but that at the same time formats and qualifies markets.

The study of cultural intermediaries is relevant because it allows a critical evaluation of how creative work is carried out in contemporary cultural economies. It is useful to investigate intermediaries’ role, or impact of their work in the process of value generation in the cultural sector. Cultural intermediaries work to “implement abstract institutional policies and operationalize intangible cultural values” (Smith Maguire and Matthews, 2013, p. 21). For this reason, an investigation on the working practices of market organisers as cultural intermediaries raises a critique of how legitimacy is produced and how markets are shaped in certain ways. Cultural intermediaries contribute to defining or re-defining markets, products and consumption relationships. They also have a role in the formation and reproduction of discourses and meanings about cultural production, “making their market devices and decisions credible to those in elite positions in a chain, who control the allocation of resources or distribution of information” (Ibid, pp. 25-26). Therefore, more research is needed on cultural intermediaries, especially with a focus on how “goods, devices and dispositions are made manifest and modified in particular cultural contexts, be that in terms of new occupations, new goods or new markets” (Ibid., pp. 26-27). According to Smith, Maguire and Matthews (2013), there is a need for further research on the material practices of intermediaries and their work of attachment of product qualities and consumers. There is also a need for more research on ‘professionalization strategies’, and the mechanisms for acquiring and reinforcing taste and position in their occupational networks.

In this research, I try to shed light on the knowledge and practices of market organisers and food traders, considering the formation of taste, and how specific forms of cultural capital are used (Savage and Hanquinet, 2012; Naccarato and Lebesco, 2012). I use Bourdieu's conceptualization of cultural intermediaries as a provocation to understand consumer cultures, and "the role of cultural intermediaries in generating and legitimating new taste regimes" (Smith Maguire and Matthews, 2013, p. 23). Bourdieu's work serves as a starting point to study "how tastes are formed, legitimated and continue to develop" (Ibid., p. 24). In cultural industries or scenes, cultural intermediaries generate value and mediate taste through their habitus (Bourdieu, 1984), in their different encounters with producers and consumers (Entwistle, 2009). In this sense, I draw on the notion of cultural intermediaries as *taste makers* (Bourdieu, 1984), as has been previously discussed on studies in the sociology of consumption (Du Gay et. al., 1997; Featherstone, 1991) and in economic and cultural sociology (Callon et. al., 2002). These studies use the term *taste makers* as those who "perform the tasks of gentle manipulation" of taste (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 365).

Bourdieu's approach to cultural intermediaries and cultural production is relevant for this thesis, especially in relation to taste making, how expertise and legitimacy are obtained, and the idea of cultural capital and dispositions. Although, Bourdieu's work on this issue was pursuing a class analysis of an emerging semi-bourgeois group to understand upwards and downwards social mobility, my aim using these relates to how people in these occupations conduct their professional practice. By following the practices of cultural intermediaries, my research contributes to understanding how taste is developed and expressed in the work of market organisers and food traders. It contributes to understand how their habitus, cultural capital and subjective dispositions are linked with their jobs or occupations (Nixon, 2006, 2013) and cultivated in their everyday life as "aesthetic dispositions" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 141).

In Bourdieu's account of cultural intermediaries, the definition of habitus as a structuring practice but also as a practice being structured by it, represents a vital analytical element to explain their actions. Habitus organises practice; it "is both the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgements and the system of classification (*princippium divisionis*) of these practices" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170). It is

performed through reservoirs of cultural capital transmitted mainly through family generations, which can take the form of embodied symbolic features (mind and body dispositions), objectified cultural forms (material elements) or institutionalised properties (as academic qualifications) (Bourdieu, 1986) and can be converted into other forms of capital (economic capital, social capital).

“In Bourdieu’s theory, cultural capital is a relational effect of a social field. In this field, capital is created, circulated and reconverted into other forms of capital, producing social profit as social positions and reproducing social stratification and power in society (Bourdieu, 1986). In the case of cultural intermediaries, they develop this cultural capital as taste, as “the capacity to discern aesthetic values” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 474); taste is an “acquired disposition to 'differentiate' and 'appreciate'” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 466), to make distinctions in order to have a social orientation and place in the social structure. To define cultural intermediaries as “tastemakers” in different fields is to describe their practice as shapers of production and consumption. Therefore, in the music industry they are described as “gatekeepers between bands, producers and audiences (Negus, 2002); in fashion mediating tastes and identities of designers and models (Entwistle, 2009)” (Arriagada, 2014, p.p. 22-23).”

These tastemakers contribute to the definition and development of the boundaries that enclose and give identity to the field and create different values and status within it. An interesting point in Bourdieu’s analysis of cultural intermediaries is the ability to create and legitimate new taste, the “canonization of the non-legitimate” (Bourdieu, 1984: 326) or the capacity to differentiate and form new fields or styles and to keep them independent from mainstream trends. This is particularly relevant for the emergence of new styles in music (indie), crafts (do it yourself) or food (artisanal, street food) to differentiate cultural scenes. That is to say, they act as “shapers of tastes and inculcators of new consumerist dispositions among the wider population’ (Nixon 2003: 25)” (Entwistle, 2009, p. 154).

According to Lash and Urry (1993), the role of cultural intermediaries’ is to attach meanings and values to particular goods and services through framing. This includes the definition of goods and services, qualifications, and negotiations of value. In this sense, framing is a form of expertise (habitus, cultural capital, dispositions and preferences, knowledge, are used) aiming to produce impact, influence others (Smith

Maguire and Matthews, 2012; Woo, 2012) and allow for participation in different networks of value. In Bourdieu's perspective, habitus organises practice. It is performed through reservoirs of cultural capital transmitted mainly through family generations, which can take the form of embodied symbolic features (mind and body dispositions), objectified cultural forms (material elements) or institutionalised properties (as academic qualifications) (Bourdieu, 1986), and can be converted into other forms of capital (economic capital, social capital). However, in the street food scene market organisers' habitus and cultural capital are not linked with traditional forms of highbrow cultural capital as in Bourdieu's (1984) thesis. In this thesis, organisers perform curation by using a different set of knowledge and cultural dispositions that are linked with contemporary forms of elite or upper class consumption. In curation, there seems to be a use of emergent forms of cultural capital (Prieur and Savage, 2013; Friedman et. al., 2015), in which the organisers' position in the street food scene allows them to develop a taste that is eclectic and open to a diversity of cuisines and food consumption, as a new form and expression of cultural distinction.

Bourdieu's original idea of cultural intermediaries "presents a static notion of the intermediary" (Smith Maguire and Matthews, 2013, p. 38). I consider that the formation of taste and acquisition of cultural capital by cultural intermediaries is a dynamic process, and can develop and fluctuate through the life course or career path or through other interactions with people and objects in different times and places. These skills develop through a combination of cultural capital and "job training and experience that can only be acquired inside the market" (Entwistle, 2009, p. 13). According to Entwistle, this substantial cultural and economic knowledge or forms of "capital" (Bourdieu, 1984) includes economic rationality, non-cognitive skills to make sense of business and also the sensual or embodied knowledge which is necessary to make calculations in aesthetic markets. In other creative industries, such as fashion, cultural intermediaries' habitus is described as "performative knowledge, signalling that market actors have the appropriate embodied understanding" (Entwistle, 2009, p. 42) of their fields. Cultural intermediaries need to be rooted in the field, with particular cultural and economic knowledge and aesthetic awareness to make taste distinctions. In this thesis, embodied knowledge obtained by working in the field is relevant to

analyse the decision-making process of market organisers' curatorial practices when formatting markets, or making place for their audiences.

In the curation of street food markets, organisers' embodied knowledge of the scene is particularly relevant to differentiate their markets and marketplaces from other forms of food consumption or food retail, and to work towards curating markets with singular qualities and brand identities. This ability to make distinction is what Bourdieu defines as taste making, or making taste-informed decisions in a field of cultural production as "acquired disposition to 'differentiate' and 'appreciate'" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 466). Cultural intermediaries as tastemakers contribute to the definition and development of the boundaries that enclose and give identity to the field where they operate and create different values and statuses. An interesting point in Bourdieu's analysis of cultural intermediaries is the ability to create and legitimate new taste, the "canonization of the non-legitimate" (Bourdieu, 1984: 326) or the capacity to differentiate and form new fields or styles, and to keep them independent from mainstream trends. This is particularly relevant for the emergence of new styles in music (indie), crafts (do it yourself) or food (artisanal, street food) to differentiate cultural scenes.

In the curation of the street food scene, Bourdieu's approach to cultural intermediaries is useful to analyse market organisers' positions in the scene, and how their working practices depend on their taste, personal involvement and acquisition of embodied knowledge about how street food markets are formed. Organisers as cultural intermediaries also have an important role in transforming the street food scene into a culturally differentiated field of distinction, that is different from other forms of food consumption and street trading, and that aims to appeal a young, middle-class audience.

However, a Bourdieusian approach to cultural intermediaries has its limitations when analysing the curation of street food markets. Curation is a process that involves the use of taste and cultural capital to differentiate a scene, but it also entails economic activity that uses cultural and economic knowledge with the purpose of making markets and marketplaces. There are authors that are more critical about the validity and usefulness of the concept of cultural intermediaries inspired in Bourdieu's ideas of analysing cultural economies. These scholars, inspired by the work of Michel Callon

(1998), propose to shift the focus from looking solely at meaning attachment and symbolic work, to the study of material practices in the work of cultural intermediaries. This critique is useful to understand curation as a process that is not only about meaning making and distinction in the scene, but that is also a working practice that makes markets through different forms of cultural calculation. For example, McFall (2013) suggests that cultural intermediaries are just one actor among many others involved in the process of qualification of goods, that not only involve generation of symbolic value and meanings, but product qualification and singularization. McFall claims that cultural intermediaries' role as key actors in the making of markets in contemporary economies has been understudied. My thesis aims to add insights into their role as market actors by analysing the curation of markets and marketplaces through an attentive description of organisers' working practices.

McFall's proposition raises questions about the routinized work of framing and qualification of goods, or what forms of knowledge or cultural capital are employed in the performance of expertise by these actors. Smith Maguire and Matthews (2013) call for a 'practice-oriented approach' that pays attention to tools, techniques, devices and their implementation, and what kind of disposition, rationalities, and aspirations are involved in market actors' practices. These authors claim that material practices also entail the "performance of expertise and accomplishment of influence" (Smith Maguire and Matthews, 2013, p. 25). This means performing as an authority to make markets, understand consumers' desires, and singularise good and services accordingly. The source of authority in this performance varies and depends on reputation, formal education, or embodied knowledge or habitus of their profession. In this thesis, market organisers as cultural intermediaries have an embodied knowledge of the field, and use their taste and cultural capital to perform cultural distinction, as well as to singularise their markets using economic and cultural knowledge.

In the curation of markets and places, organisers are authorities with an expertise to define their product according to their understanding of the scene, including picking traders and places for specific audiences. Businesses in the cultural economy need forms of economic and cultural expertise, and rely on workers' competences on taste, trends and consumers' preferences to design products and services for market niches.

This is particularly true in small businesses, where there is not such a clear division of labour and the design and marketization of products happens simultaneously. This process results in a combination of “creative talent, technical skill, economic calculation and cultural knowledge” (Tonkiss, 2002, p. 118). Intermediary professionals not only find markets for specific audiences, but imagine and created them through a process of qualification to singularise these goods for specific groups of consumers (Tonkiss, 2002). In this thesis, I examine the curation of street food markets through the intermediary role of market organisers generating distinction, but also making markets. This means, on the one hand understanding their aesthetic and subjective dispositions of taste to make economic and cultural decisions, and to look at their working practices as framing and qualifications of markets and place on the other.

Although combining these approaches on cultural intermediaries seems difficult given the differences in their conceptualizations of the social, the work of both Callon and Bourdieu coincides with the necessity of observing markets from practice. For example, Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is useful in looking at the embodied practices of market actors, while Callon’s concept of qualification and mediation is relevant to understand the complexity of the process of value generation in markets. Researching cultural intermediaries as market actors is relevant for my definition of curation of markets and place as an intertwined economic and cultural process. A combination of Bourdieu and Callon’s approaches to the study of cultural intermediaries is not new, and it has been used before in previous research, for example in Entwistle’s (2009) study of fashion retailers and model bookers. She illustrates how these actors as cultural intermediaries gain and develop their taste and cultural capital through their work, and their personal and affective investment in the production of markets. In the process of selecting and making distinctions, Entwistle interrogates how these decisions are being made, how cultural intermediaries do what they do and how they know what they know. Their choices are not just an automatic response to the demands of clients, but they also “qualify and requalify” products. In this sense, they are “instrumental” (Entwistle, 2009, p. 18) in the generation of value in particular products, in this case, cultural and economic value.

For the street food scene, my understanding of curation through the work of market organisers as cultural intermediaries is similar to Entwistle’s (2009) account of fashion.

Market organisers make use of different kinds of knowledge to curate their markets, when for example picking new traders to join, or new places to set up their markets. They also share and communicate their decisions to other actors in the field, circulating ideas and trends about the street food scene. Additionally, market organisers envision a specific kind of audience for their markets in different locations, and curate the food offer and place qualities according to their understanding of clients wants and needs. My research on the curation of street food markets contributes the merging of these different approaches to the study of cultural intermediaries, focussing on the use of taste and cultural capital, as well as considering the practices for singularizing products and making markets. The synergies between both frameworks contribute to a much richer understanding of curation as a process that creates markets and places.

In addition to research on fashion, this line of argument about the importance of looking at cultural intermediaries as market actors is supported by studies on advertising and branding. McFall's research (2009, 2013) uses an economic sociology framework for the study of cultural intermediaries, that allows her to observe the interdependencies between producers, consumers and products, as well as the longer chain of actors and their relations to accomplish a mediation task. McFall claims that traditionally the study of cultural intermediaries focusses on intermediary occupations that are 'symbolic', because the idea of aesthetic is seen as a synonym with culture. And there is a tendency to overemphasise the meaning making and taste making functions, leaving underexplored the market-making tasks that intermediaries have as relevant market actors. This traditional understanding of intermediary occupations dismisses other professions that are not only "channelling meanings to consumers" (McFall, 2013, p. 64), but have an active role in processes of qualification of goods to introduce them to markets. A move towards 'product qualities' rather than meanings and symbols as the only preoccupation of intermediaries represents a turn to a different kind of understanding about the relationship between production and consumption. In my research, the focus on curation aims to analyse market organisers' intermediary role in creating distinction, but also their relevant role in the qualification of goods or services to create their markets and marketplaces. In the curation of street food markets, market organisers are involved in a dynamic process of product

qualification that involves stabilising their markets' qualities and linking them with their potential niche market of consumers in the scene. In this research, I am looking at curation as a process in which market organisers as market actors mediate between a series of actors and elements to curate markets and places with distinct qualities.

In a similar vein as what has been proposed by McFall in the case of advertising, Moor's work on branding (2003, 2007, 2008, 2012, 2013) deals with the materiality and socio-technical aspects of the work of cultural intermediaries. In branding and design agencies, part of their work is to create or change a company's brand through the coordination of different material elements as a form of 'media' or point of contact with their audiences, and to create new opportunities for business growth. In this case, branding is a distinctive intermediary occupation because it uses professionals like designers to work on "the material culture of a brand and to translate brand values from one space or material to another" (Moor, 2013, p. 102). Their work focusses on intervening and offering changes to product, retail spaces, company offices, and other office materials, like uniforms, stands, stationery or their website aiming at delivering a 'design coherence'. In this particular task, branding agencies identify values that the company seek to communicate to their audience to then produce design proposals that "align these values with their material extensions and embodiments so that they become mutually reinforcing" (Ibid., p. 103). For example, they create a sales point and suggest changes in clothing, colour palettes, furniture, interior design or music. Similarly, market organisers curate marketplaces to perform a brand identity (see Chapter 6 and 7). This curatorial work is carried in a consistent manner, where aligning values with developers or Councils, as well as consumers, will result in a more profitable and prestigious business.

Branding agencies work to establish associations between materiality and values, emotions or ideas. In this industry, this is called 'product semantics' and gives the brand its personality. To achieve the correct connection or semantics between companies and these values, branding professionals do not always conduct specialised research to target an audience and reach a decision. According to Moor, to some extent these decisions about materiality and values are contingent, unstable and imprecise, and these professionals often "overestimate their capacity to understand the tastes and preferences of a target audience, and base their decisions on personal

experience, speculation or stereotype” (Moor, 2013, p. 107). In this sense, professionals use their own habitus as a point of reference to build these associations between companies and consumers, who tend to share their demographic characteristics. Something similar is observed in the case of this thesis; in my research market organisers usually use their embodied knowledge of the scene, and cultural assumptions about potential value of certain geographical areas, to locate their markets, or about the audience they attempt to bring into their street food markets, their taste, desires or needs. These assumptions are used when for example picking food traders to join their markets (see Chapter 4 and 5), or finding suitable venues for their marketplaces (see Chapter 6).

This use of speculation and stereotypes of consumers, or imagining audiences has been mentioned before in research in other cultural fields (Friedman, 2014; Cronin, 2004). For example, Cronin (2004) describes this self-referential process in the design of advertising campaigns, where practitioners use their own experiences as consumers to select elements to be introduced in their ads. Cronin claims that this relation “between practitioners’ dual status as producers (of ads) and consumers (of ads and products) reproduces social divisions and hierarchies” (Cronin, 2004, p. 353) in the content that is generated with their work. Similarly, in Friedman’s (2014) research on comedy scouts, the selection of new comedians to bring to the public attention in TV, radio or in live productions is based on brokers’ strong class assumptions about audiences and value, reproducing the divisions in the field and associating particular comedy styles with cultural distinction. These constructions are “defined in terms of their own judgments of aesthetic quality” (Friedman, 2014, p. 32), or by identifying themselves with their audiences, when for example they select “someone like me/us” (Ibid.), using their own taste as the right measure of their choices. It is also possible to observe this in my research, in which market organisers curate markets and place to produce cultural differentiation for an audience that shares similar characteristics with them in terms of race, class and educational background. For example, in the task of recruiting new traders for their markets, organisers focus on finding people who fit into their business. They look for young, white middle-class and educated food entrepreneurs to bring to their markets (see Chapter 4 and 5) that could perform the intended brand of their markets.

In this sense, Moor suggests that the literature on cultural intermediaries could benefit from more intense empirical studies observing the work that is conducted in sites like branding consultancies in different contexts, to critically understand the working practices of cultural intermediaries. This emphasis on materialities, product semantics and imagined audiences is important in the analysis of the curation of street food markets. In many ways, the working practices of market organisers resemble the practice of advertising and branding agencies when defining values and associating them to materiality and place, as well as when organisers use their own aesthetic judgements, taste and subjective dispositions to identify imagined audiences for their markets. Their work as cultural intermediaries focus on producing distinction for their markets, and exclusion by aiming at congregating a niche market of middle class people as food traders (see Chapter 4) and as clients for their markets.

2.3. Market performativity

As mentioned in the previous section, a fruitful path for the analysis of cultural economies results from looking at cultural intermediaries as key market actors. This shift requires conceptual tools from the field of study of market performativity (Callon, 2007) to make sense of economic and cultural practices in the formatting of markets. My understanding of curation entails looking at cultural intermediaries' taste and distinction-making in the scene, as well as their use of economic and cultural knowledge to make markets. To study market formation I am inclined to use ideas on market performativity that look at market formation based on the working practices of market actors from a microeconomic perspective. I argue that a sole focus on taste and cultural capital, or on qualification and calculation, is unproductive to understanding the practice of curation. In this research, the idea of curation entails the use of both cultural capital in market organisers' jobs, and the performance of cultural calculations in business decisions to make markets and place.

According to Gregory (2014) the Callon approach to study markets is a constructive critique to neoclassical economics and moves from the problem of rational choice to the analysis of market calculation and performativity. In this thesis, concepts from the

field of market performativity like calculation or qualification, and the use of market devices, are relevant to look at the curation of markets and places as an activity that entails a series of contingent and interrelated practices that are produced simultaneously by economic and cultural distinctions. A summary of Callon's approach to the study of markets can be found in his recent work on economization or marketization (Çalışkan and Callon, 2010), where the main features and mechanisms involved in market formation are discussed. Markets "organize the conception, production and circulation of goods" (Çalışkan and Callon, 2010, p. 3); markets are an assemblage that deploys rules, devices, metrological systems, logistics, discourses, scientific or technical knowledge and embodied skills. Markets create spaces for power struggles given the multiple definitions on how to value goods and establish prices.

Processes of 'marketization' or the generation of markets are diverse, and markets are not created homogeneously. There are multiple actors who can create markets, or engage in processes of marketization, like "firms, trades unions, state services, banks, hedge funds, pension funds, individual consumers and consumer unions and NGOs" (Ibid.). There are asymmetries on the calculative capacities of these agents, and there are unequal powers on whose valuation gets to be imposed in the market. This multiplicity of calculative agencies also includes non-human agents and Çalışkan and Callon consider many elements, such as "the product presentation, the spatial organization of shelves, the labels, shopping carts and lists can all be analysed" (Çalışkan and Callon, 2010, p. 12).

The curation of street food markets can be analysed following ideas from the process of marketization, especially in relation to the concept of calculation or qualification to examine the operations that market actors perform to curate markets and places in practice. In this thesis, curation has been defined as the work carried out by cultural intermediaries where they generate value through calculating or qualifying markets and marketplaces, assembling different elements like objects, people, aesthetics and ideas to configure the street food scene. The empirical findings of this research in the following chapters highlight the importance of understanding curation as process of market formation. For example, the process of picking traders indicates how market organisers make decisions about their business by evaluating and weighing up

different elements, that are economic and cultural, combining economic rationality to make a business with their taste and cultural knowledge about the street food scene.

2.3.1. Qualification

When examining the curatorial practices of market organisers in the making of markets and places, there are similarities with the use of the idea of qualification and re-qualification (Callon, 1998; Callon et. al. 2002) in market formation. Market organisers format the street food market scene through different calculations, measurements, decisions, and displays of objects, people and places in their markets. Although qualification seems to operate in the realm of culture, attachment and good singularization, Callon does not make a clear and strong distinction between calculation and qualification. However, I consider that the idea of qualification is more connected to the process of curation of the street food scene, because it highlights the qualitative elements in the calculative practices or working practices of market actors. In my conceptualisation of curation, Callon's work (1998) is useful to analyse how markets are constructed "or 'formatted' through the operations of a range of social actors, including economists, lawyers and marketing professionals" (Slater and Tonkiss, 2001, p. 111). These operations can be associations, relationships and strategies that actors use to calculate.

Callon et. al. (2002) describe the economy of qualities and the organization of economic markets as "inhabited by actors who are real professionals in product qualification and the profiling of goods, consumers are constantly prompted to question their preferences and tastes and, finally, through the explicit debates that implies, their own social identity" (Callon et. al. 2002, p. 212). The economy of qualities, the qualification of goods and the continuous and dynamic processes of qualification-requalification constitute one of the central matters in the organization of markets (Callon et. al. 2002). In this research, market organisers work as "real professionals in product qualification" when organising markets. In the street food scene, organisers curate markets and places by defining products, services, traders and

audiences continuously and using their previous knowledge and practical skills, testing and changing curatorial decisions according to markets' profitability.

In its first definition of calculation in *The Law of the Markets*, Callon (1998) was modelling a description for market transactions that refers mainly to quantitative or arithmetical calculations. Later on, in his work with other scholars (Callon et. al., 2002) and further work of colleagues (Cochoy, 2008) there is an intention to move towards more qualitative elements in calculative practices. Referred as 'qualculation' by Cochoy, it is defined as "quality-based rational judgements" (Cochoy, 2008, p. 17). In this depuration of the term, it is clear that qualification entails both quantitative and qualitative elements through different techniques, materials or devices. Callon and Muniesa (2005) discuss qualification with a specific focus on operations not only as arithmetical or mathematical, but as qualitative and "establishing distinctions between things or states of the world, and by imagining and estimating courses of action associated with those things or with those states as well as their consequences" (Callon and Muniesa, 2005, p. 1231).

This qualification process involves detachment or objectification, in which an element or entity is detached from its context or social connections to then be associated with others, and transformed to produce a new entity, as for example, an evaluation, a sum, an ordered list. Subsequently, a process of singularization is performed, where a product is evaluated as having specific qualities or properties that "represent a value for the buyer. This evaluation can be expressed as a price or a range of prices that the buyer is prepared to pay to appropriate the thing, that is, to become attached to it, to incorporate it into his or her world" (Ibid., p. 1233). This process of singularization, Callon defines as "the process the thing (...) is progressively transformed into a good (...) It becomes entangled in the networks of sociotechnical relations constituting the buyer's world" (Ibid., pp. 1233-1234). In sum, qualification transforms an element into a thing, while market agents adjust its properties and attach them to a consumer. In this thesis, a street food market is described as a calculative space where market organisers as calculative agencies, or market actors, have qualified goods, sorted and organised elements of their markets such as good food, good people or good place (see Chapter 4) and attach them to their expected niche audience.

This process of singularization or identifying a product's qualities requires the work of multiple actors or 'market professionals' like "marketers, packagers, advertisers, designers, merchandisers, and sellers" (Callon and Muniesa, 2005, p. 1234). These professionals have the role of qualifying products, which entails classification and sorting to make these goods both distinguishable and comparable to others. This singularization must produce a distinction, that could be materialised in, for example, "quality labels or, more generally, quality standards — that measure and objectify certain properties" (Ibid., p. 1235), these labels or standards are also called metrological networks. The operations that make a good calculable involve "the notion of distributed agency" (Ibid., p. 1236), where both human and non-human agents participate. In the curation of markets and place, this process of singularization could be exemplified by the effort that organisers put in differentiating their markets from other food retail companies, or other forms of cheap street food like greasy burgers and chips. Market organisers, in curating street food markets, work as market professionals that make their marketplaces comparable to others, like the case of EAT-LONDON and Vibes Feast (see Chapter 4), but distinguishable from others with lower status.

In the definition of this process of qualification, product properties need to be evaluated, defined and tested in order to distinguish it from others. This definition of a product and its standard is described as a process of "qualification-requalification" which aims to establish quality as a group of characteristics "stabilized at least for a while, which are attached to the product and transform it temporarily into a tradable good in the market" (Callon et. al. 2002, p. 199). In the case of this research, through their working practices market organisers as curators are constantly evaluating and defining the street food scene to make it distinguishable as a product. Market organisers curate markets according to a qualification process in which a definition of good traders (see Chapter 4) is needed to singularize the street food scene as a product. In this case, the definition of a good trader is continuously evaluated according to their performance in different marketplaces and a rotating line-up of traders is created (see Chapter 7).

2.3.2. Cultural calculation

The idea of qualification is useful to the study of market framing, but some nuances to this idea need to be introduced to explain how the curation of the street food scene is performed. The market performativity literature does not specifically address the cultural aspects that qualification entails, especially in the field of the cultural economy. In this thesis, I argue that curation is a specific form of qualification, the one that has been defined by Slater (2002a) as cultural calculation. Therefore, in this thesis curation is both defined as qualification as well as cultural calculation. Although, both concepts are not synonymous, I am using them both to address curation as the specific form of qualification that market organisers perform, which is different to the way in which qualification is used in formal economics. The process of curation entails both cultural assumptions and economic rationality. It could be better analysed and interpreted as a process of cultural calculation (Slater 2002), in which cultural knowledge and assumptions about the social, as well as economic rationality, intertwine when market organisers make business decisions to create markets and marketplaces.

Cultural calculation can be defined as the use of “different types of interpretative and cultural knowledge to qualify goods and consumers (...) advertising practices might be understood in terms of the manipulation of the ‘use value’ of goods; practices that involve an effort to connect products and potential consumers with cultural and social categories” (Ariztía, 2015, pp. 147-148). For example, McFall (2002, 2009) and Ariztía (2014, 2015) propose that the specificity of the work of advertising and marketing agencies needs to recognise the different kind of knowledges they use to connect goods with consumers and to circulate ‘cultural forms’ in these markets. According to this perspective, research on economic activity must be conducted from “the micro level of analysis” (Slater, 2002a, p. 59), from the perspective of social actors, who “cannot actually define a market or a competitor, let. alone act in relation to them, except through extensive forms of cultural knowledge” (Ibid.).

Developing the idea of cultural calculation, Slater (2002) uses advertising as a case study to propose that social actors use their cultural knowledge instrumentally to

make market decisions. Advertising has been seen traditionally as a 'cultural intervention' to the economic field. In this study, advertisers as market actors must resolve and manage complex situations to perform economic activity. Slater argues that the market is understood by them as a manipulable and malleable entity, that depends on actors' ideas and conceptualisations about their work, who are their competitors, what are they selling or how to choose the most adequate commercial strategy. For market actors to make economic decisions, they "cannot know what market they are in without extensive cultural calculation; and they cannot understand the cultural form of their product and its use outside of a context of market competition" (Slater, 2002a, p. 63). In the case of the curation of street food markets, organisers also deal and manage complex elements to create markets and places, like organising food provision and traders, finding venues, and thinking about the audience for each market location. Organisers make use of their cultural and embodied knowledge of the scene to perform economic activity.

Market actors as professionals work to define and conceptualise markets instrumentally as a market strategy. Their work is to define the boundaries of the market, what are the kind of goods that it contains, how to substitute them, and what kind of goods are excluded from these boundaries. In order to be a particular kind of economic institution, a market must also be a certain kind of culturally defined domain: "it depends on social categorizations of things as similar or not" (Slater, 2002a, p. 68). The definition of products, their values and meanings is not static, but dynamic and a result of a series of negotiations and contestation with other actors, "within complex power relations and resource inequalities" (Slater, 2002a, p. 72). Market actors use their cultural knowledge values and meanings to define products, and to stabilize them in order to transact them in the market. This process entails simultaneous calculation about the qualities of the product, the consumers who will buy it and the social context where these activities of consumption occur. In this conceptualisation of markets and goods, market actors need to read and interpret social context, which entails the product and its properties "that are designed, presented or perceived in particular cultural contexts" (Slater, 2002a, p. 74). They also need to understand the social context where the product will be needed and consumed; and to construct the product and its consumption in relation to social

actors, the group of people who will use them. For the curation of street food markets, organisers as market actors create market strategies for their markets to differentiate them from other food chains or markets. They calculate the qualities of their markets and places to make them distinctive, with good food, good people and a good place. Organisers use their cultural knowledge and interpret the context where their marketplaces are located, conceptualising their offering as different depending on if they are trading at, for example, Lewisham, Battersea or Dalston (see Chapter 7).

In the case of Slater' (2002a) research, advertisers as market actors are defined as quasi anthropologist, or sociologists who need to conceptualise things in terms of value and meanings. By looking at micro-economic practices and how economic activity is performed it is possible to overcome the binary distinction between culture/economy as overarching explanatory categories; "By investigating the ways in which these economic categories are constructed and acted upon, we can disaggregate the monoliths of 'culture' and 'economy' and produce theorizations that start from their internal relation within forms of social practice" (Slater, 2002a, p. 77). This thesis follows this premise and focusses on understanding curation from the working practices of market organisers, by looking at the detailed micro-economic decisions to create markets as products.

Similarly, in his study on the qualification of consumers by advertising agencies, Ariztía (2015) explored how insights are produced by these professionals through a process of cultural calculation in which different actors, devices and knowledges are mobilised. He studies and analyses how the category of 'consumer' is not a given, but created by the professional practice of advertising agencies. The literature on market professionals as cultural intermediaries does not particularly engage with how professional practices create markets. Ariztía is interested in exploring "how these practices might involve not only enriching but actually shaping the qualities of goods and consumers" (Ariztía, 2015, p. 146). He argues that the idea of intermediation does not acknowledge the active role that these market professionals have in framing goods and consumers, and even in the generation of new meanings about social class and social mobility (Ariztía, 2014). Ariztía (2015) proposes that it is more appropriate to look at these practices as 'mediation' that "involves transforming and shaping the nature of goods and consumers being connected" (Ariztía, 2015, p. 146). Following this

discussion, the role of market professionals in qualifying consumers relates to ideas from the sociology of markets, where market actors shape and produce economic entities like goods, consumers and market relations. For this reason, advertising professionals are defined not just as intermediaries between production and consumption, but “more as a central mediation that contributes to assembling market encounters” (Ariztía, 2015, pp. 146-147). This study on advertisers highlights the mediation role of market actors. In a similar way, market organisers curate street food markets by framing goods and consumers, and have a central role in how market encounters between food traders and customers are produced. For example, the relationship between traders and audience is not entirely spontaneous. As I will show in Chapter 4 and 5, there are clear examples of the professional work of cultural calculation that organisers perform to determine what kind of food is being offered, what kind of people can trade at these markets, and how trading should be performed to engage customers.

A different study that uses Callon’s ideas on calculation for market formation, and that is directly related with the case study of this thesis, is Pahk’s research (2017) on food truck markets in San Francisco. In this research, Pahk combined Butlers’ (2010) and Callon’s approaches to performativity to explain a process of requalification of a non-successful market, that attracted a new consumer demographic, from being a typically working class, Hispanic food alternative to a ‘middle-class subculture’ “through the articulation of new attachments and desires” (Pahk, 2017, p. 299). In this case study, the author explains that new young middle class traders joined the business in the Mission District, and changed the offer to organic and more elaborate cuisines. These vendors would also use social media to advertise their businesses and communicate their location. Before then, the market arrangements had a different ‘calculative agency’, “one that privileged cost and convenience over sophistication and ‘quality’” (Ibid., 2017, pp. 300-301); this new market scene had also a novel organisation, gathering mainly in street food fairs and not as solo entrepreneurs.

Pahk argues that this new market configuration was not only instrumental to feed people, but offered “‘participation’ or ‘experience’ or ‘scene’” (Ibid., p. 304). This new offering was rejecting fine dining by offering a fun and accessible alternative. However,

Pahk claims that these markets work on the basis of a class and race boundary, where participation was not extended to other forms of street food trading like hotdog vendors or burrito trucks. These markets were attracting a whiter and wealthier crowd than their predecessors. The stability of this new kind of street food market was given due to the existence of traditional forms of street food trading in the area, and this new experiment “was legible only because it was a variation on something already existing, but it was different enough to put the arrangements at risk (...) The devices certainly worked – the makeshift carts in combination with Twitter combined to requalify street food and ‘capture’ or constitute a new audience” (Ibid., pp. 306-307).

Pahk’s research in San Francisco shows similar findings to those I have found with my research into London’s street food scene. In this thesis, curation serves as the analytical tool to explain the changes in the configuration of these markets, that are aimed at more than feeding people for lunch time. These markets are curated to generate a brand experience that attracts a particular kind of customer, in this case a young middle class audience. A change to more elaborate cuisines, the location of marketplaces in areas with a high concentration of young professionals, or the use of social media, are all elements that both of these studies share. In London, a new market formation is possible due to the professional work of market organisers as market actors that curate markets and places as economic and cultural entities.

2.3.3. Critiques

Although in this thesis the idea of curation of markets and place follows the performativity approach to the study of markets, this approach has not been exempt of criticism. These critiques relate to the issue of market framing as problematic to understanding the context of market formation, and the relevance of other actors and structures involved in this process. After *The Laws of the Markets* was released, there was a series of discussions between Callon and Daniel Miller (Miller, 2002; Callon, 2005; Miller, 2005), specifically on the ideas of market framing and overflowing. In particular, Miller argues against Callon’s idea of disentanglement, cutting out or establishing boundaries in goods or services to stabilise and make them transactable in

the market. Miller states that Callon's model still proposes the economy as an abstract entity. As an alternative to focussing on *homo economicus* and disentanglements, Miller proposes that participants in market transactions are entangled subjects that use their values, knowledges and references to participate in the market. Instead of being a 'framed' scenario, market transaction is a moment of 'aesthetic totalization', when subjects are not taking certain variables and externalising the rest, but subjects value things as part of a group of multiple considerations, including values and representations that exceed the purely 'economic'. In this sense, Miller supports Polanyi's (1957) idea of embeddedness of the economy, where market encounters require complex calculations that are quantitative and qualitative.

For this thesis on the curation of street food markets, this criticism to the early market performativity program is relevant. In this thesis, I use the idea of qualification, and more specifically for my case study, of cultural calculation to understand curation as a process that includes market actors' use of cultural knowledge, values and representations to create markets and place. In here, the economic rationality and quantitative aspects of curation are as relevant as the qualitative elements that market organisers use to create markets and marketplaces. In curation, a combination of both economic and cultural knowledge is necessary for market actors to interpret the context in which their work operates. A variety of elements like actors involved, regulations, locations, and customer's needs are entangled, and cannot be separated when curating markets and place.

In a similar vein, other authors introduce a critique to the early performativity program and support the proposal of more recent work on marketization, which is more focussed to study the mechanisms for market formation and change. The author suggests that some theoretical parts of the performativity approach are important for the marketization program, but "other elements of it, which were also adopted, pose internal contradictions, and hinder it from becoming a full-fledged research program of markets that it set out to provide" (Pellandini-Simányi, 2016, p. 572). In this case, by following ideas from the performativity program too strictly, the analysis and outcome of studying how markets come about and evolve turns out to be too 'economic centric'.

Instead, Pellandini-Simányi proposes a ‘strong program of marketization’ where the inquiry starts from existing markets to analyse in retrospective the processes and agents that have formed them. In this case, it is possible that in certain markets “economic theories and ‘marketizing’ agents played a key role; whereas in other markets, other theories and other actors did” (Ibid., p. 574). This proposal highlights the importance of the empirical study of markets and their diversity, and traces the role of various agents and discourses, some of which could be economic. The author argues that in most cases, other non-economic actors are usually not included in Callon’s analysis, like for example, “the formation of consumer demand, the dynamics of the political context (unless it involves economic theories) or that of other non-economic agents, such as NGOs that often play a key role in market-making” (Ibid., p. 578). In this thesis, this proposal is considered when relating the curation of street food markets with the wider context in which marketplaces are formed. Especially for the case of the making of place, curation extends beyond purely economic concerns and connects with discourses and events that are happening in the urban realm, like regeneration programs in certain Boroughs, or developers’ strategies for commercial gentrification.

Besides these critiques to the conceptual elements of the approach of market performativity, another issue raised by some authors is its lack of politics. Liz McFall (2009) discusses the value of this ‘new’ new economic sociology approach, and refers to the ‘apolitical’ critique, especially when comparing it with research on the political economy. There is criticism of the intensive and specific attention to detail in the analysis of calculation in markets that tends to overlook major issues. To this McFall responds that the approach remains useful and relevant because it departs from making grand generalisations about fields studied before, and its virtue relies on “telling us about the distributed and material character of market processes specifically.” (McFall, 2009, p. 278). Taking this into consideration, in my analysis of the curation of the street food scene I am contributing to the generation a thick description of market processes to understand how the priorities, purposes, dispositions and skills of market actors are performed.

McFall stresses that the performativity program contribution is not banal, but “has practical and political purchase over the sort of normative generalisations

characteristic of prior sociological approaches to the promotion of consumption which made little, if any, attempt to describe market processes.” (McFall, 2009, p. 279). In the critique to ANT or in general to cultural economy of a lack of politics, McFall claims that it lacks “the right sort of politics” (McFall, 2009, p. 279) according to political economy, when for example, ignoring conditions of oppression in organisations or the general context where markets operate. In this case, the analysis of market formation although not aiming to tackle issues of economic justice, does provide politically informed insights on how economic life is made and through which kinds of agency. McFall recognises that description of markets that might seem mundane or unimportant promises to be useful by looking at embodiment and the performance of “market knowledge, skills and strategy” (McFall, 2009, p. 280).

In my analysis of the curation of the street food scene, issues of agency, uses of knowledge, relationships and hierarchies between multiple actors highlight the political implications of the making of markets and place. With a detailed description of the working practices of market organisers, their use of networks, and their ability to interpret and use the urban context, and to establish relationships with Councils and developers, it is possible to observe issues of power in the set-up of these marketplaces. My analysis of curation is politically informed, and it is aimed at exploring how economic life is made, and what actors and agencies are at play.

2.4. Making place

2.4.1. *Markets and placemaking*

In sociological literature, marketplaces are defined as spaces for the temporal encounter of producers and consumers to trade and transact. These are defined as cultural forms or social events where multiple activities take place, providing “a place for political and religious communications (for example, proselytising and rabble rousing) as well as flows of information and gossip that may be consequential in political, social or commercial terms” (Slater and Tonkiss, 2001, p. 10). They are the places for commercial activity, but also for spectacle and performance, ritualized

spaces of transaction in which diversity converges as a “spontaneous and rather explosive congregation of crowds” (Slater and Tonkiss, 2001, p. 10). Following this idea of the marketplace as a space of encounters, markets are on the one hand “liminal spaces” (Slater and Tonkiss, 2001, p. 11) for chaotic entertainment, places for pleasurable experience and places “of liberty and license, of desires and fun” (Slater and Tonkiss, 2001, p. 11). On the other hand, marketplaces are also controlled places with a tight relationship with local governments and its regulations. In European history, markets have been highly regulated spaces, where policing and control usually takes place (Slater and Tonkiss, 2001). The public space of the market has occupied a central role in the planning and economy of cities to control the use of public space and the provision of goods.

These different characterizations of markets and marketplaces put emphasis on the multiple activities happening and the freedom or control that is possible to experience when visiting markets. However, little research discusses how marketplaces are made or come into being. In this thesis, I show how marketplaces are curated through a process of placemaking, in which market organisers have a key role. As mentioned before, analysing curation through the working practices of market organisers entails looking at the use of cultural capital and taste, as well as other cultural and economic aspects when making business decisions. It also entails understanding a crucial aspect for the curation of street food markets: place. Both the Bourdieusian and Callonian perspectives pay little or no attention to the relationship between cultural intermediaries and the making of place. The curatorial process of making markets depends on the making of place; markets need a spatialised form, and the process of curation is in this regard also a process of placemaking. In this thesis, the idea of curation as placemaking departs from previous accounts on placemaking in the urban planning literature. This literature usually looks at placemaking as an inclusive and collaborative process of value generation for place. On the contrary, in this research, curation as the making of place involves organisers’ evaluation of different economic and cultural aspects of place, as well as the negotiation of these values with other stakeholders like Councils and developing companies in a process that is safeguarding mainly private interests.

In urban planning and architecture studies, placemaking has been defined as a process that creates, transforms and improves place, it entails to collectively shape “the public realm to maximize shared value (...) by planning, design, management and programming of public spaces” (Mngutyo and Jonathan, 2015, p. 28). The Project for Public Places defines placemaking as “a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value (...) an effective placemaking process capitalizes on a local community’s assets, inspiration, and potential, and it results in the creation of quality public spaces that contribute to people’s health, happiness, and wellbeing” (Project for Public Places, 2009). Russel (2015) also mentions that “Placemaking seems to comprise a community-driven process for designing public spaces (streets, sidewalks, plazas, squares, campuses, parks, and so on) that are mixed use, host a variety of activities for diverse audiences, and are well-connected to the larger city or town” (Russell, 2015). In these definitions, placemaking describes a process and approach to urban planning that considers a variety of activities that transform and create public places as a collective task, where community participation is essential; it is used as a synonym of “good city planning and the development of sustainable cities.” (Urban Strategies Inc, 2008, p. 6). However, the process of placemaking when curating marketplaces does not attempt to create shared value for the public good; it is a process aiming at creating new places with the participation of a few actors interested in the economic profit and symbolic gain of setting up marketplaces in different locations.

This approach to placemaking found in urban planning has been used in various studies, reports and research on marketplaces to assess their value and to propose how to work towards rescuing and promoting them (Newman and Burnett, 2013). Watson and Studdert (2006) claim that markets are not usually investigated in terms of sociality, valuing not just their economic outcomes for local economic development, but also as sites for social encounters in public space. Watson claims there has been limited research on markets in the British context, and the sociality aspect has been particularly disregarded. For this reason, she proposes to study markets as significant social spaces, especially as places for social inclusion or ‘rubbing along’, performance and mediating diversity. Although, most markets in London are public/private spaces, and even some managed by private companies, they still act as a central point for the

encounter of local communities. In their research on markets in London, they claim that markets are significantly valuable for the elderly, families with children, young people and people with disabilities (Watson and Studdert, 2006). The social role of markets emerges from their openness and publicness that allows the congregation of diverse people, from various backgrounds and ages. Markets could also be studied as alternative places for trading, where through informal activity such as car boot sales, they could attract diverse groups of people. Markets could stimulate a “renewed community spirit (...) constituting a new sense of everyday public space with a condition of social fluidity” (Watson, 2009, p. 1578), as well as acting as spaces for spectacle and performance.

Watson’s argument is that markets are particularly useful in providing spaces for marginal groups to actively engage in public space and for mutual recognition of the ‘other’. These spaces are important for old people or people with disabilities, where the ‘care work’ performed by traders contributes to integrate them to market activities. The sense of theatrics and the atmosphere of markets also engages people to participate in these spaces; as well as the mixing of strangers or people from diverse backgrounds, like in Ridley Road Market in Hackney, where there is a mix of Afro-Caribbean, African, Eastern European, Latin American and Chinese food traders and customers. Although Watson mainly makes a case for markets as places for conviviality and encounter, she still recognises that the economic characteristics of the area where markets are located, or their aesthetic attributes could prevent people from participating in them, “the look of a market, its materiality and the products sold convey certain social meanings which attract some individuals while disinclining others from entering that space.” (Watson, 2009, p. 1587). In the sense of habitus (Bourdieu, 1984), these dispositions of taste are part of how markets are experienced, with people from middle-class backgrounds not participating in cheap markets, and preferring the farmers’ markets that sell organic food.

My research on street food markets differs to a certain extent with Watson’s findings and argument. The markets analysed in this thesis are not necessarily spaces for openness, social inclusion or ‘rubbing along’ for whole areas or communities. As Watson mentions, the area and economic characteristics of the audience of a market,

its aesthetic qualities or the kind of food that is being sold could determine participation. In this thesis, markets are being curated following a business strategy that benefits market organisers, and other involved actors, like Councils and developing companies (see Chapter 6), and that encourages sociality and inclusion of a specific kind of audience. The curation of marketplaces produces exclusion of those not invited to participate as traders or partners, and establishes other barriers to keep certain customers away, like having pricier meals, drinks, or even entrance fees (see Chapter 7).

Other sociological research that investigates the relationship between food and place in terms of sociality and conviviality and the “domestication of the street” (Parham, 2009) has shown similar findings in terms of markets producing distinction and exclusion. This line of inquiry questions how certain rules are being established, accepted and negotiated in relation to the use of place; and how a socially constructed “order” implies a dominant vision of the “legitimate ways to use” (Gomez, 2008, p.77) and to discipline public space. These studies on the relationship of markets and urbanism have focussed on the complexity of local buying and eating practice. In particular, they have looked at issues of placemaking, inequality, class and race, and ethnicity and consumption practices (Parham, 2015), or how the consumption of food is related to the formation of lifestyles and identity in urban space (Zukin, 1995). Parham (2012) studies everyday life food provision and consumption in markets in London and their relationship with urbanism. In her work, she argues that the spatiality of food has usually been under-explored in the social sciences and urban design, she claims that more work is needed on the spatial aspects and social distinction produced by these places. In this regard, my thesis contributes to the analysis of the relationship between urban space and marketplaces, and how the curation of the street food scene creates new destinations that are then matched with the lifestyle and consumption preferences of a young, middle class audience in London.

One of the main findings of Parham’s research is that food quarters in London are places for the display of “good taste” and for people to obtain cultural capital. Marketplaces constitute sceneries for the display and performance of the habitus and

embodied expressions of taste. Convivial spaces and food quarters are contained within social norms that transform them into 'civilised' places for provisioning or eating on the street. In her work on food quarters in London, Parham suggests that it is clear how food is used for an "aesthetic appropriation" of these places from those with high economic and cultural capital. She also notes how changes in the symbolic elements of such spaces contribute to the accommodation of the material aspects of gentrification, such as the restructuring of space, planning and developments.

According to Parham (2009) the relationship between urban regeneration and consumption spaces is close. Most of the regeneration strategies in the UK in the past two decades have focussed on attracting investors and middle-class consumers and visitors to transform places, for example, the marketing of retail spaces and the development of "quarters" or "food quarters" are a common regeneration strategy in city centres (Bell and Binnie, 2005; Bell, 2007). Food can be linked to the transformation of these places for authentic convivial relationships. Conviviality can take different forms in different settings but it is usually accompanied by drinking, feasting and entertainment during leisure time. In these terms, conviviality does not imply necessarily economic exchange, but entails other complex social relationships in public space. In London, markets and the effects of their conviviality have been used as a way to commercialise third spaces or to market places as "hospitable spaces" (Parham, 2015). Other authors have described this phenomenon as a new form of commercial gentrification (Zukin, 1991; Gonzalez and Waley, 2013). This connection between urban regeneration and marketplaces is presented in this thesis in Chapter 6, where Councils have showed different strategies for partnering with market organisers to curate markets in determined areas to support their regeneration plans.

Within these perspectives about markets as a tool for placemaking with particular effects on conviviality and sociality, little has been said about market formation or the mechanisms for markets to create places with specific qualities. In this thesis, looking at the curation of marketplaces requires a focus on the processes of market and place formation, examining the various actors and material elements that transform a place into a marketplace. My approach to placemaking departs from its definition from an urban planning perspective, and refers to the idea of the making of place, in this case, placemaking or marketplace formation as an assemblage.

2.4.2. *Urban assemblages and the making of place*

The curation of markets and places could be more clearly interpreted as a process of placemaking that assembles place. Here, the idea of urban assemblages is useful descriptive concepts to make sense of the process of curating marketplaces. When curating marketplaces, organisers use their taste, cultural capital and economic and cultural knowledge to bring together a series of disparate and heterogeneous elements that create a distinguishable entity, with specific qualities. Marketplaces can be analysed as urban forms emerging from diverse socio-material elements that are put together and stabilised to form an urban assemblage, like a square, a festival or a street food market.

Bringing in actor-network theory (ANT) to the study of urban forms focuses on the contingencies and processes of assemblage in urban space with a commitment to descriptive analysis. One of the major contributions of the concept of assemblage relates to its descriptive power, as a conceptual tool that gives significance to the role of devices in configuring the social “where processes of creativity, conceptual innovation, and observation can be used to mobilize novel insights. They challenge the orthodoxy that sees description as inert, a means of arraying given, fixed, categories, in contrast to the mobilization of explanation which is seen as intensive and creative” (Savage, 2009, p. 170). Following this argument, the introduction of the idea of assemblage, or urban assemblages, or assemblage thinking, to the study of space and place is a productive possibility for an ethnography about the curation of marketplaces. From this perspective, the analysis of the curation of marketplaces relies on the potential of a descriptive analysis that reveals the operations through which these are formed, the actors involved in this process and their interrelationships, including looking at hierarchies and inequalities in these relations.

Assemblage formation, originated from the French translation of *agencement* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) refers at the process of arrangement, fitting and organising elements. According to De Landa (2006) it implies connections and capacities of the properties of human and non-human elements that constitute an assemblage. Assemblage theory or assemblage thinking in urban studies does not reduce the social

and spatial to pre-fixed forms, but offers a “bottom-up ontology” (Kamalipour and Peimani, 2015, p. 404) that concentrates on the heterogeneous relations and interactions that constitute an assemblage. Assemblage is increasingly used in the social sciences and urban studies, and refers to the processual, relational, and temporal possibilities for the formation of cities. McFarlane’s work examines the different processes, historical and spatio-temporal, that form an assemblage through the work of specific actors. These processes can be contested and shifted in relation to new contexts or power relations. His focus is on empirically investigating the formation process and practices on site, and acknowledging the differences between what has been assembled and how, and the possibilities to make it differently.

The idea of assemblage or urban assemblage in this research is used as a descriptive concept, as a “descriptor of sociomaterial transformation” (McFarlane, 2011b, p. 206), to look at the idea of curation and place and how this practice creates specific and localized urban forms from the interaction of heterogeneous elements. Ignacio Farías (2010) refers to urban assemblages to define the different ways in which the city is assembled in its many concrete and specific sites through practice. In this approach, the city is not a bounded object, but ‘decentred’, as a “multiplicity of processes of becoming, affixing sociotechnical networks, hybrid collectives and alternative topologies” (Farías, 2010, p. 2). From this ANT perspective “we should imagine the city being locally constituted” (Farías, 2010, p. 13), meaning that these local sites, produced through multiple actor-networks in the city, are not bounded but are defined according to the activities enacted in them, through the concrete practices that produce them. ANT offers a perspective that considers space, scale and time as “multiple enacted and assembled at concrete local sites, where concrete actors shape time-space dynamics in various ways, producing thereby different geographies of association” (Farías, 2010, p. 6). Thinking about the curation of marketplaces from this perspective entails understanding the multiple working practices of market organisers, and how these enact and produce different associations to make place with specific qualities. For example, the ways in which organisers pick venues by negotiating with development companies; or how they select a specific group of traders for particular locations; or the addition of aesthetic elements to the set-up of the market.

From this perspective, the idea of enactment is important to understand the role of objects and materiality in the formation of assemblages. The challenge of looking at the city as a multiplicity, and to space as enacted through actor-networks, is to study in detail how these enactments are “articulated, concealed, exposed, and made present or absent” (Farías, 2010, p. 14). Using the notion of urban assemblages allows us to see how the city is formed from “ensembles of heterogeneous actors, material and social aspects” (Farías, 2010, p. 14). An examination of the curation of marketplaces means looking at the relationship between materialities, spaces, and bodies that create this urban form. A marketplace could be a localised site in which an assemblage has been formed by heterogeneous human and non-human actors and their relationships. In this way, a marketplace would be an ‘emergent event’ (Farías, 2010, p. 15), a concrete local site that requires investigation of the practices that articulate it and make it stable.

McFarlane (2011a, 2011b, 2011c) talks about these relationships and interactions between elements in terms of possibilities for the formation of particular assemblages, introducing a political element to way the city is formed. In this way, if there are hierarchies or inequalities in the way an assemblage is formed, this allows for an exploration of the politics of urban formation. In the case of the street food markets, looking at the curation of place and the emergence of market places as an assemblage considers focussing on the actors that play a role on these formations, its relationships, interactions and aligned values, as well as the hierarchies and inequalities that exist within them. McFarlane proposes to see assemblage as an approach and an object that is “broadly political (ie as a way of thinking about not just how cities are) but how cities might be otherwise” (McFarlane, 2011a, p. 653). This highlights the political elements and inequalities that exist as conditions for the formations of assemblages. The focus in assemblage thinking is less on these conditions, and more on the particular forms that these assemblages take and the processes of their formation, as well as the agency of the elements of these groupings.

This ANT approach to urban studies (Farías and Bender, 2010; Farías, 2011) has been subject to critique (Brenner, Madden and Wachsmuth, 2011; Tonkiss, 2011). Brenner et. al. (2011) are particularly interested in how ANT engages with political economy and critical urban theory. Their account specifically critiques the concept of

assemblage because it underpins notions of structure and context and their political dimensions in the transformation of urban space. They suggest that the concept of assemblage remains as a descriptive tool not 'thick' enough to sufficiently tackle issues like urban inequalities or the impact of capitalism. Brenner et. al. (2011) claim that assemblage thinking and its methodological stance focussed on the description of these networks and connections, fails to acknowledge the "context of contexts" or the structural forces that frame the possibilities for these assemblages to be formed. From their perspective, the usefulness of the concept depends on how precisely "conceptual, methodological, empirical and normative parameters are circumscribed" (Brenner et. al. 2011, pp. 229-230) and defined. Brenner et. al. disagree with the idea of urban assemblages as an ontological alternative, but agree its use as a methodological tool or descriptive approach that could be combined with other theories or conceptual frameworks to question the urban.

Brenner et. al. (2011) propose to use assemblage with a specific purpose, as for example, at an empirical level as a specific research object. They argue that its use empirically and methodologically has merit in developing a research agenda in urban studies. For example, when attention is given to the sociomaterial relations, and the agency of non-human actors in urban processes. However, in their perspective, there still needs to be some connection between using assemblages empirically and methodologically with a theoretical framework that allows to understand the structuration processes that act as conditions for the urban process. Therefore, its ontological use is contested and regarded as ignoring the concept of structure as an explanatory tool for the context where these sociomaterial formations are locally embedded. Without a theoretical framework of this sort, there is little possibility for identifying, for example, which human or non-human actors are more or less relevant in these processes of urban formation. They call this assumption a 'naïve objectivism', in which the empirical data does not require a theoretical interpretation to elucidate the underlying context and causes of inequality, marginalization or deprivation.

In this thesis, my use of urban assemblages is specifically defined, as it pays attention at the formation of localised urban forms such as marketplaces. The focus on the curation of marketplaces is on the working practice of market organisers, and the operations for the making of place, in a thick description of the context from which

these operations are possible. This perspective allows for the raising of issues around inequalities in the curation process, and who gets to define what is valuable and what place is for. In this sense, looking at marketplaces as an assemblage means focussing the analysis on the curation of place as the result of working practices that produce differentiation. The politics of this practice is related to the specific role of these market organisers as placemakers, on their agency and the hierarchies within the networks they are part of, as well as the hierarchies their work is producing in the local context where their markets are situated.

In response to the critique from Brenner et. al., Farías (2011) defends the urban assemblages' program by arguing this is an empirical proposition that focusses on agency, and that to maintain the focus on practice entails a different ontological perspective about how cities are formed. Regarding the first point, on urban assemblages as an empirical proposition, Farías' response is that this concept comes from understanding urban facts and objects as "uncertain, controversial and conflictive" (Farías, 2011, p. 366). This involves a commitment to empirical inquiry, not only 'following the actors', but following their inquiries. He suggests that the main concern of new urban studies is not capitalism itself, but what constitutes urban life and how it is made, organized and created collectively. He continues: "how urban materials, technologies and different urban life forms are composed and held together in practice... by looking at cities we can learn more about capitalism as a form of life... not as a global abstract logic imposing its forms into local spaces, but as a concrete process assuming multiple forms even within a city" (Farías, 2011, p. 368). This notion of urban assemblages opens the possibility of looking at urban space not as a whole entity, but as 'multiplicity' - as multiple assemblages that are in the making.

Farías responds to the critique of 'naïve objectivism', by explaining that urban subjects and objects "perform and group themselves situationally" (Farías, 2011, p. 366), meaning that the configuration of an assemblage depends on the practices these actors are involved in. The inquiry for urban assemblages involves a problematization of these situations, and open exploration of how these actors enact the urban. This exploratory and open approach is part of the methodological proposal of the study of urban assemblages, because 'urban facts', actors and objects are always uncertain, and their associations cannot be discovered in advance. There is a 'commitment to the

empirical' (Farías, 2011, p. 367), which means ANT offers a way to conduct research and to create conceptualizations from the field, instead of using theories and fixed concepts a priori. According to Farías, this form of inquiry that is being used in the study of urban assemblages, although being based strongly on an empirical enquiry does not mean that it is exempt of critique; this critique needs to emerge from the study on site, from practice.

The idea of urban assemblages is also useful to look at the issue of agency and how this is distributed between actors; how they have different capacities and positions, including the dynamics of domination. In this case, Farías clarifies the idea that urban assemblages don't provide a 'symmetrical ontology', but can also reveal asymmetrical relations, hierarchies or inequalities in the way that these groupings are formed and enacted. However, these inequalities do not emerge from structural theories. They emerge from the localized study of "practices, processes, sociomaterial orderings, reproducing asymmetries in the distribution of resources, of power and of agency capacities, opening black boxed arrangements and ways in which actors, things or processes are made present and made absent" (Farías, 2011, p. 370). In sum, urban assemblages engage with a political perspective, or 'ontological politics' (Mol, 1999) by looking at the distribution of power in these heterogeneous actor-networks, "for objects that are performed do not come alone: they carry modes and modulations of other objects with them" (Mol, 199, p. 81). This is a non-traditional view on politics, that allows for the exploration of alternative uses when referring to assemblages.

In the case of the curation of street food markets, my analysis engages with these proposals about the potential for a political ontology of assemblage thinking. To study place formation from practice, and from the associations of different actors, entails looking at interactions contingently. It involves asking how these interactions are possible, examining the negotiations and alignment of value between actors (see Chapter 6), and if any of these prevail over others. It also requires an analysis of the use of taste in working practices (see Chapter 4) to determine and defend place's material and sensorial qualities. As well as looking at how these assemblages connect with their exteriority; who gets in, or what values could be integrated and sustained. The use of the idea of assemblages to conduct analysis in empirical research has been fruitful to identify actors, follow their operations, and to examine their role in the

making and changing of place. Assemblage thinking is useful to analyse the curation of street food markets from the practicalities of curating place, and the relationship between market organisers, traders and urban actors such as Councils and developing companies. It is also useful to examine the context in which these relationships develop, and the hierarchies established between these actors.

Recent work that uses the idea of urban assemblages or assemblage thinking (Blok, 2013; Edensor, 2011; Ureta, 2014; Tironi, 2012) is dedicated to the study of place and the heterogeneous actors that are forming it. For example, in a case study attempting to describe power and inequalities in urban dynamics, Ureta (2014) uses the idea of urban assemblages to analyse a controversy about a bus shelter outside Santiago's National Library. The bus shelter was controversial because, on the one hand it would negatively affect the view to a national monument, but on the other, it would prevent public transport users from making use of new public infrastructure. In this work, Ureta refers to the "necessary practices of co-ordination in which a hierarchy was established between the competing assemblages, involving important transformations in some of its components" (Ureta, 2014, p. 231). He claims that the concept of urban assemblages is better equipped than political economy approaches to expose the processes of reordering of urban space and the agencies involved in co-ordinating to resolve this controversy. "Coordination practices in the case under study involve the performance of multiple assemblages of the involved entities in which the components in dispute are presented as being divided and/or shared in new ways" (Ibid., p. 234). In this case study, the National Library and the public transport authority were competing and deploying different tactics to transform or reject the construction of the bus shelter. Both agencies were entangled in different legal hierarchies, and from these different positions, one was more influential than the other. "It is exactly in these multiple hierarchies that a great deal of power in assemblages resides, enhancing or restricting, even forbidding, the capacity of assemblages to territorialise in different times and/or spaces, to re-enact in some ways and not others" (Ibid., p. 244). According to this proposal, using the idea of coordination in assemblage urbanism is one way of dealing with relational power and inequalities in urban space.

Examining the entangled networks of actors that connect in the curation of marketplaces is fruitful to reveal these hierarchies and processes of coordination. In

my analysis of the curation of marketplaces, different placemaking strategies are designed to align the values of market organisers, Councils or developers (see Chapter 6), to create markets and place. The curation of marketplaces in this thesis refers to a process of placemaking where a localised urban form is assembled from heterogeneous elements that include traders, audiences, food, locations, transport links, venues and brands. Market organisers as curators use their economic, cultural and spatial knowledge to create marketplaces with distinctive qualities in different areas.

2.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed the literature that informs this thesis research question and argument. To develop a conceptualisation of curation to understand the street food scene, I draw on ideas and concepts following work from previous research on the cultural economy, aiming to look ethnographically at economic practices and to analyse them through the cultural elements that form them. In this research, the study of the working practices of market organisers is in line with previous research on the work of cultural intermediaries in different fields. Following these actors is relevant because it enables us to understand curation in relation to the circulation of meanings and calculation of products and services to create markets and places.

Although recent research on cultural intermediaries has been undertaken in traditional intermediary occupations in fields like fashion, music, art and other fields like advertising and branding, there is still little research on emergent intermediary professions in areas such as food services. Much of this previous research on cultural intermediaries has been inspired by Bourdieu's (1984) ideas on cultural production. However, my thesis analyses curation by looking at cultural intermediaries using concepts like taste making, and cultural capital, while at the same time exploring intermediaries' role as market actors. This approach serves to understand a value generation process through actors' positions and dispositions when carrying out their curatorial work, while at the same time focussing on economic practices to qualify markets and place. A focus on the curatorial work of market organisers as cultural

intermediaries is important as it serves to make a critical examination of 'professionalization strategies' in the practice of creative work in cultural economies, and to evaluate the role of these actors in processes of economic, cultural and spatial value generation.

The role of market organisers as cultural intermediaries will be examined in the following chapters of this thesis. Concepts such as taste and cultural capital, and the use of embodied knowledge, will be addressed when analysing the curatorial practices of creating markets, especially when describing specific activities like defining the offer of markets by picking traders (Chapter 4) or creating marketplaces with specific atmospheres and aesthetic qualities (Chapter 7). This set of ideas is particularly relevant when analysing the curatorial work and the decision-making process in making taste distinctions. The embodied knowledge of the field is especially important in the work of market organisers, and it is used in the various curatorial activities to qualify their markets and marketplaces with particular qualities, enacting a brand experience.

As mentioned above, the role of cultural intermediaries as market actors has not been sufficiently explored in research on cultural economies. In this thesis, the generation of markets and places is analysed by looking at the routinized professional practice of market organisers as market actors. In the curation of the street food scene, these actors qualify goods, services and place through the use different techniques, ideas, subjective dispositions and networks to create markets and marketplaces. My research contributes to the study of cultural intermediaries by looking not only at the meaning making aspect of their activities, but at a range of mediation practices and the different agencies and devices used in this process. To achieve this aim, literature on market performativity is contributing to the analysis of the qualification of markets and places as an activity that requires economic and cultural calculations of a complex set of elements to curate the street food scene. The curatorial work of market organisers is being analysed through this framework as a value generation practice that requires the performance of various operations of qualification like measurements, calculations, display and assemblage of people, objects, ideas and aesthetics to create markets and marketplaces.

However, as previously demonstrated, the idea of cultural calculation seems to be more appropriate to define the curation of markets and place. Cultural calculation is useful in recognising how cultural knowledge and assumptions about the social context are embedded in the decision-making process in which market organisers create goods and imagined audiences for their markets. These cultural calculations are analysed through the empirical material on the conceptualisations of the street food scene and the performance of organisers' curatorial roles in Chapter 4, as well as when looking at different negotiations with other actors to find locations and set up markets for different audiences in Chapters 6 and 7.

By looking at cultural intermediaries and their work of cultural calculation, it is possible to explore the different kinds of knowledge and assumptions that are being used to define values and their circulation, and who can participate in these networks. As mentioned before, markets are diverse and the literature on economic sociology does justice to that diversity, escaping generalizations about economic processes without looking at the localised practices of economic actors. This kind of analytical work on curatorial practices contributes to an understanding of purposes, dispositions, uses of knowledge and professional skills in the making of markets and marketplaces.

Along with cultural calculations to create markets, the curatorial work of market organisers also creates place. Market organisers are cultural intermediaries and placemakers, their curatorial distinctions create marketplaces with distinct qualities and transform the use and experience of place. My approach to placemaking differs from the urban planning literature that looks at the process as a homogeneous participative process that involves communities and institutions to define the use and value of place for the public good. In the case of the street food markets analysed in this thesis, placemaking takes the form of a specific activity carried out by market organisers and other private actors to transform place according to their understanding of location and audience. In contrast to previous research on food markets that focuses on issues like sociability and conviviality, the curation of these street food markets reveals a process that requires the negotiations among private actors according to their different narratives and assumptions of value, as analysed in Chapter 6.

In this thesis, the curation of the marketplace is being analysed the idea of urban assemblages to describe how marketplaces emerge from a series of dispersed and heterogeneous socio-material elements that market organisers stabilise in their street food markets. The idea of assemblage is productive when using an ethnographic approach that reveals the practical operations of making place. It is useful to explore the actors involved in this process, their connections, the material conditions for the generation of marketplaces, and their internal elements and coherence. Assemblage thinking is also useful because it focusses the discussion on agency, the labour of specific actors in the formation of place, and how this could be contested according to power relations and hierarchies. In this sense, it allows for questions to be raised about how place came to be as it is, and the possibilities for it to be different in the future. Chapter 7 shows how market organisers curate places by making different associations between value, qualities of place and the brand experience they wish their marketplaces to enact.

In summary, the curation of the street food scene has been defined as a process of value generation in which cultural intermediaries create markets and marketplaces by using their taste, cultural capital and embodied knowledge of the scene to qualify markets and places with distinctive qualities. In the following empirical chapters of this thesis, the literature on cultural economy, market performativity and assemblage urbanism are combined to analyse and explore different aspects of the curatorial work of market organisers, their dispositions and narratives, and the practicalities of creating markets and marketplaces in London. Chapter 3 will explain the ethnographic process to collect evidence that supports this analysis.

Chapter 3. Methodology and reflexivity

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I present the methodological and reflexive aspects of conducting this ethnographic research. Firstly, I set out the main features of my ethnographic approach, detailing the use of empirical material inductively to build a sensitizing concept (Blumer, 1954; Willis and Trondman, 2002) such as curation; a concept that emerges from the field, and that is then conceptualised sociologically. I then describe my ethnographic approach with a focus on practices, and on engaging with my informants in an immersive embodied experience of their working practices. The ethnographic work conducted also developed relationally, and with an ANT sensitivity (Mol, 2010) to the field. In this chapter, I describe my interest in following the actors in different settings and tracing associations between them to understand the dynamics of these relationships and the curation of the street food scene. A third element that is relevant to my ethnographic approach in this research is place. Conducting ethnography in different locations was important since the making of place is one of the outcomes of the curatorial practices of market organisers, and moving to different settings and scenarios allowed me to gather data on the practicalities of this process.

Secondly, I introduce the key elements of the field and research participants, detailing the stages of research. I start with a pre-fieldwork stage, conducting non-participant observation visiting markets and gathering information online. Then, I present the access negotiation strategies I deployed to enter the field, the details of the three stages of fieldwork and a summary of the data collection techniques used in this research. The three stages of fieldwork describe the activities conducted during 9 months of ethnography and one month of interviews in 2014. In these sections, I discuss my role and position on the field, the process of accessing and establishing rapport with the informants, the data collection, as well as presenting the criteria behind the research decisions I made while in the field.

Finally, I discuss issues of reflexivity and ethics, with a particular focus on my positionality, and confidentiality and anonymity of my research participants.

3.2. Ethnographic approach

3.2.1. *Using a sensitizing concept*

In this thesis, I have gathered ethnographic material from the field in a dialogical way. I not only use ethnography in a descriptive way, but as a tool to analyse and build a theorisation of my research question, as well as raising new questions about curatorial practices and cultural economies. Working ethnographically and dialogically implies using ethnography to theorise, focussing on telling explanatory stories and letting research participants theorise about their own practices and connections. My approach was inductive, using a concept from the field such as *curation* as a “sensitizing concept” (Blumer, 1954; Willis and Trondman, 2002); a concept that “emerges when the observer discovers something worth problematizing, “addressing” the concept to the objects of investigation, producing precise and accurate evidence of chosen phenomena” (Faulkner, 2009, p. 80). For this thesis, I have used a native concept from the field to build a conceptualisation about the making of markets and place. The idea of curation emerged as a guideline to narrow down the research question and as a starting point to merge data with sociological theory.

Working with a sensitizing concept respects the process of developing ideas while collecting data in the field. After informants used this word to describe their working practice of organising markets, I focussed my observations in the field to look at the nuances and practicalities of their work, how it was developed, how it changed according to time, context, and their involvement with other actors. In using this idea, I sought to learn and adapt my previous ideas about the field to what I encountered on site. As Faulkner states, after taking a sensitizing concept from the field or a process of ‘concept exploration’, then comes the process of ‘making’ a sensitizing concept, or ‘concept exploitation’. This task needs a continuous “coupling or decoupling of concept and evidence” (Faulkner, 2009, p. 80), which means working with theories, ideas, and the empirical material to make sociological sense of it. This merging and coupling of curation and data is explored through different ethnographic vignettes and quotes from interviews with participants in the coming empirical chapters of the thesis.

Although fieldwork is always an embodied activity, most of the data collection process in this research focussed on visiting places while people were at work and I was working along-side them. This could be considered a “step-in-step-out ethnography” (Madden, 2010, p. 80) modality, where I was restricting my fieldwork visits to the times when my informants were working at offices or markets. To conduct participant observation in a work setting, it was crucial to develop the necessary competencies to perform tasks while in the field. My participation working in the scene was instrumental in relation to getting trained and learning “on the job” how to work with market organisers and site managers, as well as trading with food traders at their stalls. This training was important to develop rapport with my informants, but also as a tool for gathering data, by understanding their working practices and collecting insights into their curatorial work or how they do what they do.

In this sense, embodied research was conducted by working in partnership with the actors in the field. This process allowed me to transform my everyday experience into a participant of the street food scene. For example, by disciplining my own body to perform this job, I learnt how to behave and talk at the EAT-LONDON office, how to taste and evaluate dishes when scouting for new traders, when to change my clothes, using gloves, and headbands, and how to cook, how to move dynamically in the stall and how to serve and talk to customers. In this setting, the training was difficult and these difficulties in terms of physical pain, exhaustion, and overcoming the weather, allowed me to develop a close relationship with my informants and get deeper access to their practices. By being part of a group, more confidential information was shared with me; they trusted me as a researcher. This trust with different actors in the field was important to then gain access to conduct interviews at the end of fieldwork, with the intention of obtaining a more reflexive discourse about what is being done and how.

However, an embodied position in the field was not only used as an access and rapport strategy, but as a research technique to investigate on curatorial practices. Wacquant (2005) claims that when conducting ethnography in an “apprenticeship” modality, the body is “both the object and the means of inquiry” (Wacquant, 2005, p. 465). This

means that an embodied experience of informants' practices is not only a means for better access or for getting an adequate understanding of the 'culture' of the participants, but as a "technique of ethnographic investigation and interpretation in its own right" (Ibid.). In the case of my research, it allowed me to gather both the corporeal intelligence that was being used along with language. Entering the field as an apprentice facilitated the grasping of the "ordinary knowledge that makes us competent actors" (Ibid. pp. 465-466). For example, by learning how to cook and serve with each trader I worked with, I had the chance to observe how the sensorial qualities of food (colour, size, texture, smell, and aesthetics) are an important element in the curation of the street food scene in London. This cultural calculation process was learned and transmitted through practice; the right taste of food was acquired through an embodied participation working market organisers and food traders.

3.2.3. Relationships

In addition to a focus on practices, my ethnographic approach in this research was inspired by an "ANT sensibility" (Mol, 2010). An ANT sensibility in ethnographic research involves a particular descriptive activity of tracing associations and dynamics between actors. It also involves a particular relationship with theory, which is not used to frame data a priori, but to understand the associations and connections that are formed in the field. This particular kind of sensibility focuses on describing the dynamics of actors enacting their own realities and allowing them to "speak their sociologies", or letting the theoretical concerns unfold from the field as the research progresses. It also takes into consideration the question of performativity and the politics of research, putting attention on the ways in which my research practices shape the field itself. As a researcher, this means questioning "the kinds of worlds we are helping to make and legitimate in our accounts, and the ways in which we are helping to compose and reconfigure the very communities, processes, and actors under our ethnographic gaze" (Baiocchi et. al., 2013, p. 337). An ANT sensibility is committed to maintain reflexivity at all stages of the research process.

The ANT sensibility approach is similar to what Desmond (2014) describes as a *relational ethnography* or sociology as a relational method (Bourdieu, 1998) characterised by “studying fields rather than places, boundaries rather than bounded groups, processes rather than processed people, and cultural conflict rather than group culture” (Desmond, 2014, p. 547). Contrary to the multi-sited (Marcus, 1995) or un-sited ethnography proposal, Desmond proposes to study fields as “interrogative boundaries”, meaning to construct the ethnography object against substantialist perspectives. The substantialist perspective usually focuses on compiling a set of characteristics of place or groups to determine an object of study that is atomistic and static. Similarly, ANT inspired ethnographies are not alone in rethinking the boundaries of the field. What ANT distinctively adds to the conversation about “global” and “multi-sited” ethnographies is the “making” and “unmaking” of fields by actors themselves, that is, “what actors achieve by scaling, spacing, and contextualizing each other” (Baiocchi et. al., 2013, p. 337). Relational ethnography is interested in understanding the configurations of relations, connections, associations and their interdependence. In this research, this means looking at the struggles of two or more actors or agencies. In the study of the street food scene, a relational ethnography approach allowed me to understand the field as a dynamic construction that unfolded with time while doing research, where following the actors and their practices guided me to different scenarios of curation of the street food scene in London.

The importance of following actors and their relations is to get “the main connections right” (Desmond, 2014, p. 559), by constructing a relational object of study before and during fieldwork. As an ethnographer, I analysed these configurations and actors’ own interpretations of their working practices and the scene itself. In this endeavour, I gave more importance to the connections in the field, and the kind of relationship that exists between market organisers and food traders, and how they negotiate their work with other actors in the scene such as landowners and Councils. By observing connections and relationships I focussed on gathering insights about compromise, cooperation, conflict, and coordinated activities such as when “actors manage to work together by creating routines and shared meaning scripts” (Desmond, 2014, p. 555). With this interest in understanding relationships between actors in the field I sought to understand the logic of their social worlds and how they interconnect.

3.2.4. *Place*

Besides focussing on actors' practices and relationships, my ethnographic approach in this thesis was concerned with understanding place not only as the location where fieldwork was conducted. My interest in place is directly connected with the idea of the curation of marketplaces. Whilst conducting the ethnography I focussed on how places were selected in which to locate markets, and how the market set up is made on site. These processes took place in different locations, and defining the 'boundaries' of the field was a complicated task. The field unfolded in a multiplicity of localities, which were connected through the working practices and relationships between actors. Locality was in this sense part of relationality. Places in this research are diverse, but are curated in a certain way by market organisers and traders, giving the scene a particular boundary or identity. These different settings were not picked a priori, but emerged when different markets were arranged or traders obtained new trading spots in different places.

The limitation of this approach is that it prioritises "breadth" for "depth". Although my ethnographic work follows the idea of developing a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of the street food scene in London, I still focussed on following actors to the different scenarios where action was happening. This "relational depth" (Desmond, 2014, p. 570) guided the changing of scenarios in my research. After reaching a saturation point working with market organisers at the office location, I was ready to move to a different setting working with food traders at their markets wherever they were. The dynamism of the scene and the logic of the work of organisers and traders took me to places connected in a network of London's street food scene. If I had stayed static in one place, I would have missed the opportunity of understanding the logic of placemaking as part of the curation of the street food scene.

3.3. Key elements of the field and the research participants

In this section, I describe the pre-fieldwork stage of my research, and the access negotiation to start working with a market organisation.

3.3.1. Pre-fieldwork (August- November 2013)

During the pre-fieldwork stage, I conducted exploratory activities to get a sense of the field and to prepare for negotiating access to the field. The aim of such activities was to gather as much information as possible from the scene, identifying key actors, locations, relationships, dynamics, events, and activities that market organisers and food traders would normally do. I began by looking at media and online publications advertising street food markets in London, such as the Evening Standard or Time Out London. In these publications, there were weekly recommendations of food markets, new trends or new traders in the scene. Through these recommendations, I started looking for these markets and traders on social media. I used my personal Twitter account to follow the accounts of traders and street food markets; this was useful to look at their contacts and gain a sense of the network of people working in this field, as well as obtaining information about markets and events.

I created a database to identify active street food markets and traders in London. In this database, I gathered information from their social media accounts, websites and other online resources (blogs and magazines). I gathered information about the location, day and time that these markets set up, as well as their websites and contact information. For food traders, I gathered information about the markets where they trade, days, and contact information. This database allowed me to understand the amount of active markets, its geographical distribution and the amount of food traders actively working in London. This was also useful in terms of dismissing some of the social media accounts I had followed from markets and traders who were no longer in business. I completed the database in November 2013 with fifty-six active street food markets and one hundred and seventy-four traders in London. I made the decision to also dismiss farmers' markets selling produce. Instead, I decided to focus on sites where food was sold and consumed, and where socialising was possible. The decision to exclude farmers' markets was because my research focuses on a different kind of

street food market, namely those with a pop-up style occupancy of places, and where audiences can gather to consume on the street or other private spaces with public access. I was also interested in those markets where an organising company, or organising staff, were involved, so that I could examine the curatorial work carried out to set up these kinds of markets. Farmers markets, although a traditional London institution, did not have the characteristics of the markets that are the focus of this thesis. A map with the distribution of the markets from the database can be seen in Figure 2.

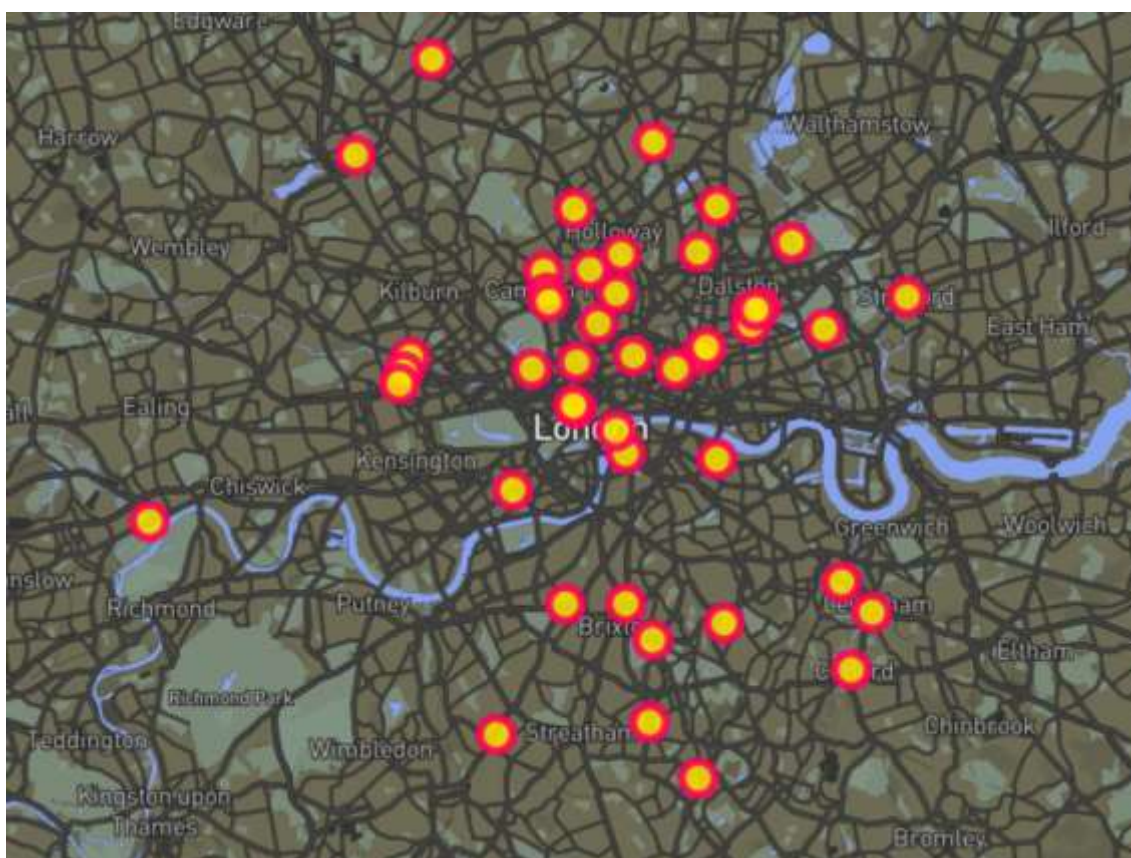


Figure 2: Active street food markers in London by November 2013 (own database)

In addition to this database, I created a calendar with trading days for over 50 markets in London. With this information, I started planning exploratory visits to markets. As my interest was in the performative aspects of markets, and how these were curated on site, I considered it necessary to conduct exploratory visits to these places to gather information about the set up in practice. During these visits, I looked at the space occupied and its features such as location, access, size, number traders at the marketplace, food being traded, prices, customers and general dynamics of the

markets for week-day lunch times, night markets and weekends. I carried out non-participant observations during October and November 2013. I spent time in a market at the Southbank Centre (Figure 3), in a special night market for Halloween near Granary Square in King's Cross, and in a day time market in a parking space near Old Street Station.

The pre-fieldwork stage was useful to plan for the data collection process by considering things such as how long would fieldwork last for, which contexts I would like to explore, which actors I would like to engage with and from which position. Given that the aim of the thesis was to look at market formation and placemaking through the curatorial practices of cultural intermediaries, I decided to focus the fieldwork on cultural production. This means collecting data from the working practices of the practitioners that create the street food scene. I was interested in observing the street food scene in the making, and this involved occupying an active role working with the key actors in the field. I planned to work with market organisers, especially with a company or a team, instead of individuals organising markets. I was interested in engaging with an organisation that consistently and repeatedly organised markets, preferably in different locations and with different formats. This particular scenario would allow me to observe the calculative practices in picking places, negotiating with different landowners or councils, and curating the food offer and marketplace for different audiences. The plan was to conduct participant observation at their offices, during meetings and when arranging markets on site.



Figure 3: Non-participant observation at the Southbank. 2 November 2013.

I also made the decision to work with food traders wherever and whenever possible. I was interested in following these actors since they play a crucial role in actively performing the curatorial decisions of market organisers when trading at the marketplace. My aim was to explore how curatorial decisions are performed on site, and the negotiations and relationships between organisers, food traders and

other actors involved in the setting up of street food markets. While working with food traders, I attempted to gather information on, for example, events managers, council staff, regulatory bodies, or business investors.

Fieldwork planning involved consideration of the particular dynamics of street food markets. This entailed planning participant observation in line with the seasonality of the markets (less trading in the winter, intense work during summer), and timing (lunch time, weekends, special events). For this reason, it was highly important to gain access early in the year, so as to be able to start working and gain knowledge of the field before the spring and summer, when markets are most active. I therefore decided to start fieldwork at the beginning of 2014 and to continue with it until September of that year. I planned to conduct interviews at the beginning and end of my fieldwork to conclude the data collection phase.

With the information from the database, the contacts and revision of activity on social media I started to narrow down the most active markets in London and the companies that were associated with more traders. In this case, the criteria to select the case studies for research included determining how active these markets were, meaning that they were opening continuously during the year, how many traders were associated with them, how many Twitter followers they had and how often they were featured in media publications. By reaching the most active street food markets, I also sought to use this relationship to get access to other actors in the field, such as food traders, or for getting interviews with other organisers. The length of fieldwork was also taken into consideration. It was important to pick cases where sufficient thick information could be gathered during approximately 9 months.

After identifying the most active markets, I determined that the companies EAT-LONDON and Vibes Feast were the ones with the highest number of active markets,

and the highest number of traders associated with them. These markets were also the ones with better reviews in the media, and they were considered to be high quality and prestigious markets. Another point worth noting is that at that time, both companies shared half of their traders. This was a crucial factor in determining that both companies and traders were key research informants connected in a network of work, and it was likely that they were sharing similar knowledge and had similar authority in the scene in order to access other actors through them later.

However, these companies have different organisational modes, EAT-LONDON is dedicated mainly to daytime, lunch markets, whereas Vibes Feast specialises in night-time markets. EAT-LONDON has around 50 traders associated with them and organises markets regularly in locations such as Maida Hill Place in Paddington (Saturday), King's Cross (lunchtime Monday to Friday), Bloomsbury (first Wednesday of each month) and The Gherkin (every Thursday lunchtime). Vibes Feast, with around 38 traders associated, has markets located mainly in East London, such as an old warehouse near London Fields, a car park in Dalston and in Brick Lane, a recording studio in Hackney, and in Camden Town Brewery. They also organise a Christmas night market near Hoxton Square. By November 2013, Vibes Feast was on a break, their season usually runs from April until September each year.

3.3.2. Negotiating access

EAT-LONDON access

I first contacted Perla, EAT-LONDON Founder, in October 2013 with an email introducing myself, and my research. I was able to meet her during the special Halloween event they were setting up in King's Cross. After our initial conversation, when I explained my research interest and my desire to find an organisation to work with, Perla stated that she was interested in taking me on as a volunteer. I sent Perla more details about the research process (length of fieldwork, activities, and anonymity) and I negotiated my role according to my interests and skills. I was taken in to work at EAT-LONDON offices as an assistant from February 2014. Whilst I knew they

could make use of my research skills, I thought that working as an assistant to different members of the team would be useful as a first point of entry to the working dynamics at the office, understanding the roles of staff, and 'making myself useful', in addition to gathering information. In time, my role developed to conduct other tasks at the office and on the market sites.

From the beginning of our negotiation, Perla was interested in my research and participating as an informant. In our first meeting, she told me she was finishing an MSc in Urban Studies, and that she met Nick, one of her colleagues while studying together. She was interested in having someone with an academic inclination collaborating with them at the office, because they intended to make connections between their work with markets and wider implications for urban planning. Although, this welcoming might seem like the best scenario for any ethnographer, I was cautious about what they might ask in return, or as an outcome of my research. I was also aware they were organising a market at an academic institution and I thought they might think of my position as instrumental to promote their business through my connections. However, from the beginning I was clear in setting the terms of my participation and how my fieldwork could be useful for the organisation, contributing to their daily work by conducting research or administrative tasks; and that I will work as a volunteer without receiving payment. Through this role as participant observer, I had access to their daily activities, conversations about decisions, databases, and to their mailing list, as well as access to their market sites as part of the on-site organisation staff.

Vibes Feast failed access

In the initial fieldwork planning, I attempted to gain access to both EAT-LONDON and Vibes Feast. The aim was to conduct participant observation within companies with different markets and target audiences. I sought to obtain information about different styles of curatorial work around markets and places, and to identify the similarities and differences between market organisers, as well as the different relationships with traders and other actors. As Vibes Feast was also a central organisation in the scene, aggregating many traders, I contacted the organisers via email in November 2014,

sending information about my research and willingness to meet them in person. I spoke with Alan, Public Relations officer, at their Hawker House market in Hackney. During this conversation, I was able to gain more information about the dynamics of the company, and the possibilities of conducting fieldwork at their offices. A month after this meeting, I spoke with Vincent, Vibes Feast Founder, to introduce myself and my research aims. Vincent was interested in my research and after a while I realised most of his answers were rehearsed as if I was a journalist from a newspaper. After this conversation, he said he would be willing to let me access their team to work with them voluntarily. After a couple of weeks, I contacted him again to finalise details, but did not receive any further response. As I already had EAT-LONDON confirmation to conduct fieldwork, I decided to change research strategies and collect data about other organisers by working with traders in other markets or by asking for interviews with key actors. The idea of comparison between organisations was impractical, as eventually I had to dedicate a great amount of time working with EAT-LONDON to establish rapport, understand the dynamics of the business and gather detailed information about their working practices. Working with Vibes Feast might also have raised an issue of confidentiality, working with two different companies that could be competitors in the business. Prioritising depth in the fieldwork process that already had different stages and strategies allowed me to collect better, detailed and rich ethnographic material from market organisers and food traders.

3.4. Conducting ethnography

The ethnographic work was planned in three stages, where the first two were overlapping for a few months. Each stage was focussed on one activity, while at the same time completing and finishing others. A diagram of the data collection process is presented in Figure 4.

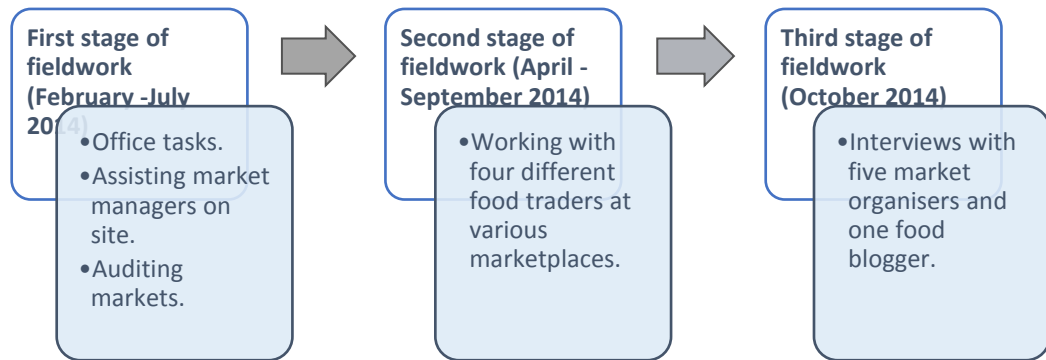


Figure 4: Stages of fieldwork

The first stage of fieldwork started in February 2014 and consisted on carrying out participant observation working with EAT-LONDON at their offices and at their marketplaces. From the second week of fieldwork, I started to combine days at the office assisting the staff with days at the market sites assisting the market manager. From June 2014, I continued working with EAT-LONDON but only at their market sites or completing tasks remotely, without visiting the office. I finished my work with EAT-LONDON at the end of July 2014.

During the second stage of fieldwork, I conducted participant observation working with food traders at their stalls or vans in various marketplaces. This stage began in the first week of April, when I was combining work on EAT-LONDON market sites, with remote tasks, and work with food traders at their markets and in markets by other organisers. During August and September, I worked solely with food traders at different markets and events. During this stage, the aim was to continue observing the curation process on site, by looking at the experience of food traders enacting these curatorial decisions, and gathering data from different curatorial styles in markets from different organisers. The third stage of fieldwork was conducting interviews with market organisers and key actors in the scene in October 2014.

3.4.1. Data collection summary

Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in 14 different locations in London. The EAT-LONDON markets where I conducted fieldwork were: King's Cross, University College London (UCL), The Gherkin, and Canary Wharf. Vibes Feast markets where fieldwork was conducted were: Dalston, Hawker House 2014 and 2015, and Model Market. Other markets where I conducted research were: Tottenham Green Market, Harringay Market, Rupert Street Market, The Southbank Market, The Stock Market and two market events at Trafalgar Square. The details, including the locations of these sites, can be found in the map in Figure 5.



Figure 5: Map with location of fieldwork sites.

A summary of the data collection techniques used during fieldwork is presented in Table 1.

Technique	Actors	Description	Locations
Exploratory visits – pre-fieldwork	Food traders	Visiting markets and talking	King's Cross and the Southbank Centre.

Technique	Actors	Description	Locations
		informally with food traders.	
Participant observation	Market organisers	At the EAT-LONDON offices Includes pictures from fieldwork and material from office work such as emails and documents.	EAT-LONDON headquarters in Central London.
Participant observation	Market organisers	At Eat- LONDON marketplaces. Includes pictures from fieldwork.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gherkin • King's Cross • Canary Wharf • Southbank • UCL
Participant observation	Food traders	At their stalls. Includes pictures from fieldwork.	EAT-LONDON markets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gherkin • Canary Wharf • UCL Vibes Feast markets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dalston • Haggerston • Lewisham Other markets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soho • Haringay • Tottenham Green • Bermondsey • Trafalgar Square

Technique	Actors	Description	Locations
			Festivals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field day • Blissfields • Glastonbury Private events and a pub residency.
Informal interviews	Cleaners Security guards Market customers	Conversations while on site at EAT-LONDON markets.	EAT-LONDON markets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gherkin • Canary Wharf • UCL • King's Cross
Interviews	Market organisers Food blogger	Semi-structured qualitative interviews.	London. Various locations.
Survey	EAT-LONDON market customers	Customer survey requested by EAT-LONDON. The information gathered included background questions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you hear about this market? • Where do you live/work? • An evaluation scale (1 to 5) on: food quality, place 	EAT-LONDON markets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gherkin • King's Cross • Canary Wharf • Southbank

Technique	Actors	Description	Locations
		atmosphere, service.	
Media reviews	Newspapers Magazines Press releases Twitter Websites	News about upcoming markets, reviews about traders, press releases from development companies, tweets from food traders or market organisers.	Online.
Document review	Council reports Mayor of London reports Council Local Plan	Statistical information about markets in London, planning documents.	Online.

Table 1: Data collection summary

3.4.2. The first Stage of fieldwork: EAT-LONDON offices and markets (February 2014 – July 2014)

During this ethnographic fieldwork, I worked at EAT-LONDON offices, assisting the team and gathering information on organisers' working practices and activities. I had access to their daily routines, conversations, decision-making processes and to the development of their business in relation to curating markets and marketplaces.

EAT-LONDON is one of the major companies organising street food markets in London.³ Their office is in Central London (EC1), in a building along with other small design companies and solicitors' offices. It comprises two small white open spaces, a working area with five desks, a round meeting table, an open kitchen and a couch. People work there, and remotely from home, on a part-time and full-time basis. The team is formed of a group of six people in their late 20s or early 30s and: Perla (Founder and Director), Nick (Head of Markets), Ron (Finance and Site Manager), Toby (Designer and Site Manager) and Anna and Cristina (Private Events managers). Ron said the first time we met, "We all have very English names", all members of staff are white British. The office has different posters on the walls from previous markets and special events, calendars and boards with the planning for the year to come, spray paint and cardboard boxes with flyers; it's a combination of a workshop and an office. A copy of "Happy City" by Charles Montgomery lies on one of the desks along with old issues of Time Out London; there is a shelf with a diverse range of books, about leisure and the food industry and urban studies.

In EAT-LONDON an important part of the strategic planning happens collaboratively in the open space of the office. On the walls, on different boards, they have planners, calendars, maps of hot spots and the profiles of new traders to look at (see Figure 6). In terms of the specific job roles the year before I joined, EAT-LONDON evolved, bringing in new members of staff to take care of the growing demand of tasks. For example, Nick, Head of Markets, now "Head of Operations and Innovation", oversees all markets and has a strong influence on Perla's decisions about events, finding venues, developing new strategies and picking new traders to join as members. On the other hand, Site Managers oversee specific markets on site, dealing with issues such as helping traders to set up, fixing problems with water supply or electricity, dealing with the landowners or external staff, such as cleaning and security teams, as well as talking to customers, tweeting and uploading images to promote the market, or meeting journalists or potential clients on site. In addition, when back in the office, they still need to undertake administrative, financial or marketing tasks, such as designing flyers

³ This company organises more than five markets simultaneously, and fifty-eight traders were associated with them as of October 2015.

or maintaining and improving the website. Private events managers work mostly at the office, sending budgets to private clients for birthday parties, weddings, or events.



Figure 6: EAT-LONDON office board

Participant observation with EAT-LONDON

Conducting 'office ethnography' (Kuipers, 2013) entails collecting information about meetings, discussions and informal conversations. Sometimes it is not possible to get access to everyone's activities and interactions, as some of these meetings could take place outside the office space. My participant observation started by working in a voluntary role assisting the Founder and other team members with tasks in the office once a week, usually Thursday. The day and tasks were negotiated with Perla, according to the availability of a desk and their most pressing needs. Perla created a shared spreadsheet file with tasks I could do, and to which member of staff I should report to. These tasks included: reviewing and giving feedback on their website; creating databases of offices in the areas where the markets are located; collecting quotes from the media that they could use to promote their markets; compiling news stories about their markets, their traders and the competition to produce a weekly newsletter; creating a plan for auditing their markets and to survey their customers on

site. At the beginning, the tasks given were exploratory and not demanding. I was completing them on time and making sure that I was being useful and responsive to people in the office in order to gain their trust.

The tasks and information produced during work were also considered relevant data for this research. I was given access to databases, emails with information about their markets and an email list that their traders use to request casual staff. In addition to this, being part of the team and being involved in their everyday activities and casual conversations was producing substantive data about market organisers' working practices. During my first day at the office, I conducted interviews with Perla and Nick, head of markets. These interviews were relevant to get to know their background, how they started in the business, their roles, common tasks, difficulties and general opinions about street food in London.

The information gathered in the office came mainly from conversations about their work, the planning of markets, the evaluations they made of their traders and the requirements they discussed about bringing in new traders. Some of these conversations were about particular tasks being carried out, but we would also talk about our weekends, the markets or events they went to, some controversy or discussion on Twitter, and other media stories. We would also talk about our personal life, such as family, travelling to places, studies, latest films etc. At the beginning, it was hard to relate to some of their conversations, because the group was usually talking about other people that I had not met yet, but with time I got to know people and places and I could understand and relate to these chats. As mentioned by Kuipers (2013) when conducting ethnography with cultural intermediaries, some of their activities might seem very casual, as if nothing important is happening at the office, like "sipping lattes in Starbucks, having lunch in hip venues, flipping through magazines, browsing stands at festivals and fair, and most of all: talking to people" (Kuipers, 2013, pp. 72-73). In this sense, at the beginning it was difficult to grasp the immaterial labour in these informal conversations at the office space, where EAT-LONDON staff were narrating their personal involvement with the street food scene and cultural preferences in other areas. For this reason, during the first weeks of fieldwork I was actively asking specific questions about how they conduct their work to prompt group conversations at the office, like asking them for comments about new

markets or new traders; asking them about people they were talking about that I did not know. These conversations were fluent as part of the normal process of induction into office work. My aim was to get to know their roles and position in the office, exploring their narratives about their work, the scene, the people involved and their relationships. My aim was to understand their stories, as well as who might be the best person to ask for certain information. I was committed to listening their descriptions about the scene and how they would offer concepts, ideas or theorise about the street food scene, how it was formed and how it was developing.

My key informant in the office was Nick, head of markets, who, with a background in urban studies, was particularly interested in my research. He constantly explained to me issues about their business or asked me questions about literature or my opinion on things. We built a positive relationship and he was open and patient in explaining things and making me feel comfortable. When I first started fieldwork, I thought my main relationship in the field would be with Perla, but after a few weeks of coming to the office I figured out that she was not there most of the time and her role was to manage the business by meeting clients and establishing relationships outside of the office. Although I was constantly communicating with her via email, I did not have the chance to socialise with her while in the office or during lunch breaks, as I did with other members of the team. EAT-LONDON staff were curious about my research, and people at the office would ask questions about my research and personal life, about the PhD Program and the LSE, my life in Chile and what it was like moving to London. However, with time, they asked less questions about my work and the conversations focussed on more general everyday topics about life in London, such as the tube strike, the weather, news stories in the paper, etc.

One of the main topics of conversation in the office was food. We usually talked about the last place where we had a meal, critiquing it, and talking about likes and dislikes. We discussed and commented on EAT-LONDON traders, or we talked about our favourite traders or meals and made rankings, commenting on each other choices. We also had lunch together in the office most of the time, buying food from somewhere near the office or bringing food from home and disclosing recipes, talking about ingredients and flavours. I heard colleagues talk about very specific characteristics of food: flavour, acidity, saltiness, sweetness, spiciness, temperature, freshness,

crunchiness, presentation, sauces, seasoning, etc. They were constantly comparing and evaluating food or flavours, sharing recipes, favourite traders, dishes, locations of where to eat or buy food. They took food very seriously, and they tended to use many key words and language to discuss food. These kinds of conversations were useful to understanding the specificity of their work and to learn how to “*talk food*” in the way they were in the office. This also made me aware of my lack of vocabulary to describe and evaluate meals and flavours, and that my comments and judgements could be perceived as poor from their point of view. Although I like food and I consider myself a foodie, I did not have the appropriate terminology to evaluate these categories of description. When I was asked for my opinion, I would try to repeat some of their comments, and when I did not know how to respond, I would blame not finding the right words on being a non-native English speaker.

Taking notes in the office was not a difficult task. I worked on my laptop and I would open a file to take notes while working. In these notes, I registered the date, time, tasks requested, tasks that the team was doing each day, what was written on the boards and calendars in the office, information about the meetings they had or they were preparing for, and informal conversations during work and during lunchtime breaks. I also noted down the tones used, and non-verbal communication such as gestures or music they were listening to. Some of these notes were taken after some activities were carried out, in order not to interrupt the natural flow of our conversations. In order to type faster I took notes in Spanish, writing down key words they used or quoting directly in English. In these fieldnotes, I also wrote down my feelings and personal reflections about the experiences and the relationships in the office. For example, I registered difficulties in understanding what colleagues were saying, for example about how disruptive my presence was for communication in the office. On a couple of occasions, calls were taken outside the office, or Perla asked people to have a chat outside the office where I could not listen.

Given that the office was a small open plan space, I could interpret that some private conversations between staff were not disclosed with other team members. These situations were important to remind me of my position as an outsider and researcher in the field. Some of these thoughts or personal reflections in my field notes were later transformed into questions to ask a participant on future visits, such as for example,

understanding a comment they made about a place or a specific person in more detail. I also took pictures of some of the information written on the boards hanging in the walls of the office and transcribed the content that could change each week. Some of the boards had information about places or traders to look at.

By the second week I was given more responsibilities with a special task that consisted of auditing EAT-LONDON markets and surveying their customers. This was a proof of increased confidence and rapport. I was asked to develop a plan to repeat an auditing exercise they did the year before, which consisted in counting the footfall at their markets and comparing the proportion of visitors with sales. I was also put in charge of creating a survey to gather information from customers. Some of the questions were: how did you hear about the market; evaluate in a scale of 1 to 5 different aspects of the markets, such as food quality, place atmosphere, price; give feedback to improve the offer; and asking customers for their emails to be added to EAT-LONDON mailing list to promote new markets.

My role in the office changed over time, due to the beginning of the spring season when more hands were needed at the market sites. I then combined visits to the markets to assist the market manager with visits to the office. The scheduling of my visits was always planned jointly by Perla and I. This negotiation of visits created tensions by the time I was working both on the market site and at the office. After finishing the fourth month of doing participant observation, I was working half a day in each place. After a couple of weeks, I received an email from Perla asking me to either spend a full day in the office, or to not come in at all. She said *"The afternoons are often times when we can get into some good flow in the office and it can be a bit disrupting having people drop in and out in the midst of it"* (30 May 2014). After receiving this email, I made the decision to follow her directions and go to the markets on different days to the office. I replied to the email politely, making sure to clarify that my intention was not to disturb their work, but to contribute while I was there.

This situation was important in making me aware, again, of my presence in the office and my position in the field as a researcher. This was also proof of how the field was evolving and how I needed to adapt my focus towards spending more time in the markets. I was following how things were developing and by the end of May there was more work on site and more markets emerging. Whereas at the office, some weeks I

could spend hours working on some tasks without gaining any interesting insight or taking interesting field notes. Sometimes only a couple of people were in the office at the same time as me. The action was happening at the marketplaces, and I decided to pursue conducting my participant observation there.

EAT-LONDON markets

I started going to the EAT-LONDON markets from the second week of February 2014. I first visited their lunch time market outside The Gherkin building in the City of London on Thursdays. Then, I visited EAT-LONDON lunch time markets in King's Cross, Canary Wharf, in a University quad in Central London, and at the Southbank. I also visited special weekend markets at the Southbank and at King's Cross. The aim of visiting the markets was to gather information on the setting up of markets, and how the curatorial decisions made at the office were enacted by food traders and staff on site. In this way, I conducted participant observations in a role of assistant to the on-site market manager, with routine tasks such as talking and managing staff, namely cleaners, security guards, and food traders, making sure the food stalls were set up correctly and timely, and controlling the queues of customers when service started. Other tasks were related to health and safety, such as making sure everyone had the required equipment and signs. Other tasks included marketing and promoting the markets by taking pictures and sharing them on social media, or handing out flyers around the market before lunchtime. The site manager also fulfils a public relations role on site, talking with bloggers, journalists, potential customers and traders who want to join EAT-LONDON when visiting their markets. At the end of the trading day, the site manager charges the pitch fee or intake percentage which EAT-LONDON charges for trading at their markets. The manager also makes sure everyone leaves the site clean at the end of the trading day, to then report back to the landowner staff on site about the day and to return the key, materials, etc.

In this role, I had the chance to meet and talk with everyone involved in the set-up operation. While talking to the site managers Ron and Toby, I learnt "on the job" about the decision-making process and the relationship between the organisers, traders and other actors. Taking longer field notes on site was difficult because most of the

activities required me to work whilst constantly moving around the place, finding materials, or having multiple conversations with many people. At the beginning, it was hard to concentrate on being in the field, since this required my getting used to the activities, meeting people and learning their names, while at the same time taking notes. Whenever there was a quiet moment, I concentrated on taking as many notes as I could. I amassed a large amount of data during my first visits to the markets. The experience was intense, particularly as whilst being trained on site to assist the manager, I was in a public space with people passing by, traffic, shouting, music, rain, wind and many other stimuli. I was learning how to run the site, and being given instructions about what to do. Each new visit entailed meeting ten or twelve new people, as the EAT-LONDON markets rotate the line-up of traders in each market, each week. My field notes kept track of the names and roles of the people I encountered, traders on site, routine activities, uses of space, tasks and instructions given, conversations I had with the manager and traders, overheard conversations from customers visiting the market, activities carried out by the traders inside their stalls or vans. I also noted down questions I was asked, further questions to ask others, and notes from the social media coverage of the activities of the market, such as posting pictures and responses from followers. I completed my field notes when I returned home after the trading day ended.

In my first visit to the EAT-LONDON market at The Gherkin building (Figure 7), Ron introduced me to the building managerial staff and to the traders as a researcher, a student volunteering for EAT-LONDON and helping them with the work at their markets. His introductions during the first couple of weeks made my access to the site easy, and it made me feel more comfortable in this new scenario. Also, in introducing me to traders, by my next visit some of the new people had heard about me from others. By the third week of visiting markets, Ron stopped introducing me to other traders and people at the markets, and I was more comfortable in approaching people to introduce myself, and my role. On these occasions, I made sure to be clear about communicating the aims of my research, and the anonymity and confidentiality of my study. Traders' consent to participate in the research was granted orally in these conversations.



Figure 7: Set-up EAT-LONDON market at The Gherkin

Traders I met on site were curious about my research and wanted to know more about the angle I was pursuing. They asked if my focus was on food, or if it was on the business or public space. Most of these initial conversations were very useful in terms of gathering their thoughts about the street food scene, their roles, and their observations about how the business works, which are the most important markets, traders and trends. However, their perception of my role as a researcher was different from the perception of EAT-LONDON staff. The team at the office understood that ethnographic work is a committed, full and long immersion in the field. On the contrary, food traders thought that my research was a short intervention, consisting in a couple of visits and interviews. By the third time visiting the markets, a couple of them asked me if I had finished my research already. Learning about this confusion about my role in the field was useful in ensuring that I communicated clearly each time about details of my research, and that I managed the separation between assisting EAT-LONDON, and gathering information on the curation of street food markets.

During this stage of fieldwork assisting the market manager on site, I became acquainted with food traders, since I frequently met them and heard their stories. Most of our conversations took place in the short period between setting up the gazebo or parking the van and prepping the food before customers arrived. I took advantage of this opportunity to ask more direct questions about topics such as: their journey to becoming a street food trader, why they chose a kind of food, how they learnt to set up a business, the best thing about trading and the difficulties they faced, as well as how things might have changed in the past few years, etc. These conversations were very rich in terms of gathering an incredible number of stories and ideas to pursue on further visits and interviews, and to prepare for the next stage of fieldwork working only with food traders.

My participant observations working on site were valued and recognised, and Ron in particular, had a key role in instructing me on what to do, and explaining some of the decisions he was making whilst on site. I also took this opportunity to ask direct questions about people (who they are), situations (what is happening) and decisions (why are we/they doing that). The aim of this line of questioning was to make connections between the curatorial work carried out in the office and the actions and people implementing them on site. After the market finished and we returned to the office together, Ron gave an overall report of the trading day to Nick, or Perla if she was there. I put attention to how they were solving problems arising in certain markets sites. In participating in both the office and at the market sites, I was able to obtain a better picture of the market organisers' working practices and how they curate markets and place. In the visits to markets, I also took notes on the difficulties or problems I experienced in the role of assisting the market manager. One of the main issues was working on the street for long hours. We had to stand on our feet from 8am until 3pm in varying weather conditions and temperature, remaining on site until all traders had left, to then frequently return to the office. The work was exhausting and I had to spend time filling in field notes after being on site. These visits were physically and mentally intense and challenging. For this reason, I scheduled visits to markets on non-consecutive days when possible, except when working on a weekend market.

A more specific task which I completed while on site was the audit and customer survey as requested by Perla. On some of my visits I counted the footfall of people coming in, and passing by the marketplace. On other visits, I handed out a survey for customers to fill while queuing for food or whilst eating nearby. I then gathered up the surveys, and transcribed and analysed the data to produce a report for each market. The outcome of this work was beneficial for both parties; EAT-LONDON would receive information about their markets, and I was able to get access to their marketplaces, obtaining insights about their working practices and developing rapport during this process.

I continued to visit the markets to undertake the customer surveys, in addition to occasionally flyering around the marketplaces during the months of June and July. The auditing task entailed two surveys per market I was assigned to, and I had to schedule those visits later in the summer, while I was working with when I was changing scenarios of research working with food traders. This period of time with overlapping tasks was exhausting and it did not provide many insights on the curatorial practices of market organisers; it was however necessary to complete the task I had planned, in order to maintain a good and close relationship with EAT-LONDON. I met the EAT-LONDON staff at the marketplace, and talked and caught up throughout the summer whilst I was conducting the survey. I would email a report from the survey data every other week to Perla. By July 2014, I sent the final report and an email to say goodbye and to thank Perla and the staff for having me. I also asked Perla for a final interview later in the summer, which took place in October. We are still in touch by email and follow each other on social media.

3.4.3. Second stage of fieldwork: food traders (April- September 2014)

Access to food traders

After spending five months working with EAT-LONDON, I was reaching saturation point with the participant observation on the curatorial practices of market organisers. I had the chance to gather data on the decision-making process for making markets, picking

traders, finding market locations and setting up markers as well as the networks organisers were involved in, and the relationships they had with other actors in the field. The second stage of fieldwork was aimed at observing how these curatorial practices and criteria were materialized at different marketplaces. Kuipers (2013) describes these places where cultural intermediaries develop their work as a research opportunity. "Researchers can go to where 'the field' materializes (...) At such events ephemeral cultural fields, held together by mediated interaction most of the time, suddenly come to life. During such meetings, standards are negotiated, made and put in practice; relations are forged; hierarchies performed and challenged; 'buzz' is created; and knowledge is disseminated and transferred. Such materializations of the field are ideal fieldwork sites" (Kuipers, 2013, p. 77). By progressing to work with food traders on site, I engaged with the curation of markets from trading practices and the curation of marketplaces from localised urban forms. The aim was to conduct participant observation to understand traders' roles in generating a business within the scene, the practicalities of running a business, building an identity and negotiating access to market organisations and events. For this reason, it was important to continue fieldwork with food traders as key actors of the street food scene in London. Additionally, by working with food traders I could have access to non-EAT-LONDON markets, and thereby continue my inquiry into the curation of the street food scene from other organisers' practices and perspectives.

As previously mentioned, in order to access food traders, I introduced myself, and my research, to those working at EAT-LONDON markets. The company also added me to a mailing list where traders posted job offers for casual staff. At the same time, I started searching Twitter for food traders that were requesting staff, and I contacted a few of them, to introduce myself. The first trader I contacted through Twitter was Marcy, running a business selling Malaysian burgers. Marcy had started her business only 3 months before I contacted her. We met in April 2014 and when I introduced myself and my research aims, I made clear that I was looking for the opportunity to work with food traders as part of the fieldwork for my PhD research. Marcy was enthusiastic about having me, and interested in sharing her knowledge and learning experience as an entrepreneur.

Marcy used to work as a corporate lawyer in the City, and quit her job to become a food entrepreneur; Marcy is also a trader not associated with EAT-LONDON. She was working at Rupert Street in Soho and in a community market in a School in Harringay. After I joined her, we went to work at a night market in Bermondsey, a community market in Tottenham Green, and for the company Vibes Feast at a Festival event, and at their Dalston and Lewisham markets. Working with Marcy allowed me to expand my fieldwork to look at the work of food traders, but also gave me the possibility of exploring other organisations. I became Marcy's first ever member of staff, and I continued working with her until the end of my fieldwork in September 2014. I also joined three other traders who were looking for staff and working in various locations: with Jack and Millie from Kerala Dosa, a couple who were trading south Indian food; with Francesco and his junior partner Mike, making gourmet burgers; and with Claire, a chef running an artisanal ice cream stall.

The criteria for selecting these traders was in part pragmatic, due to accessibility and timing, as they were looking for staff, they were interested in participating in my research, and they were understanding of my dual role as staff member and researcher. Furthermore, I was looking for traders more experienced in the business, as a counterpart to my work with Marcy. Jack, Millie, Francesco and Claire had at least two years of experience working in their respective businesses when I first contacted them. They also had different journeys, stories and visions about the street food scene, and gave me access to other markets and locations. My ethnographic fieldwork was flexible enough to follow these actors to the places where they were conducting business. By working with these traders, I was able to understand the dynamics of EAT-LONDON markets, and I also had the possibility of working in places such as a pub, a night market, special events, weddings, and two music Festivals including Glastonbury⁴.

Some of my assumptions behind these criteria to select traders were that I would find more, and different, data by working at other organisers' markets. I thought that this

⁴ Glastonbury Festival is a five-day festival of contemporary performing arts that takes place near Pilton, Somerset each year in June. According to Wikipedia "Glastonbury is the largest greenfield festival in the world, and is now attended by around 175,000 people... Regarded as a major event in British culture, the festival is inspired by the ethos of the hippie, counterculture, and free festival movements" https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glastonbury_Festival

experience would provide additional material to understand the curatorial distinctions and practices of other actors in the scene. However, working at these other places did not provide a deep insight into working practices. It generated a more general knowledge of how other organisations work and how networks of organisers are established. For this reason, I decided later to conduct interviews with market organisers to gather more specific information about their roles and the curatorial processes to create markets and marketplaces.

Access to food traders was made via networks I developed through EAT-LONDON and Twitter. In each case, I presented myself as a PhD student, conducting research on street food markets. I explained the data collection process and how I intended to go about ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of research participants. Consent was granted orally in our first meetings. During my work with food traders, I made sure that they could see I was committed to complete the necessary training and tasks required to work with them at their stalls and other events. We also agreed to have a calendar of shifts that I could complete. In this instance, it was very important for traders like Marcy, and Jack and Millie, to be convinced that I could be responsible, carry on with the tasks they gave me, and completing shifts on weekdays and weekends.

Participant observation with food traders

This participant observation required working alongside traders selling food at their stalls to gain insights into the street food scene. The work was mainly physical, and involved tasks such as unloading vans and carrying boxes, setting up a gazebo, preparing ingredients, cooking food, serving plates, taking orders and chatting with customers, engaging with other traders and market organisers, shopping nearby for a missing ingredient, among many other tasks. The work also involved developing skills such as cooking on the street and serving fast, manipulating raw meat and following the health and safety indications, slicing buns to perfection, and being constantly aware of the need to restock, or to hold the queue during busy periods. My participant observation in these shifts usually lasted for five or six hours for a lunchtime market,

and eight or more hours when working on a weekend night market or a festival. Given the large size of the tasks and activities undertaken, I used my breaks to take field notes with my phone. I took pictures and wrote down keywords to remember the tasks carried out each day, the uses of space, situations and conversations. I completed my field notes at home after my shift, and then on the following days. I tended to schedule trading visits on non-consecutive days, so as to have enough time to complete and organise my field notes and photos, as well as to reflect on further issues to explore on my next visit.

The aim of having an immersive experience whilst working with traders was on the one hand, to participate without disturbing their trading job. I needed to develop my working skills so as to feel comfortable enough to maintain conversations with them while doing the job required. On the other hand, this involvement gave me the chance to be trained “on the job” by the traders. The training period was rich in insights about the curation of street food markets and how traders develop a business under these terms. Being trained was an opportunity to learn about their practices on creating products, brands, and managing the business. Including practical tasks like calculating amounts of food, sizes of portions, or evaluating flavours and aesthetic elements of food. It gave me information to understand the importance of the sensorial aspects of a market; and of managing relationship with other traders, market organisers, customers, bloggers, photographers and potential investors visiting the stall. In eating together, we shared our likes and dislikes, opinions about specific characteristics of food such as flavour, acidity, saltiness, sweetness, spiciness, temperature, freshness, crunchiness, presentation, sauces or seasoning. I had already learned more about the language with which to “talk food” during my work with EAT-LONDON, through the practices of discussing food or flavours, evaluating, sharing recipes, favourite traders, dishes, and where to eat or buy food in London.

Initially the work with food traders was extremely intense and physically exhausting because it demanded standing for many hours, and because it overlapped with other activities in my research working with EAT-LONDON at their office and markets. During these first few months, I was working with four traders on different dates. By June 2014, I worked more consistently with Jack and Millie, a couple that sells southern Indian (see Figure 8, pictures at the bottom). Then, in July and until the end of my

fieldwork in September, I worked every weekend with Marcy at the Vibes Feast night market in Lewisham (see Figure 8, pictures at the top). I was only able to work five or six times in total with Francesco and Claire, and on these occasions our relationship remained focussed on the job tasks and did not developed any further.



Figure 8: Participant observation with food traders

I spent many occasions with Jack and Millie, and we travelled together and camped at the festivals where they were trading. With time, our conversations evolved and rapport was built on the assumption that I could perform my job and contribute to their business without being distracted. We had many conversations, and they shared opinions and insights on the scene, and how it was changing. Most of the initial conversations about their business sounded like a rehearsed pitch, but later this ‘outward discourse’ evolved to a more inward speech. Trust was developed through the many informal conversations we sustained while selling dosas, unloading and loading the van, camping and chatting with other traders at the festivals and sharing many meals together. Their openness and willingness to share their motivations to pursue this career, problems of their business, conflicts with organisers, and criticising

their competition in the scene was a sign of their trust in me. They were also interested on hearing my experiences of living in London, stories about Chile, travelling and tourist destinations, food, the Spanish language and generally my research and the demands of doing a PhD.

I also easily built rapport with Marcy, and developed a deeper relationship during this stage of fieldwork. Given that she was new to the business, I had the opportunity to learn how to create and develop a street food business, and witnessed the changes and problems she was experiencing along the way. Marcy is a perfectionist and a strict instructor; working with her was very demanding, and she would constantly give directions to follow tasks to prepare and serve food at her stall. We had many conversations in which she shared the problems and misfortunes she experienced trying to enter the major market organisations like EAT-LONDON and Vibes Feast, and how to expand her business in the near future. She also shared her story about her career-change decisions, from being a lawyer to selling food on the street, building a business and a brand, how to promote and get more customers, or followers on Twitter, who she would talk to for advice, the importance of networking, and other relevant information. Marcy shared details of her personal life and she was interested in knowing about my research, my journey from Santiago to London, and my everyday life. My relationship with Jack, Millie and Marcy is still active, we follow each other on social media, and I say hello when I see them at some markets.

The fieldwork stage of working with food traders was challenging and intense. It was physically, mentally and emotionally exhausting to be trained to do a job I did not know, and to gain trust and develop a relationship with the traders and other actors in these markets. The work with food traders allowed me to gain a perspective from the inside of the curation of markets, with different locations, formats and temporalities such as lunch time markets in streets or squares, night markets in warehouses, parking spaces or abandoned places, festival markets like Glastonbury, and special events such as the Malaysia Night⁵, and the Brazil Day⁶ in Trafalgar Square.

⁵ This is an event held every year to celebrate Malaysia's food and culture.

⁶ This was an event to celebrate the kick off the Football World Cup in 2014.

3.4.4. Third stage of fieldwork: Interviews (October 2014)

I had the opportunity to interview Perla, Nick and Anna from EAT-LONDON during my first visit to the office in February 2014. Those interviews, although useful, were highly exploratory and were an attempt to get to know them, their background and their role at the office. Issues relating specifically to curating street food markets were not initially asked. As mentioned by other research on the work of cultural intermediaries (Kuipers, 2013), conducting interviews with these professionals is challenging because they tend to communicate rehearsed pitches about their work and their business. It is difficult to get past these accounts, “and they are skilled at avoiding unwanted questions. Therefore, formal interviews are ideally complemented with ethnographic methods” (Kuipers, 2013, p. 75). The aim of conducting interviews after the ethnographic part of fieldwork was to discuss and clarify some issues and ideas that emerged, and to ask specific questions about the curatorial practices and their relationship with other actors in the field. For this reason, it was important for this research to combine ethnographic work and qualitative interviews to develop a nuanced exploration and description of the curatorial discourse and practices used when making markets and creating marketplaces.

After conducting participant observation with food traders, I decided to interview organisers from different companies, and people related to the street food business. I conducted six interviews in total: four with market organisers, one with a food blogger and one with a landowner/market organiser. I decided to contact market organisers that I met during fieldwork and others that I did not necessarily work with, but had heard of from traders, or when working with EAT-LONDON. I contacted interviewees by email or private messages on Twitter. I introduced myself, and my research, explained the aim of the interview and asked to record our conversation, as well as promising the anonymity and confidentiality of the information they shared. The interviews lasted between forty-five minutes and one hour and were held in places chosen by the interviewees (cafes, restaurant or their offices) during October 2014.

The interviewees were:

- Perla: EAT-LONDON founder. We had a final interview two months after finishing fieldwork with the company.
- Alan: market organiser for Vibes Feast. I had met Alan before, when trying to get access to Vibes Feast.
- Rosie: market organiser for a company that introduces food trucks into commercial spaces in Estates in the City of London. I contacted her through the email address available on their website.
- Alice: organiser of a small community based market in North London. I contacted her by sending her a message on Twitter.
- Hillary: commercial festival coordinator for a major cultural venue in London. This cultural centre holds a weekend market organised by a private external company. They were making the transition to start organising the street food market themselves. I contacted through email.
- William: food blogger. I met Will through Marcy. He used to attend many markets and street food events, taking pictures and promoting markets in social media. He was one of Marcy's mentors and introduced her to people in the street food business.

The interviews focussed on different topics, and the questions were flexible enough to build a casual conversation. The interview questions were developed from a list of general topics, and were adapted according to the interviewee's profile and expertise.

In general, the topics of the interviews were discussed according to the following guideline:

1. Finding and creating a marketplace:
 - a. How do you find or pick places? Is there something particular about the places where you locate your markets? What caught your attention about these places? (location, infrastructure, audience).
 - b. What is your relationship with other actors involved? (development companies, landowners, Councils).
 - c. What do these actors gain from street food markets like yours?
2. Curating markets.

- a. How would you describe the experience of being in your market? Which elements define your style?
 - b. How would you describe a street food market style?
 - c. What qualities are you looking for in the traders you pick?
- 3. Use of social media or digital communication
 - a. How important it is to have a digital/social media production of your market/events?

3.5. Reflexivity

Working ethnographically means working reflexively; thinking about doing ethnography is also part of doing ethnography (Madden, 2008). Thinking about doing ethnography and doing ethnography ran in parallel during the many months conducting fieldwork, when I constantly negotiated my subjectivity as a researcher, and my positionality in the field (Finlay, 2002). Reflexivity means dealing with questions of how my position as a researcher, and intrusion in the field, creates or changes the data I am collecting. By working reflexively, I had to deal with issues such as my biographical characteristics (Sheehan, 2011) as a foreigner, a non-native English speaker, and a PhD student. I continuously adjusted and adapted my decisions to the different scenarios where I conducted research to generate a strategy for access (how to introduce myself), rapport (how to position myself to gain trust) and data collection (how my intrusion changed the field).

Regarding my position in the field and the generation of rapport, I was reflexive on the data I was collecting and my capacity to be trusted by my informants as well as true to my role as sociologist. During fieldwork, informants were comfortable sharing their opinions and thoughts about their work with me. For example, market organisers from EAT-LONDON would explain or make comments on the success of their company, and how their privileged position was helpful. In this case, their class background, education and whiteness were elements mentioned as assets to be successful in the scene. They would also make comments on the ethnicity or racial background of their

traders (see Chapter 4). These comments made me aware about my personal identity in the field, and to which extent I was considered an equal or an outsider in the scene. I was a foreigner, non-white person. Therefore, to which extent would our relationship develop and how would they share key information.

But I was also and LSE PhD researcher; my educational credentials could positioned myself closer to the EAT-LONDON group. My abilities were valued, and tasks were given to me to assist them with their work. However, this ambivalence also made me question the purpose of them overtly sharing their thoughts on class and race privilege. It might have been a performance; something that was deliberately shared. It could have been shared as a sort of explanation of the labour inequalities in this sector, or to prevent my criticism on the politics of their curatorial work then, or later when writing up my findings. I used this kind of conversation as a reminder of my aim of conducting critical sociological analysis of these findings. My analysis of the curation of street food scene recognises the political implications of the curatorial role of market organisers. In this research, I am proposing that market organisers as intermediaries define the values of the scene, excluding people from participating in markets and marketplaces.

During fieldwork, my role was changing according to the different scenarios where I was working at. I entered the field as a PhD student undertaking ethnographic research. When working at the EAT-LONDON offices my position was fully understood, and information about me was shared, stating that I was a researcher collaborating with the team. In this instance, intrusion occurred when working at the office and I observed how certain issues were discussed outside the office space, where I could not hear their conversations. As a PhD student, my competencies were used in the office to conduct certain research tasks that were needed. In the scenario of the market site, where I was assisting the site manager, my position as a researcher conducting ethnographic work was more complicated. The site manager knew what I was doing, but with everyone else involved, I had to introduce myself and explain my research aims on several different occasions. I constantly reinforced my role and position in the field to secure consent about the information I gathered while working on other tasks.

My intrusion in the field as a trainee working with market organisers, and then as a trainee working with food traders, was not exempt of issues with confidentiality. As my participant observation involved carrying out tasks for market organisers, my identity as a researcher in the field was at times confusing for food traders, or other people I met. Some of them did not realise I was still conducting research while working for EAT-LONDON. Then, when I started working with food traders, my identity changed again, and the issue of confidentiality emerged once more. On one occasion, a food trader thought that my familiarity with EAT-LONDON would be helpful to gain insider information about the organisation and to prepare a meeting with them to get picked to join their markets. On other occasions, food traders shared confidential information with me, and then asked me not to tell anyone in EAT-LONDON. On both occasions, I promised my participants full confidentiality on what they shared, and reinforced the message that any information or opinion shared with me during fieldwork was confidential and anonymous. I would not disclose information or my experience with traders to EAT-LONDON and vice versa.

Negotiating my access with food traders was not difficult, but negotiating my position was a tough task in which I had to perform my job at the stalls to a certain standard, while also conducting academic research. My identity as a researcher was confusing when starting work with food traders and getting trained to do the job. In this sense, the tasks were highly demanding and I did not have time to take notes. I had to ask the trader I was working with for time off, or to let me take short notes while working. On some occasions, the demands of the job exceeded my capacity to write field notes at all, and these were completed after fieldwork. I also had to refuse to work on certain dates or for longer Festivals due to academic commitments.

Part of being reflexive while conducting ethnography is to examine the “subtlety politics of my research position” (Baiocchi et. al., 2013), how my research can have an impact on participants’ lives or work. In this sense, taking on board ethical considerations in terms of the disclosure of research aims, intentions, how the data will be used, and also gaining consent to gather information, and to record or take pictures, was important. For an ethical fieldwork process, it was also important to continuously ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of my informants, as well as

communicating with them that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw their support at any stage of the research process.

3.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed my ethnographic approach to this research, with an involvement in research participant's everyday practices and an embodied immersion in the field at all stages. During fieldwork and during the research process in general, I reflected on my position in the field and the data produced by it. I was also, flexible enough to make changes and adjustments in my approach as required, taking each stage of fieldwork as a learning experience. For example, I moved to a different setting, engaging with different actors in many locations to obtain rich and deep ethnographic material that would serve to analyse the curation of the street food scene in London inductively.

My research concern was to develop an idea of curation based on empirical material, to then make sense of it sociologically. I decided to separate out the analysis of the empirical material in the thesis, by first focussing on the curation of markets and the relationship between organisers and food traders, and to then explain the involvement of other actors and the curation of place. The aim of separating the curatorial process into markets and places was to give each aspect of curation enough space for detailed ethnographic description. Whilst markets and marketplaces are inseparable entities, in my analysis these two elements are examined in different chapters. The data obtained about curation of markets, and the relationships between organisers and food traders are presented in Chapters 4 and 5; the curation of marketplaces from the narratives and negotiations of value of market organisers and other actors are discussed in Chapter 6. The practicalities of making place with specific qualities for a brand experience are set out in Chapter 7, and Chapter 8 is the thesis conclusion.

Chapter 4. The curatorial practices of market organisers

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I demonstrate the importance of the curatorial practices of market organisers as cultural intermediaries by looking at their definitions of the scene and their role as curators in the process of picking traders to join their organisations. I describe their use of taste and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984), and different kinds of knowledge to curate markets as a practice of qualification (Callon, 1998) or cultural calculation (Slater, 2002a). The chapter begins by analysing organisers' narratives about the scene and their involvement in becoming curators. Through their personal narratives and working practices, market organisers describe the street food scene and the kinds of values and taste they seek to promote through their work in making markets: good food, good people and good places. In this case, I focus on their occupation, and discuss how their taste dispositions are cultivated as embodied knowledge, expressed through their working practices to create a new career in a niche business.

I analyse the cultural calculations they perform to define professionalism when picking new traders to join their markets. I examine the quality criteria they use to determine good traders, and how they select people on the basis of being a good fit with their organisations. In this case, the organisers use economic rationality, and an understanding of how the street food scene works, along with an embodied knowledge, to make taste distinctions about traders' food, personality, customer service skills, their entrepreneurial vision and ambitions. As well as considering traders' social characteristics such as age, class and educational background.

This process of curating markets by picking traders is an example of how cultural intermediaries perform an important role as market actors, where they work to singularize the offer of their markets with a series of qualities that they actively look to perform and stabilize. This empirical case also shows how cultural intermediaries generate value based on their cultural capital and embodied knowledge (Entwistle, 2009) to make taste distinctions (Bourdieu, 1984). With these distinctions, they create hierarchies in the street food scene, and by including and excluding people from

participating in these markets, create inequalities in the scene. Market organisers work as authorities in the scene, defining styles and values to curate markets as economic and cultural forms.

4.2. Becoming a market curator

A small group of people⁷ have started companies or developed freelance careers in setting up new street food markets across London. Most organisers I met during this research work independently as consultants or for a company that provides places where food traders can sell their food. One could say this is a new profession in the cultural economies aimed at creating niche markets in the field of food services. Market organisers work as intermediaries between food traders and landowners, and between traders and audiences. Market organisers have different backgrounds, most of them have university degrees and experience in the food or catering industry, or in some creative professions. It is possible to find people with experience in everything from organising events and parties, to public relations, and law, with only a few with experience as former street food traders.

A common characteristic of people in the business is a career change. Most market organisers (and also the food traders of these markets) have moved from different jobs such as corporate law, politics or finance, to work in the organising of street food markets. For example, Rosie, who works as a market organiser, has international experience in the food industry from a creative perspective as a writer and in public relations. Other organisers have experience in the catering business or organising public events. Nick from EAT-LONDON studied Economics and Russian Culture and was very interested in cities and diversity. He says *“I love all the kind of cacophony of voices and the dynamism and that kind of excitement of being in cities I guess... and food has always been my love... after I graduated I worked for a year in an Edinburgh cheesemonger which was the best year of my life actually”*. He worked as an MP’s assistant in London doing research on housing and welfare, but he was trying to find a

⁷ There is not an exact number of companies that organise street food markets in London, but during my ethnographic fieldwork in 2014, I have counted at least six companies employing around fifty organisers in total.

job that could combine both of his interests, urban issues and food, and decided to work for EAT-LONDON.

Alan from Vibes Feast has public relations experience in Finance and he also created his own pop-up restaurant. With a friend, they found a delivery service of good quality products like lobster and oysters and they used this opportunity to start cooking and organising dinners in a pub in Clapham. This allowed him to connect with a network of people in the restaurant scene and to decide on a career change to a more fulfilling job organising markets. He says his role in Vibes Feast evolved quickly from event management to co-organising, also doing marketing, bringing in sponsors for events and *“picking traders and curating these weekly night markets”*.

These actors describe their involvement in the business as a personal and professional change towards a creative job that is undertaken for reasons of passion and self-interest rather than only for profit (Negus, 1995; Wright, 2005, McRobbie, 2016). In these accounts, it is possible to trace the way in which the careers of market organisers have evolved from personal experience, or an interest in the food business, to the profession of a market organiser. In this way, regardless of academic background, market organisers train themselves *“on the job”*, using a combination of their skills in planning, logistics and events and food, their cultural capital on the scene and participation in social networks. These cultural intermediaries have gained cultural and economic knowledge of the scene through their previous personal involvement and interest in related events and by taking part in a network of similar people.

Through interviews and participant observation with EAT-LONDON and in other markets, I observed that market organisers' jobs entail conducting and coordinating multiple tasks at once. These include finding suitable venues, managing the logistics of setting up markets, organising the food offer at particular sites or events, and picking traders to join their markets. Rosie explains that their role has solved a problem for the organisation of street food markets. She says that finding locations to set up their markets is a difficult and time-consuming task, and that food traders were facing immense difficulties in managing the logistical aspects of organising markets, as well as working in their food business. According to Rosie, this is one of the reasons for the professionalization of their role as market organisers, with a clear mission of finding and negotiating the use of venues with landowners to facilitate trading.

According to conversations with organisers in different companies, the model of these businesses usually consists in generating profit from charging a pitch fee to traders to work at markets or a percentage of their intakes. For some events, they also make a profit from selling alcohol. Freelance market organisers or companies generally provide a service to traders that includes taking care of the site logistics (power and water supply, toilets, Council permits, security in some cases), promotion and marketing for these markets or events. Some of them additionally provide feedback, advice or consultancy for food entrepreneurs starting out in the business. As the nature of organising street food markets is still developing and evolving, these sorts of companies are exploring different business ideas and seeking new opportunities for growth.

For EAT-LONDON, this curatorial role demands a series of tasks that have recently increased with the growing demand from landowners to set-up their markets at their venues. In terms of the specific job roles, EAT-LONDON has evolved bringing in new members of staff in the past year to take care of this demand. For example, Nick, Head of Markets, now “Head of Operations and Innovation” oversees all markets, but also has a strong influence on Perla’s decisions about events, finding venues, developing new strategies and picking new traders to join as members. On the other hand, site managers oversee specific markets on site, dealing with issues like helping traders to set up, fixing problems with water supply or electricity, dealing with the landowners or external staff such as cleaning and security teams, as well as talking to customers, tweeting and uploading images to promote the market or meeting journalists or potential clients on site. In addition, when back in the office, they must still undertake administrative, financial or marketing tasks like designing flyers or maintaining and improving the website.

However, the curation of street food markets involves more than the logistical and structural arrangements of a place and the food offer; it also involves the design of a consumption experience. Whilst food is the main element transacted in street food markets, market organisers as cultural intermediaries put together multiple material and sensorial elements that form a particular style and brand experience that can be referred to as culture, vibe, atmosphere or a sense of place at their marketplaces. Market organisers describe how their job could also be aimed at revitalising places,

contributing to socializing and bringing a community together, or creating new entertainment destinations by opening non-traditional places for food and drink consumption like car parks, abandoned warehouses, or power stations.

These different companies organising street food markets have their specialities and they are dedicated to certain kinds of events or targeting specific audiences. For example, companies like EAT-LONDON organise lunchtime markets simultaneously at various sites targeting office workers during the week, and also organise special events on the weekends for a broader audience. Other organisers work setting up markets on weekends in community areas, like schoolyards or green areas in residential neighbourhoods. Vibes Feast organise night markets, setting up indoors during the winter in warehouses, and outdoors during the summer in other spaces like car parks or abandoned retail spaces. Similarly, Rose, a market organiser, works to integrate a street food offer into more traditional retail settings, in this case bringing in food trucks to what she calls “*blue chip developments*” in the City of London. The biggest organisers of street food markets in London tend to combine lunchtime markets or daytime markets with seasons of night markets and special events at the weekends. As Alice, organiser of a small community street food market in North London describes, the big names in the street food scene are a “*whole league in themselves*” and create markets and transform places into leisure destinations for a wide range of customers, while community markets, on the other hand, are aimed at encouraging neighbours in local areas to meet each other.

The paths that the participants have followed to become market organisers curating street food markets share some similarities. Most of them are educated and from a middle-class background, having changed careers to develop a job in a new niche market. They occupy intermediary positions where their personal involvement and interest in food and the street food scene has equipped them with the skills and knowledge to develop their work as market organisers. They perform a series of tasks setting up markets, but the most important responsibility is to find suitable venues and create a brand or style for their organisations. These street food markets share a similar configuration based on the values and standards that these organisers determine. Differences between markets depend on the curatorial practices the organisers perform, tailored to the specific target audiences of each of their markets.

4.3. The street food scene in London.

As cultural intermediaries, market organisers see their role in the street food scene as one of generating value for their customers; they work to differentiate their markets from other forms of food service and street trading. As market actors, organisers singularize their markets with distinct qualities. The element of 'quality' itself is what separates them from the rest, and they curate these markets to appeal to an audience that can understand this value and is willing to pay for it. There are three elements of quality that market organisers visualise in the street food scene: these are a combination of good food, good people and good places. I examine how market organisers conceptualise these elements in the following section.

Perla, EAT-LONDON Founder, started in the food business in 2006 when, after working abroad on cruise ships, she decided to become a food trader and sell chocolate products from a van. She travelled across the country, visiting different towns and asking people for a place to stay, giving chocolate pudding in return. She created a blog where she wrote about her weekly "tour" adventures and received feedback from customers and supporters, attracting media attention and giving interviews for magazines and television. After four years, and wanting to have a more challenging and intellectually stimulating job, she decided to sell the van and start a new business that would help street food traders to work collectively.

Perla comments that EAT-LONDON aims to open public spaces for street food, where everyone can have access to markets with *good food*. Her vision is different from other organisers that, according to her, look only for "*what's hip and the hip places*" to do night events. She has a distinctive interest in urbanism and transforming places with food, and creative ideas to build more sustainable and diverse businesses. For Perla, the job is to create a *culture* of eating on the street, to communicate with a larger group of people involved in the street food business, and to arrange events and venues collaboratively as a collective. As Perla describes, market organisers have an expertise in sorting and "*putting things together*" in places, working with networks of traders and other people in the street food business.

After setting up EAT-LONDON, Perla successfully negotiated deals with landowners to set up street food markets in various venues across the city, starting with the Boulevard in the new development of the King's Cross area. In 2012, the business was rapidly expanding and they were organising markets simultaneously in different locations, and getting recognition in the press and growing a social media presence. As Nick explains, at the beginning there was not much competition and EAT-LONDON expanded fast, being the first organisation to open a street food market of this kind in the City of London, feeding hundreds of corporate office workers. Suddenly they were working full time and in need of new traders to join their organization.

At EAT-LONDON an important part of the strategic planning happens collaboratively in the open space of the office: on the walls, on different boards, on planners and calendars they map hot spots and the profiles of new traders to consider. They also list the criteria and key aspects of the business they would like to develop in the coming year. This information is part of the infrastructure of the office, that everyone can see and discuss openly and at any point, whilst undertaking the day-to-day tasks of the business. In terms of the strategic planning, words like "nurture", "focus", "innovate" and "profit" can be read on the board in the office. On my first visit to the office, Perla explained what some of these words mean for her business:

"[We are] "Value creators", "Custom-made bespoke, "Place-making" is what we do best, and "reputation" is the value that [our customers] get from working with us. These are our four customers: traders are our customers, people who own space, customers that eat [in our markets], and private event people are our customers as well" (Perla, EAT-LONDON).

On this board on the wall, and according to Perla's description, it is possible to observe how market organisers consider their role as important for the value generation of the scene. Their curatorial role involves creating value for their traders, clients and customers to their markets, as well as creating value for the places where their markets are located. Informants describe their job specifically as changing the vision of eating on the street, and advocating for a change in the public perception of street food trading. In this sense, they are creating new taste by legitimising a new consumption experience.

Market organisers shape the scene as entertainment, where going to street food markets becomes a hobby or pastime for their imagined customers. Nick says that going to a market on a Friday or a Saturday is a very London thing to do, and that in the past people wouldn't be doing that as a hobby. *"Broadway Market for instance in Hackney is really, brought a whole new sort of set of food loving people probably actually built that culture of people wanting to eat food, and really kind of engage with it locally"*.

Market organisers create markets professionally, characterised by the offer of *good food* and *good traders* with a higher standard of trading, making a *good place* for socialisation and consumption. They see and shape street food markets as a destination, where good food, good traders and interesting places combine to offer a brand experience, which is different from just the provision of food. In this value generation process, where market organisers curate markets with distinct qualities, the idea of 'quality' is an important and distinctive feature they like to promote with their street food markets. It is an element that connects their taste choices with the intended audience they would like to attract to their markets.

4.3.1. *Good food*

According to informants' descriptions there has been a cultural change in the UK's food scene, and especially in London, where it has evolved to offer a diversity of cuisines to an audience that has changed their interest, involvement and perception about food in social life. One the main roles of market organisers as curators of these spaces is to perform a quest for *good food* (Joosse and Hracs, 2015) based on their taste distinctions and classifications, and their own interpretations of what their clients, such as customers, traders or landowners, are looking for. Market organisers as curators need to navigate a complex network of actors and interests to make successful business decisions. Through their work, they constantly define the street food scene as a different kind of consumption experience; they define the scene interpreting what food markets should be like. Their curatorial work entails singularizing their markets with specific qualities that could differentiate them from other food spaces, such as farmer's markets, other forms of street trading selling

cheap food, and the retail chains. As cultural intermediaries, market organisers generate value with their markets, both in terms of economic value as a business, and cultural value by generating markets with distinct qualities.

Market organisers describe the customers at their markets as a group of people who are curious about food and like to know and explore different cuisines and places. In this way, customers might be called *foodies* (Johnston and Baumann, 2015), *hipsters* (Mörtenböck and Mooshammer, 2015) or an audience with a growing *culinary capital* (Naccarato and Lebesco, 2012) or *urban cultural capital* (Savage and Hanquinet, 2013). Market organisers try to reach this imagined audience (Moor, 2013; Friedman, 2014; Cronin, 2004) by curating a consumption experience at their markets that includes a diversity of cuisines, with handmade, fresh and tasty preparations.

Although, street food traditionally has been labelled as offering cheap and greasy food, market organisers work to change this perception. In the organisation of their markets they address elements like hygiene, cleanliness and the ethical sourcing of produce (especially meat). These choices relate to a “morality of quality” (de Solier 2013; Goodman 2004), or the moral value of what constitutes *good food* and *good shopping*, in which ethical or environmental issues are relevant to the consumption decisions of their imagined audiences (Moor, 2013; Friedman, 2014; Cronin, 2004). Market organisers define the street food market scene as a *foodie* offer for an audience that, as Nick claims, has the cultural capital to distinguish a good from a bad burger, as well as the economic capital to pay for it. This kind of cultural capital is a form of emerging cultural capital (Savage and Hanquinet, 2013) that recognises value in lowbrow forms of cultural production, as explained by Naccarato and Lebesco (2012) with the idea of culinary capital. Here, distinction emerges from the ability to include certain food choices, and exclude other on the basis of connoisseurship of cuisines, ingredients or quality. Nick explains the differences in their food offering:

“lots of people still think of it as the kind of thing you get outside a sports stadium or, you know and it’s kind the worst burgers in the world, really bad meat, really poor quality, but I think here things are changing, and people realize that... and I think people have got to the point largely that if they’ve got the money they are comfortable spending £7 in a burger, it’s no longer something ridiculous,” (Nick, EAT-LONDON).

By creating markets with a quality food offer, they are able to open new or non-traditional places for street food trading, such as, for example, the EAT-LONDON market at The Gherkin or in Canary Wharf; places in which the food offer tends to be dominated by restaurants and chains. In both of these locations, market organisers find a group of customers with the taste dispositions and economic capital to buy from them. Nick says, they are working to develop the experience of consuming street food as a permanent cultural practice among this audience, as *“making a culture that actually stays”*.

4.3.2. Good people

In the street food scene, markets perform a quality food offer by bringing hygienic, clean, diverse and tasty meals to audiences that can appreciate these qualities, and are willing to pay for them. This idea of quality also extends to the food traders who work at these locations. When defining the street food scene in London, market organisers emphasise the quality of the offering at their markets, as well as the standard of distinction that guides the selection of the traders. As mentioned before, in conversations with market organisers and in interviews it is possible to observe a clear discourse about finding high quality traders. However, the term quality seems to cover various different and heterogeneous aspects, such as the quality of food and service, or the hygiene levels of professional traders, as well as their branding and creativity. According to Rosie, ensuring quality in their markets entails precisely the raising of standards in the street food scene. She says, *“There’s still a lot of crap over there”* that could be improved in terms of quality of traders, food and the set up. Alan from Vibes Feast also acknowledges that his role as a market organiser is to find good traders and maintain the standards of the scene by organising markets:

“If you come to Vibes Feast you’re going to get a concentration of the best, and the same with EAT-LONDON you know, I think our job is to nurture the talent that is coming through and sustain it, and to distance it from the crap that you get in other places, there’s still such a huge margin between what’s good and what’s bad” (Alan, Vibes Feast).

In these terms, what differentiates their markets from other markets is the quality offering, which gives these street food markets a particular identity and brand. Curation is a value generation process that produces differentiation through these taste distinctions. Through their curation practice, market organisers and their companies perform the function of “arbiters of taste” (Gaskill, 2011). Their decisions legitimate street food as valuable, as Anna from EAT-LONDON comments; their brand is seen by the public as a *“mark of quality”* and an authority to advise clients about *“what’s good and what isn’t appropriate”*.

Market organisers configure their collectives by attracting members that can provide a *foodie* offer, but that are also able to embody a range of desirable characteristics during service, such as being charismatic and fun. The spectacle and atmosphere of street food markets is not only conditioned by the transaction of food, but by the relationship between customers and traders. Alan from Vibes Feast says that when curating their markets, in addition to making taste decisions about food, they need to be aware of having an interesting selection of traders, *“it’s about having a mix, but ultimately it’s got to be good food and it’s got to be good people”*.

Market organisers also work to develop a collaborative community of independent traders. They claim they promote start-ups and solo entrepreneurs working to resist the forces of corporatisation. Perla considers independence as a value for the scene; a good trader is someone who understands their role as providing an alternative to the provision of food by restaurants or chains. Perla says that a spirit of independence and collaboration is an essential element in the work of food entrepreneurs and it has been the inspiration to create EAT-LONDON. The idea of organising collective markets where food traders can work together has to do with economies of scale, setting up a group of traders in one place in order to attract more potential customers. It also helps to build a community of support based on their shared passion for food. Perla says that their community is very practical, *“everyone is a doer”* and helpful with each other; she mentions that it is important for traders to build connections with others and form a support network that will provide information about items such as future events, festivals or about who is selling equipment.

This independent character (Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999) is attractive to other businesses that can see commercial value in using similar models. In the case of street

food markets, the success of the business has attracted corporate investors willing to fund traders to expand their businesses or create street food chains, which is a major threat to the spirit and aims of the street food scene. Perla says that although a more corporatized environment is inevitable as the business grows and develops, she thinks there are always more independent businesses emerging, and it is her aim to support them. In this sense, curation is not just about distinction and taste making, but also about cultivation and care, in helping to develop their business or encourage growth. It is about both connoisseurship and an exercise of taste, as well advocacy and championing what curators regard as progressive or of quality. Perla explains her role:

“I don’t think I would ever want to be involved in a business that has lost its soul, so as long as the business still has some soul and the human element, and the human relationship... we’re always going to be linked to the grassroots, because we’re always going to be there for the traders who don’t know what the hell they’re doing and cooking this new food, while lots of the others might go on and get a restaurant or more corporate stuff, that’s fine, that’s part of the cycle” (Perla, market organiser EAT-LONDON).

In cultural studies, this dichotomy of ‘creativity’ and ‘commerce’, or between alternative, independent, or *indie*, and mainstream, has been exposed in previous accounts (Hebdige, 1979; Willis, 1990; Crewe et. al. 2003; Hesmondhalgh, 2005, 2012; Negus, 1995). In making the scene and setting up markets, these curators work on the ambivalence of making a business more sustainable and profitable, reaching more customers, but without losing independence or creative value. In this case, curators need to manage their markets to support new traders and small businesses and retain a distinctive character of the market, while at the same time seeking opportunities for growth and potential profit.

However, other market organisers like Rosie see corporatisation as an opportunity to grow, making their business more sustainable in the future; this means raising the profile of small street food traders and transforming them into successful businesses with higher profits. In an interview, she claimed that she foresees an expansion of the

street food market scene as a new brand in the retail sector. Rosie predicts that “*the street food brands of today will probably be the LEON⁸s of the future*”.

4.3.3. Good places

Market organisers define the scene as offering interesting places for their customers to socialise and spend time while eating and drinking (detailed discussion in Chapter 6 and 7). They discuss food as a form of entertainment and eating as a cultural practice, contrary to, for example, buying lunch from a sandwich shop. Market organisers describe street food markets as offering a cultural experience for consuming and exploring the city. For example, Nick explains that what they do with their markets is an alternative to only functional eating. Nick says:

“[Street food] it’s maybe slightly cool or interesting, or has this experience edge which brings it up above going to Pret or a sandwich shop... and it brings it back to function, another thing that is really interesting, function or experience... I think humans probably want more than function” (Nick, EAT-LONDON).

The cultural experience of consumption in these markets follows other accounts of markets (Slater and Tonkiss, 2001) that describe them as locations for exploration and diversity. Market organisers aim for their audience to visit their marketplaces to obtain a brand experience that is unique (see Chapter 7). In the street food scene, marketplaces are more than functional places for food consumption, but are also places for spectacle and conviviality. Customers can explore these street food markets, observing the spectacle of cooking and serving, and the amount of choice from a diverse range of cuisines and menus. In this sense, market organisers curate marketplaces in the street food scene that can combine good quality food, and a good group of traders with excellent communication and customer service skills, serving diverse and innovative dishes.

⁸ Leon is a fast food chain based in the United Kingdom that targets upmarket customers.

The idea that the street food scene contributes to create good places to consume food is particularly strong in Perla's vision. Perla describes EAT-LONDON as a company that looks for staff and traders who are interested in making a culture from the street, growing businesses from the bottom-up and playing a role in the landscape of the city; she sees the street food scene as a form of tactical urbanism (see Chapter 6). Other narratives of value about street food markets and place describe markets with a capacity to transform places for community development or to support projects of regeneration where neighbours could gather and communicate. Other organisers see these markets as places that could enhance the offer of commercial developments, or as a new way of creating entertainment destinations and nightlife.

In sum, market organisers as cultural intermediaries see their role in the street food scene as curating quality markets in ways which generate cultural capital. Distinctions about the food, the traders and the place are important to create markets and marketplaces that are different from solely the provision of food. Cultural intermediaries consider the street food scene as a field that generates economic and cultural value for their customers, traders, or landowners. The curation of the street food scene is a detailed and complicated process where different elements need to be organised to singularize these markets with a specific offer. In this description of the street food scene, one of the main elements to achieve these curatorial distinctions, is to pick traders who can enact these qualities of good food, good service and good places.

4.4. The right fit: good traders and bad traders.

In addition to organisers' personal involvement in the scene, and their narratives about their curatorial role, they need to perform a series of practical tasks to curate markets with specific qualities. In the following section, I describe the first stage of the curatorial process of markets, which is the recruitment of food traders. Picking *good traders* that offer *good food* and service is an essential task to curate markets. I analyse this task, exploring how market organisers use their taste, cultural capital and embodied knowledge to complete it. I also reflect on the complexities of this practice,

where market organisers' assumptions about the social produce hierarchies and exclusion in the street food scene.

Market organisers with a previous awareness of the configuration of the street food scene, define a set of preferable qualities (Callon et. al. 2002,) that they would like to promote at their markets. With these local forms of rationality (Abolafia, 1998) and knowledge of the scene, organisers define the kind of experience that they would like their markets to perform, so they can find, evaluate and pick the right traders to become members of their organisations. Market organisers find, evaluate and pick traders to ensure *the right fit* for their markets. These actors define the qualities they are seeking in traders, and it is only once these qualities have been tested for, accepted and made stable, that traders can then be invited to take part in markets and events.

4.4.1. Qualities of a good trader

The definition of quality entails evaluating different aspects of the food trader's offer; this includes not only qualities of food or service, but also traders' personal characteristics. Market organisers look for specific elements or distinctive personalities in the traders they would like to bring to their markets. For example, on the EAT-LONDON website, they have published a set of desirable features that they look for, such as *"flavour, personality, kerbside spirit, not being average"* (**EAT-LONDON website**). Perla describes these features as a mix between *good food, good looks and good people*:

"you can have someone with a stall that looks kind of ordinary, but their food it's just sublime and brilliant or somebody who's got a wonderful stall and a big personality and their food is good, but it's not like the best, it's like a combination of those three things, but it's also something else, which is intangible, which has to do with their character and their spirit and whether they want to be part of something beyond just trading" (**Perla, EAT-LONDON**).

On Vibes Feast's website, there is a document with a set of characteristics which they expect from traders. Top of the list is *"quality food"* that is cooked with *"character and originality"*; second, *"consistency"*, meaning that *"your 400th street meal of the night should be as good as the first"*; third is *"magic"* which means the *"energy and charisma"* to deliver food to customers. Finally, there is *"professionalism"*: *"Be on time, be clean, don't get drunk. If you're sick or hungover, don't come in. That goes for your staff too please"* (**Vibes Feast website**). Market organisers describe good traders using different adjectives or concepts, without a clear definition of what it means to have *"personality"*, *"charisma"*, *"magic"* or *"professionalism"*.

The distinctions produced through the curatorial practices are not always clear and rely on organisers' knowledge of the scene and assumptions to judge quality or 'professionalism'. This definition of the quality of professionalism serves as an example of how curatorial decisions are made based on intertwined economic and cultural distinctions. The quality of 'professionalism' is commonly used by market organisers to describe good traders. Curatorial practices are both about using taste and cultural capital to make business decisions, as well as making economic and cultural calculations about what makes a legitimate food trader. The definition of standards such as professionalism is a form of calculation that entails evaluating economic aspects and logistics, as well as other cultural aspects of traders' performance, like style, brand or even personality.

For example, EAT-LONDON promotes professionalism by focusing on formal business documentation to validate their traders with landowners or private clients. This is an important aspect in terms of the value of the business and its distinction from informal street trading. Nick says that they request all technical, logistical aspects and health and safety documentation advised by the Nationwide Caterers Association (NCASS) to make sure that traders are running a proper professional business, whereas other markets or other organisers request less paper work or are more relaxed in terms of regulation.

For Rosie, in her business putting food trucks in *blue chip developments*, the hygiene and cleanliness of the food and its aesthetic qualities or looks are more relevant than other aspects such as handmade or innovative menus. In this way, the requirements of the landlord are stricter in terms of what is suitable for their development. Rosie tells a

story about how they had to remove a well-known food trader from the set-up because his truck was too big, his menu contained a fried product that left oil stains and greasy footprints on the pavement that had to be chemically removed. It wasn't *"the right fit"* for the Estate. She claims they are looking for professional high standard traders that can show discipline in their business by, for example, *"cleaning their hands regularly"* or not smoking while on site, and consistency, meaning that the quality level of their food maintains over time.

Good traders' professionalism also needs to be performed on site in the marketplace, by showing customer service skills and dynamism. Professionalism, in this instance, relates to having the ability to engage customers, and also deliver orders fast, especially for lunchtime markets when the service time is between two and three hours, and office workers have a limited amount of time. For EAT-LONDON, they increasingly look for traders that could develop a following. They look for popular traders to join their markets that could sell out during a service period. As Nick comments, this is due to a recent change to the EAT-LONDON business model. They are now charging a percentage on the intakes of each trader on their markets, this means that they not only need someone with quality food offer, but also someone that is popular with customers and has the ability to serve fast during lunchtime hours, especially in The City locations.

At the EAT-LONDON office the team is constantly talking about traders and analysing their profiles and performance in the business, whether it is valuable to continue working with them despite difficulties, and what kind of guidance they need. EAT-LONDON staff also fulfil the role of mentors for some of the more inexperienced traders, or for those that may be acting erratically. For example, they discussed a successful young trader who had been arrogant in his responses to his Twitter followers. Perla talked to him and offered him guidance; Nick said he was a compulsive liar, single minded, but a good trader; Anna said he liked to show off every time she visited a market and he is not trust-worthy; Toby said he is ambitious but that that is a good quality. Perla claimed that they look for people that can embody the spirit of the street food business and cultivate that with their collective. Perla expanded on good trader, saying:

"We choose people, their characters as well as their offer, so you know we

kind of cultivate that as well, you could have the best food in the world but if your attitude stinks, you're probably not going to be talking about joining us, you know, we seek out these people, the doers, we call them the doers, and people who, you know, you can leave your stall in their hands while you run to the toilet or whatever and they look after it and it's really important, that's the spirit of trading on the street for us, as far as I'm concerned" (Perla, EAT-LONDON).

Good traders also need a strong personality to perform their work, especially for night-time markets. This means generally being sociable, talking to people, having discursive skills to sell the pitch of their business and the market place, and making customers feel welcome and comfortable so that they might spend more time and consume more at the market. In various case studies in cultural industries, it has been suggested that cultural and service workers need to perform certain kinds of emotional or affective labour (Hochschild, 1983; Entwistle and Wissinger, 2006) in their jobs. This is similar to what is expected from food traders; in this case, market organisers expect kindness, closeness and empathy to generate a festive atmosphere in street food markets. A trader's performance of affective labour usually includes a narrative about their career change, their inspiration to start a business, their creative ideas in developing interesting menus which demonstrate a passion for the job (see Chapter 5). Alice, an organiser of small market in a residential area, says people want to know *"where you've come from and what it is that made you want to do that"* and to feel a connection, that they can relate to the person. Alan from Vibes Feast describes, customers look for an authentic relationship with traders:

"... at the end of the day it's about the people serving you know, when [traders names], the original guys can't be there, people feel like they're getting some kind of franchise and it's not the same, you go for the original smiles, banter and chat," (Alan, Vibes Feast).

In addition to an affective labour performance, market organisers also look for professionalism in terms of the aesthetic elements of the traders' business brand. There is an interest in evaluating features such as the look of a stall or van, the design

of a logo, and other set-up elements such as the counter, menu boards, decoration, and utensils. As with other cultural intermediaries (Moor, 2008; 2013), market organisers are aware of the importance of image and branding in the professional development of a street food business. They usually pick traders who have already worked with their branding, and whose look or style matches the branding elements of their street food markets. Alice claims that look is important, especially if it has an “edge” or something special or attractive. For Rosie, on the other hand, the brand needs to address the sanitation quality of the food they are offering. In this way, she claims the branding needs to be “good and the truck needs to be clean”, with neat and clear writing of the menus. In terms of the aesthetic requirements for traders, Rosie says:

“We’re looking for their vehicle to be clean, well branded or we want things like their menu boards to look correct, they can’t have too many menu boards, they should be well written, or well painted, that aesthetically looks correct and you know, we’ll like them to have a good social media presence, yeah, I think probably all of the usual things” (Rosie, market organiser).

At Vibes Feast they are also looking for traders with an understanding of branding and marketing to attract customers. Alan mentions the difference between what in the scene are termed the “old school traders” and the “new school traders”, or how the younger generation visualise their business development differently. In terms of the aesthetic requirements for picking traders, Alan says:

“They have to have a strong image, that’s the reason why some old-school traders don’t work for this, because they have to have a brand, it’s not just about the food, they have to have this understanding that we’re not there just to feed people, it’s like food it’s a form of entertainment” (Alan, Vibes Feast).

This generational distinction between old and new traders constitutes one of the stronger elements to qualify good traders in the street food scene. Market organisers look for *good traders* with a specific profile and cultural capital, in terms of education and working practices, but also age and class (see Chapter 5). After visiting the EAT-LONDON market at The Gherkin building for lunch, on our way back on the tube, Nick

talks about how hard it is to manage the expectations of the traders and the difference between “old school traders” and “new school traders”. He has been working with old school traders for over two years and despite their experience, they are not truly independent and usually need additional guidance or reminders from EAT-LONDON staff. On the other hand, the new generation of traders are young, from more privileged backgrounds and better educated, having made a career change to join the food business. They have also acquired communication skills from their previous jobs, exemplified by their more regular response to emails, their efficiency and their use of Twitter.

Previous research acknowledges the existence of race and class privilege and exclusion in the work of cultural intermediaries and other creative workers (McLeod et. al., 2009; McRobbie, 2002, 2016); and the idea that this is not recognised by themselves as a problem or an issue that they need to deal with (McRobbie, 2007). Nick mentions that EAT-LONDON does well as a business because they are white professionals (as are all the other market organisers in this research) and he acknowledges that this is certainly an advantage in terms of selling their markets to landowners. He also says that most of their traders are white professionals too, and “if you’re not, you might encounter more difficulties to do your business”. As in other accounts about cultural intermediaries and their assumptions about imagined audiences or customers (Moor, 2013; Friedman, 2014; Cronin, 2004), something similar occurs in the search for good traders. Most market organisers mention in their interviews that they look for “someone like us”, or people they can relate to join their markets. They describe this new generation of traders as having the same kind of “mentality” as market organisers and the same kind of working practices. In this sense, assessing food traders’ vision for their businesses is important to find the right fit for their markets. Rosie says that they look for traders with an “entrepreneurial flair”, that they would like to keep improving and modernising their business. In terms of inviting traders to Vibes Feast, Alan says:

“we have a policy that we don’t work with anyone that we don’t like, and who’s not like us, and they have to have the same kind of mentality, and they have to be fun, and they have to enjoy what they are doing, and then the food has to be fantastic” (Alan, Vibes Feast).

As reported in other studies in the cultural industries, in the street food scene network sociality (Wittel, 2001; Lee, 2013; McRobbie, 2002, 2004), meaning participation in networks of people with similar interests and ambitions, is important to recruit new traders. Market organisers find and invite traders that they might have heard about from other organisers and traders, or in social media. William, a food blogger, comments that the bigger companies tend to pursue traders within their social networks and to create a closed community that is “*almost impossible to penetrate*” by outsiders. About the recruitment process, William says:

“I think that people feel that there’s a them and us mentality, places like EAT-LONDON they recruit, sort of rich kids, so for example people pointed out, people who clearly have money, so unfortunately people with a posh accent seem to get in, seem to be the target for that” (William, food blogger).

This “entrepreneurial flair” or “entrepreneurial mentality” mentioned by market organisers seems to connect trader’s professionalism with the ability to expand their business and to get a permanent shop or do pub residencies. At the EAT-LONDON offices they talk about how some traders have grown in the past two years and are opening their own restaurant; they have consolidated a brand and a following. Some of them will continue in street food, running their shop at the same time. Additionally, other traders have expanded their business with two or more vans or stalls, trading simultaneously at different locations. These kinds of traders, the ones with a business vision are the ones EAT-LONDON describe as more professional and the type of *good traders* they are pursuing.

Market organisers prefer to work with young entrepreneurs who share their working practices and tend to be innovative, creative and independent. At the EAT-LONDON office, the team is constantly reviewing and discussing the latest traders’ innovations with their stalls or menus. Nick talks about how one of their ice cream traders is always cutting-edge in terms of the flavours they create, that they need more traders like that, ones that can “*understand the game*”. Not everyone shares this opinion though, and other team members mention that they just need to sell more. However, the EAT-LONDON team talk a lot about the creativity and performance of their traders and discuss how some of them rely on the EAT-LONDON team to be told what to do,

instead of proposing something of their own accord. *"We're not their parents"* they usually say.

In a Twitter thread, market organisers and traders discuss how street food seems to be colonized by "meat in a bun" menus⁹ and how to overcome this risk. At EAT-LONDON, the staff comment that some traders are playing safe and changing or adapting their menu to make it fit into the meat-in-a-bun category to make more sales. Whilst it is popular, affordable and practical to serve on the street, they see this trend as a major risk for the innovation and creativity of the scene. Market organisers struggle to look for new traders who can combine quality or professionalism and innovation, working constantly to make a difference in their markets and offer attractive meals for customers. As mentioned before, this ambivalence between "creative value" or "prestige" and "profit" has been documented in research on the cultural industries or creative entrepreneurship. For EAT-LONDON it is difficult to maintain a balance between having popular traders that sell a great amount of food with the meat in a bun recipe, making a greater profit out of their intakes on the one hand, whilst at the same time not encouraging the homogenisation of the offer in their markets on the other.

The curation of street food markets requires a combination of judgements on cultural and economic elements of the scene. Market organisers define a series of attributes or qualities to recruit traders to join their markets. These different understandings of professionalism serve as a parameter to find and invite new people. Some of these relate to the practical and economic aspects of the business, and others to more subjective evaluations of traders. This recruitment process also needs market organisers' knowledge about the scene and participation of social networks, where they usually share these distinctions and find new recruits for their markets. They usually evaluate professionalism as a quality that is linked with traders' social background and working skills, especially their entrepreneurial mentality. These curatorial decisions to recruit traders create markets with specific qualities that need to be stabilised. The curation process also reveals hierarchies of participation for traders to join the scene.

⁹ This refers to dishes like burgers or other kind of bread with a meat filling (beef, chicken, and pork).

4.4.2. Headhunting for traders

With definitions of *good traders* as those who demonstrate quality work, professionalism and an entrepreneurial mentality, market organisers define a *right fit* for their markets and search and evaluate new traders accordingly. Perla says that their collective is a family, and office staff and members have known each other for years. Ten or twelve of Perla's former colleagues from her past as a trader started EAT-LONDON together in 2012. In a year and a half, they brought in many more members and the company now has over fifty affiliated traders, and around two hundred applications waiting to be considered. EAT-LONDON has an application process through their website where traders can fill in a form and send information and pictures of their stall or van and their food offer, and if lucky get an appointment at the office.

EAT-LONDON site managers usually receive new traders at the market site who come to introduce themselves and push for a trial appointment at the office. One morning, Toby comes back from Kings Cross recounting that he had a visitor. Nick knows the trader and says that he is not good at replying to emails, he's not good at talking on the phone, his food is good, but his lack of managerial and social skills gives Nick the impression that he's not going *to fit* with their operation. Perla says the guy is "insufferable". In other instances, they schedule appointments at their office and invite traders to bring in their food, so that they can taste it and discuss business. These meetings are a first step in the evaluation process, because they also need to assess the service skills of the trader in question on site, if they haven't seen the trader in their natural setting; they haven't seen the stall or van, the brand, their cleanliness or how fast the trader can serve, all of which are vital criteria in judging *good fit*.

At the EAT-LONDON office Toby talks out loud about an email he received from a trader asking for the Equal Opportunities Policy and other policies to make sure that his application will be considered. They all laugh and comment that they do not have policies, they are a business, and also the trader misspelled EAT-LONDON in the email. Nick reads the email out loud again and says that he is probably insinuating that they don't have black traders in their markets; then he tells a story about a trader doing Nigerian food; the food was good, but he had an "ugly branding and website" and was

not considered. They do not usually review online applications because they receive too many and only a few are good enough to plan a visit. Instead they search and visit traders based on recommendations that they might have acquired from Twitter or from traders or other market organisers. On one of the office's boards there is a list of twelve new traders to consider. The EAT-LONDON team will plan a visit to the market where such traders are currently doing business, either during the week or in their time off at weekends.

At lunchtime on a cold winter's day we walked with Nick and Toby to Leather Lane Market, a market run by Camden Council. Ron, site manager for their market at The Gherkin, recommends a new vegetarian trader that is getting attention on Twitter. We come through a side street to the pedestrian way into the market. Two lines of stalls on each side sell different products, not just food, but clothes, bags, electronics, fruit and vegetables, and at least ten stalls of hot meals. Nick says that the market has changed a lot since last year; there are more street food traders, situated closer to each other, greater diversity and a better quality of food offer. At the end of the market we find the vegetarian stall; we check the blackboard menu with three specials for today and join the short queue of two people. We = order everything on the menu to share; a round bun filled with roasted potato, mozzarella, nachos and coriander; a drowned sub bun filled with black beans, avocado, and coriander and completely covered with a very spicy chilli sauce, and a salad box, consisting of bulgur wheat, avocado, tomato, cucumber and jalapeños.

Whilst we wait for our orders, and without telling the trader that he is from EAT-LONDON, Nick improvises an undercover job interview. How long have you been in this market? What's inside the bread? Where did you get the inspiration to do this? Have you got a Twitter account? We pay and step aside to eat while we walk down the street; we share and eat the food and Nick and Toby start exchanging thoughts about the tasting menu. The drowned sandwich is especially tricky, chilli sauce runs through our fingers; Toby thinks it's too spicy, Nick says that the buns are not toasted, minus one point. However, the potato sandwich and the fresh and creamy salad ease the heat of the other dishes. Nick says this trader is perfect for EAT-LONDON, *"very clever, original, stall looks tidy and clean and he's not using a meat replacement (such as soy burgers) to fill the vegetarian buns, but creative fillings, which is a game changer in*

vegetarian street food". This trader would be a great addition to their collective since they don't have many vegetarian traders, he's different and he would be a good fit, but where to put him? Toby says that they could offer him a weekly pitch at the King's Cross market or for the British Street Food Awards that are coming up at the end of the year. Nick says that it is too soon, but he would like to take him from Leather Lane for a trial at one of EAT-LONDON' markets.

As we pass by other food offers, we go to a jerk chicken stall, EAT-LONDON does not have any Caribbean food traders yet and this might be what they have been looking for. We buy a chicken wrap to take away and go back to the office to finish the vegetarian food and try the jerk chicken. Nick says it is good but too sweet, very child-friendly, but unfortunately not the right fit for EAT-LONDON. Toby is on the phone with Ron telling him about our lunch headhunt and says this guy could be a good addition, but what if he beats their other vegetarian traders? Would they not be mad? The vegetarian audience is not enormous, and hard to attract to street food markets; they wonder if it would be right to add more competition to their existing vegetarian traders.

A few weeks after this first visit, we do a second trip to Leather Lane Market and come across a trader doing Vietnamese food, specifically Banh Mi, a baguette sandwich with different meat or tofu fillings and vegetables. Nick says that they used to have a banh mi trader, but he left because he managed to obtain funding to open a restaurant. We stay in the queue waiting to order and can see the staff grilling the chicken. "*They're grilling chicken thighs, good, they know what they're doing*" Nick says, meaning the result will be juicier than having grilled chicken breast. While waiting in the queue, Nick makes a start on the undercover job interview to assess the trader's suitability for EAT-LONDON. He asks the owner "how long have you been here? Do you trade somewhere else?" Unfortunately, they have only been there for a couple of days, are inexperienced, and barely have a sign with the name of the stall, no Twitter account or website. They are deemed to be not *the right fit* for the moment, even though the food was delicious.

In this practice of tasting food and evaluating traders, Nick finds it hard to describe in words how he evaluated the right set of qualities. He mentions that the *right fit* is an intangible quality that can be determined with enough practice tasting food and

testing traders. It is a specific form of rationality, an intuitive judgement (Abolafia, 1998) in a market that is uncertain and ambiguous, where multiple elements need to be evaluated and tested. It is similar to the “feel for the game” (Bourdieu, 1984) or the “eye for talent” in Friedman’s research (2014) on comedy scouts or the “gut instinct” in Entwistle’s research (2009) on model bookers in the fashion industry, where an embodied knowledge of the scene is used to explain and justify judgments and selections. Nick explains that visiting markets and finding *good traders* is like a “feeling”:

“Very quickly I can be walking through a market and I’ve got a sense of who’s good, very quickly, before even eating it, you can see from the way they express themselves, the food offering, but even forgetting about the food, there are definitely people that we see that are ready to be an EAT-LONDON trader, they’re quite dynamic, and business minded, there is a sense of kind of poise or professionalism to the stall which does pass things like having a hand wash, things like being and making everything clean, all these things sort of put yourself out as being a step above the rest of the market... so I walked down Broadway Market for instance (...) so you do get this sense of who’s on it, who’s sharp, who can sell the pitch of what they’re doing very quickly, so that’s a big thing for us, and it’s quite hard to put into words but it’s kind like a feeling, you can sense it, theatre is a big thing as well, things that really engage people” (Nick, EAT-LONDON).

For this reason, people working in these companies find it difficult to bring in new staff, as most potential candidates might have a suitable background but probably no previous experience of trading on the street or an understanding of how organising markets works. There is an embodied knowledge (Entwistle, 2009) that comes from a personal involvement in the scene. As Nick explains, the daily tasks of planning and setting up street food markets are varied and constantly changing, making it difficult to train new members. Nick says in an interview that people in this niche industry have a previous knowledge or “*understanding of how it all works*” and that is really hard to find new staff that can easily learn “*the culture of us*” which is “*very hard to put in a handbook or a manual*”.

Marcy, a trader selling Malaysian burgers, was optimistic about her chances to get picked up by one of the major market organisers. She managed to get a meeting with EAT-LONDON and to have a chat with Vibes Feast as well. A few weeks after these meetings, Marcy and I were working at her stall in Rupert Street market in Soho. We were waiting to receive Alan from Vibes Feast; he was coming to try her food and have a chat about a special spicy food night market. Marcy's burgers, with handmade sambal chili sauce and spicy peanut sauce, could be a perfect *fit*. She heard that Alan has been on a gluten free diet and that we need to serve him perfectly, so she plans to give him a tasting plate with the fillings and salad, without the brioche bun; she thinks this could be her *big break* into the major leagues of street food in London.

Alan arrives at 13:30, during peak lunch time; we have a queue of at least fifteen people waiting to order and we are running out of spicy beef; it is very hectic and Marcy tries to talk to him whilst also taking orders and serving customers. She asks me to prepare a chicken burger, since she had run out of beef and completely forgot about serving Alan without the bun or having him to try her vegetarian patties. The queue is growing and she asks Alan to come back in half an hour so they can talk. She says it is still good that he sees how busy her stall is at lunch time and that she can sell out of portions, she's popular and that's something they're looking for. Alan did not come back, but later in the day I read in Twitter that Marcy is lined up for the Chili event in Dalston.

A couple of weeks later after having been picked up officially by one of the major street food organisations in London, unexpectedly we see Nick and Ron from EAT-LONDON joining the queue of customers at Rupert Street. They have finally come to try the beef rendang burger. Marcy is pleased that she has a queue at the moment they visit, so they can see her in action and they can see that she has what it takes to be part of EAT-LONDON. She serves them the burger for free and they both stand outside the stall, next to the queue; we can see their faces and how they are nodding in approval whilst they eat. Once they are finished, I go outside the stall and ask for their opinion, Nick says it's very good, it's spicy, it is exactly the kind of spicy food he likes and the beef rendang is an added value to the meat in a bun offer.

That same day, Nick emails Marcy to ask her to join EAT-LONDON for a trial at the King's Cross Market on Wednesday. Marcy is confused, she got what she was expecting

from the beginning, an invitation to join EAT-LONDON, but she is not very convinced by the offer. She says she will have a lot of preparation to do with the beginning of a night market in Lewisham in addition to Friday in Soho. Also, Wednesday is usually a slow day for trading. Eventually, Marcy and Nick meet for a coffee and she turns them down explaining that Wednesday is not beneficial to her and that she does not like the percentage fee in takings that they charge. After a few days, Nick told me EAT-LONDON decided she was not *the right fit* for them; she is not the kind of trader they would like to invite to join.

These stories show how market organisers produce value from their working practices through a process of qualification in which cultural calculations have been made and embodied knowledge has been used to make taste distinctions. In this case, they use economic rationality and an understanding of how the market works to evaluate the performance of traders in terms of their capacity to sell, the segment of customers they are targeting, their managerial skills and their experience. They also use non-cognitive skills or sensual or expressive knowledge, by tasting food and making aesthetic judgements about style, branding, character of the traders and their entrepreneurial flair.

As mentioned before, to find new talent, market organisers receive recommendations from people in their close networks, such as, for example, other market organisers, their traders or food consultancy companies and incubators for food entrepreneurs. The use of collaborators also helps market organisers to legitimate their company as a crucial node in the network of related food companies. These companies collaborate for mutual benefit, building a network of “collective taste” (Godart and Mears, 2009) with common standards and knowledge of the scene. For example, a consultancy company finds new traders, gives them advice and preparation, before making a deal with EAT-LONDON to place such traders once a week at EAT-LONDON’s markets. Nick mentions that it is convenient for them to find new traders that have been through a previous preparation phase, since this is a form of quality control filter. Additionally, he says “*One of the big things in street food for the customers is the freshness and the excitement*”. This partnership gives them the possibility to find new and creative traders for a trial in their markets.

The practice of headhunting for new traders is an example of the enactment of the curatorial distinctions of market organisers. They define the qualities of professionalism they are looking for in new traders, and then put these distinctions to work in a series of recruitment tasks. In these tasks, market organisers need to evaluate how appropriate traders are to join their markets. Through a subjective process, that is even described as a 'feeling', market organisers use their cultural capital, and embodied knowledge of the scene to make taste distinctions and bring in new traders. Through this curatorial process, market organisers create markets with particular qualities of good food and good people in the street food scene.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter shows how street food markets are being curated by looking at the working practices of market organisers as cultural intermediaries that create value through a series of calculative practices and taste distinctions. It describes how market organisers as tastemakers discursively and practically define the street food scene so as to differentiate their markets as an offering of good food, good people and good places. They aim to curate markets that can provide a brand experience in which an audience with higher cultural and economic capital understands and consumes their definitions of quality.

With their choices and aesthetic judgements, market organisers shape the scene by curating elements of taste professionally. They have transformed their own interests and passion for food into a creative profession, in which their cultivated knowledge, taste dispositions and cultural capital, and affiliation to social networks in the industry, serve as expertise that continues to develop through their working practices. Their selecting of traders and sharing and communicating their choices generates collective taste in their networks. Market organisers' personal involvement in the scene serves them as a means by which to establish a position of authority, as cultural intermediaries and market actors.

The final section of this chapter demonstrates the way in which market organisers begin the curatorial process of their markets. Market organisers pick *good traders*

through a subjective evaluation of a series of features that includes food, aesthetics, branding and a trader's personal character. Professionalism as value relates to market organisers' preferences of age, class and cultural capital when picking young, educated and entrepreneurial traders who share their working practices and business vision. Market organisers, as market actors, define a series of qualities for their markets and expect these to be enacted on site by professional traders. This curation of markets creates hierarchies in the street food scene, and separates and differentiates these markets from other forms of street trading, inevitably creating exclusion in this process.

The professional qualities of *good traders* are evaluated and tested in situ when searching for new traders and visiting other markets. Market organisers use their calculative skills and embodied knowledge in a process of cultural calculation to assess the suitability of traders to join their markets. In this process, they consider economic and practical distinctions like business profitability, regulatory issues, the relationship with the competition and their current traders. However, they also consider other cultural elements in their performance such as service, and appropriateness with intended customers, considering in addition to the food flavour, innovation in their cuisines, branding and character. This process of cultural calculation repeats time and again, as market organisers constantly re-evaluate the performance and evolution of their traders at their markets. Through their curatorial work, market organisers calculate and evaluate traders to balance the dichotomy of "profit" versus "creative value", selecting those that can sustain a business as well as be innovative and creative over time.

This chapter analyses the role of market organisers as cultural intermediaries that generate value in the street food scene. It focusses on the curatorial practices used to perform their work, and in their central role in generating distinctions and determining qualities that are culturally calculated to create markets in the scene. These curatorial distinctions and qualities need to be performed to a certain standard by food traders who work at their markets. This performance is evaluated and re-evaluated in each market and over time. In this curatorial process, food traders need to respond and accommodate their business to the decisions of market organisers. The different ways

in which food traders fulfil and challenge this curatorial process will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5. Food traders performing curation

5.1. Introduction

This chapter uses ethnographic material from my work with food traders to examine how curatorial distinctions made by market organisers are performed in the market place. The chapter analyses the different challenges that food traders face to adapt or change their businesses to meet these curatorial demands. The aim is to understand how organisers' quest for good food and good people gets materialized in these street food markets. As discussed in Chapter 4, market organisers define a series of qualities for their markets through a process of curation as economic and cultural calculation. In this curatorial process, a subjective evaluation of quality is made including evaluations about the logistical aspects of markets, and also the quality of the food, aesthetics, branding, and traders' character or personality to achieve an ideal of professionalism. The idea of professionalism creates hierarchies of participation in these markets; curation is performed by traders as a disciplinary framework to develop their businesses, where some food traders are more likely to be invited to join these organisations than others.

With different degrees of success, street food traders make economic and cultural calculations to align their businesses with the curatorial distinctions of market organisers. To be part of the street food scene, food traders need to materialize the cultural calculation process and selection made by market organisers; they need to follow a regulated and disciplined path in order to develop economically sustainable and culturally appropriate businesses in the scene. Street food traders develop a series of strategies to navigate these distinctions. To perform professionalism, traders need to demonstrate they have similar working practices as market organisers. This understanding of professionalism means having the same kind of "mentality" or "entrepreneurial flair" (see Chapter 4) as the market coordinators. In this case food traders develop their own qualification or cultural calculation process, which includes an economic rationality and practical skills to have a successful business. However, this process also includes cultural capital or tacit knowledge of the scene, so that their

plans match the requirements of branding, style and affective labour that organisers look for.

Professionalism is performed by food traders with attention to three main features: demonstrating passion for their job through a career change towards becoming entrepreneurs; a performance of care for the craft of cooking food, and affective labour (Hochschild, 1983; Entwistle and Wissinger, 2006) when engaging customers; and being continuously creative (McRobbie, 2016) and innovative, which relates to having an entrepreneurial mentality. Professionalism for street food traders is the enactment of the curatorial distinctions of organisers, an embodiment of the intangible qualities and values of the scene, in this case performing a brand narrative of passion, care, affective labour, and creativity.

In the first section of this chapter, I consider actors' accounts of why and how traders get into the markets of the main organisers in London. I look at the motivations and strategies traders use to be picked by organisers to fit into their markets, while at the same time managing their own food businesses. In the next section, I analyse the performance of professionalism in relation to the three main features. First, I examine how street food traders use their career change to demonstrate passion as part of the branding of their business. Secondly, I consider how traders calculate economic aspects and practicalities to conduct a profitable business while at the same time demonstrate care for their product with an affective labour performance. Finally, I analyse the creative or innovative strategies traders use to keep their business attractive so that it might be selected to join a market organisation, and to continue being relevant in the scene. Using examples from my ethnographic work with different food traders, this chapter examines how the curatorial distinctions made by market organisers are performed at the marketplace, and how traders face different challenges to adapt and meet this curatorial process. The hierarchies created by the curatorial distinctions of market organisers are made visible through the different narratives of food traders' paths and attempts to manage successful businesses in the scene.

This chapter also demonstrates how the curation of markets is a continuous process, where economic and cultural calculations made to qualify and singularize a market are constantly re-evaluated. The task of organisers to pick professional traders to join

these markets is only the first step in the curation process. This task unleashes unpredictability and potential instability of the curatorial decisions made. Therefore, the quality of professionalism needs to be constantly re-qualified and re-evaluated in situ with traders' performances over time. Professionalism is tested and stabilized through the scrutiny of the traders' performances of passion, care and creativity through the curatorial process.

5.2. Why to get in to these street food markets?

One of the main challenges that street food traders face when starting up their businesses is finding suitable places to trade. Joining a popular market organization means being able to trade at places with a high footfall of potential customers, and also obtaining the organiser's support to grow their business with publicity and networking. To obtain a good trading spot, traders are highly dependent on market organisers who have secured set ups for their markets in profitable locations. Market organisers like EAT-LONDON and Vibes Feast and other organisers who participate in this research set up markets where only their associated traders can sell their food. In this sense, getting in to a good market to trade does not depend solely on the traders' willingness to set up their van or stall in a market, or on offering a good product for a fair price. Their capacity to perform the curatorial requirements that market organisers are looking for is also a crucial factor. This curatorial process, where market organisers define qualities and pick traders to join their markets, can be interpreted as an exercise of disciplinary power in the scene. Traders rarely get to negotiate the requirements made by market organisers, and in general they try to adapt their business to at least be considered and to get in to the organisation.

According to food traders, markets such as EAT-LONDON or Vibes Feast offer good trading spots as they congregate massive amounts of potential customers. Also, being picked by them is seen as a sign of recognition, approval and prestige in the scene. It means being part of something greater, of a community that shares a similar idea of professionalism and quality. The status and quality of a particular market organiser or event is passed on to the street food trader, increasing their chances of getting new

customers and places for trading in the future. Street food traders that are part of this research started trading in small markets or wherever they can find a pitch to gain experience and test their products. But rapidly they need more trading days on a regular basis to increase their customer base and income. For this reason, joining a popular street food market is crucial to make a living trading food and to accelerate the development of a food business. According to Jack and Millie from Kerala Dosa, trading at EAT-LONDON's markets represents forty per cent of their monthly income. Being picked by a popular market like this can make a significant difference for these small businesses in terms of profit. It is also important for their business development, reaching new customers, being featured in the press, attracting investors or gaining more social media followers.

Howie, a street food trader who sells crab burgers, says that being part of EAT-LONDON changed his life. At the beginning, finding trading spots and expanding his customer base was difficult. He explains that selling seafood on the street is not particularly popular and customers have their concerns about cleanliness and safety, to avoid contamination or food poisoning. Howie says that joining EAT-LONDON gave him validation since their markets are usually recognised in the press as higher quality and prestigious. Howie's business became popular due to his by being picked by this organisation, and customers recognise his burgers as good quality. During the summer, he received a call to work with Vibes Feast who offered him a place at their new night market at Battersea Power Station. Howie is excited because it will be his first time working with them and he thinks this might open new opportunities to develop his crab burger business even more.

Similarly, Jack and Millie think that trading at prestigious events will contribute to develop their business and bring in more opportunities to trade during the summer. They have been going to Glastonbury Festival for almost twenty years as punters; 2014 is their first year going as traders, and they expect to continue with this tradition in the future. Jack and Millie claim that even if they don't make enough profit, they will continue going until they have an established presence and people look for them each year. As a sign of validation, Jack and Millie think that trading at Glastonbury will give them status. With this achievement, they will be capable of proving they can manage a

food operation for several days, serving thousands of portions. This experience will be useful for them to support their application to trade at other festivals in the future.

When joining an organization, street food traders also find a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) where other traders with similar concerns and experiences share their business strategies and offer support. While working at Glastonbury Festival, I was involved in several conversations with traders from EAT-LONDON who had managed to get into this festival, like Howie. In gatherings and barbeques in the days prior to the festival, street food traders would openly discuss their personal life, business strategies, providers, which organisers are more reliable than others and the best festivals to apply to work at during the summer. They discussed the new market that Vibes Feast was opening the following month. They constantly search for opportunities, especially during the summer when the weather improves and there are more events, festivals and markets taking place.

The motivations for joining a particular market or festival vary, but in general it relates to opening up economic opportunities for their businesses, such as trading more regularly and selling more portions per day. Another reason might be to get publicity and social media presence to attract new customers, private events or investors interested in their work. Additionally, joining these markets also implies gaining status, approval and recognition as professional street food traders, which distinguishes them from other cheap food stalls on the street. Complying with the established requirements of the market organisers benefits their business in economic terms and in cultural terms by being part of this scene.

Although getting trading spots is important, food traders do not necessarily join any market organization. Jack and Millie comment are aware of the fact that some market organisers only set up markets to make money, and they do not believe in the street food community. Similarly, some organisers are not experienced and they end up giving them a pitch next to traders selling cheap junk food. When they go to festivals, for example, Millie and Jack also need to be aware that they might end up being placed next to a trader selling cheesy chips. They do not like to be associated with these sorts of traders, because they say their product is an artisan product and it has more value. For this reason, they also avoid selling chips in Festivals. They are not willing to risk the integrity of their product and the style of their business for the sake of making some

extra money selling a few more portions in a festival. The owners of Kerala Dosa state that they like being part of EAT-LONDON because they can be surrounded by traders with good and similar quality products, and that helps them to maintain the value of their brand. Being associated with organisers and traders that are known for their quality offer is a form of cultural consecration (Bourdieu, 1980; Lizé, 2016), or legitimation. Once they have gained certain status and recognition in the scene, they need to protect their brand and identity and avoid low quality markets.

In this sense, the motivation for finding places to trade goes beyond getting into popular events with high footfall, but relies more on the idea of finding the right place for their business. This means finding a place where market organisers, as well as other food traders share similar taste and ideas about quality and professionalism in the street food scene. Joining other markets just because they are popular or there is a chance of selling more portions during a weekend is not enough. Traders are not interested in joining markets or festivals that could end up devaluing their food offer and their brand. In this instance, traders evaluate and find the markets that most align with their understanding of the street food scene, and that can open up opportunities for the future. The effort they put in to getting into the scene turns out to be an investment for future trading and business development.

5.3. How to get in the market organization?

There are different strategies and paths that street food traders can take to be selected by popular market organisers. Some food traders might find it useful to get trained as staff at popular markets like EAT-LONDON or Vibes Feast or at festivals during the summer before starting up their own business. They look for opportunities to acquire knowledge of the scene and how to run a street food business from the inside, as employees of other traders. As for example, Howie volunteered to work with Kerala Dosa at Glastonbury to gain experience trading at festivals. Or Aron, who holds an English degree from Oxbridge, spent a full year working as casual staff for many different traders in EAT-LONDON before starting his own business selling steak sandwiches. For traders, it is not easy to predict how these curatorial distinctions could

be achieved and developed, and being trained “on the job”, from an embodied understanding of how the scene works is helpful.

Aron used to work in marketing and social media, and after leaving his job and travelling to the west coast in the United States, he decided to create a food business in London. As his knowledge of the scene was limited, he decided to spend some time working for other traders to get trained “on the job”, gaining the necessary practical knowledge to set up a business, and becoming part of the network of traders and market organisers. When he stopped working casually and started his own company, he was quickly picked up by EAT-LONDON with whom he had developed a close relationship. After a few months, he was also picked up by Vibes Feast. After investing long hours working for others, he was able to take advantage of being part of a network of knowledge circulation. As explained in Chapter 4, organisations such as EAT-LONDON have an online application process, with more than 200 applications at the time this research was undertaken. However, such organisations prefer to recruit traders through recommendations from their social networks. In this case, network sociality (Wittel, 2001; Lee, 2013; McRobbie, 2002, 2004) is productive for market organisers when it comes to finding and recruiting new traders for their organisations.

Through training and the involvement in this network, Aron acquired practical skills such as dealing with providers and customers, calculating portions, or how to develop a convenient and creative menu for the street. He also heard about future business opportunities such as pitches, events, or how to get responsible casual staff. This strategy was useful to get insider knowledge of the scene and being able to rapidly form part of these markets. But for others who do not get “on the job” training, or who are not part of organisers’ social networks, there are several issues to consider when planning a business in order to get selected or to participate in important events. Street food traders need to find strategies to develop their business according to the features that organisers are looking for. To get into an organisation such as EAT-LONDON or Vibes Feast, street food traders need to demonstrate that they have a similar understanding of professionalism in the street food business to the market organisers. As explored in Chapter 4, the curation of the street food scene is an economic and cultural calculation of the features that differentiate their markets from other forms of street trading or retail. These curatorial distinctions to select food

traders are highly subjective and respond to the hierarchies of distinction created by organisers based on their taste and embodied knowledge of the scene. The idea of professionalism is defined as the main quality organisers look for when recruiting new traders. This quality is informed by rational economic decisions about their business and managerial skills, as well as cultural elements such as their class background, age, level of education and entrepreneurial flair.

For food traders, this idea of professionalism as an “understanding of the game” involves knowing how to create a successful food business under certain standards. For example, by making use of an economic rationality in order to transform their food stall or van into a profitable business; this includes making practical decisions about providers, or what markets to apply for a pitch, or how to calculate portions to sell each week. Also, knowledge about health and safety regulations. Additionally, street food traders need to make use of their cultural and social capital in the scene to make business decisions. In this case, understanding the rules of the game being professional means to develop and perform the intangible qualities of the scene, such as the branding of their food business; or performing quality through the care for the product and process; or being creative and innovative to keep their business fresh. Street food traders’ performances need to align with the curatorial distinctions, meanings and values that market organisers consider appropriate for the street food scene.

5.4. Performing professionalism in the street food scene

The curatorial distinctions made by market organisers when picking traders involve several ideas of quality. Issues such as formal requirements for health and safety, food quality and cleanliness are important. Aesthetics, branding and a trader’s personal character, are also relevant. Therefore, street food traders undertake economic and cultural calculation to make business decisions, taking into consideration all these elements at once. The aesthetics, branding narrative and personality performance are some of the features that traders find most difficult to deal with. As these qualities are based on organisers’ taste distinctions and cultural capital, food traders try different strategies to meet these requirements in a trial and error process. Overall, food

traders recognise there are some crucial tasks they need to conduct to conform to the curatorial requirements of market organisers. Furthermore, food traders that are recruited via these markets share characteristics with organisers. Usually young entrepreneurs with higher education seem to be picked up by market organisers. These traders also share similar social networks, for example attending the same markets or events, or by knowing other food traders in the business.

In this case, a rehearsed pitch or narrative about their business, about their passion and personal involvement and motivation is required. This discourse needs to be communicated clearly to organisers, customers and through their website or social media networks. They also need to communicate and perform care for their product and for the craft of cooking. Street food traders need to be able to explain to their customers and market organisers the specifics of the sourcing of the ingredients and the process to create their product. Also, a performance of affective labour is required when serving food, building a personal relationship with customers. Finally, a being creative and innovative with their business is a way in which to communicate their entrepreneurial flair or mentality, and this is something organisers look for and test out continuously. The combination of these elements allows street food traders to create a specific identity that differentiates them from others serving food on the street. The curatorial process is materialized through the performance of these elements in marketplaces, which needs to be stabilized over time to singularize street food markets as part of the scene.

5.4.1. Passion

Different narratives can be used to describe the passion necessary to run a street food business, such as drawing attention to career moves towards more fulfilling jobs. Care and creativity in running a business is another way in which food traders create a narrative of passion, and perform this passion while trading. Street food traders usually explain the transformative process they have experienced to become a trader, either on their websites or when talking to customers and market organisers. They talk about their career change, from corporate jobs (in law, marketing, public relations,

finance, and others) to become entrepreneurs. This transformative narrative highlights the ways in which they have dedicated their lives and jobs to their true passion, instead of working for a steady income in the corporate world. There is a logic of liberation, flexibility and mobility (Boltanski and Chiapello, 1999) behind these kinds of decisions. As analysed by Potter (2015) in his study of work paths and career change in the contemporary labour market, middle class professionals are increasingly experiencing anxiety in the way their identities and sense of self are connected to their careers. This anxiety could be resolved by looking for self-fulfilment and self-understanding by changing to a more authentic career. In creative labour, McRobbie (2002, 2016) has discussed this issue of career decisions based on finding 'passionate work' or 'happiness at work', and how "to some extent middle-class status nowadays rests upon the idea that work is something to which one has a passionate attachment" (McRobbie, 2016, p. 36). It is then interesting to discover that food traders' personal identities are redefined through a career change and a path of self-discovery. It seems that these former corporate workers are in a good position to make this transition with ease, "while workers are drawn to the autonomy, creativity and excitement that jobs in these industries can provide, they also accept as normal the high risks associated with this work" (Neff et. al., 2005, p. 308). Food traders build on this career change, and communicate their entrepreneurial journey as a narrative that gives them value and position in the street food scene.

For Jack and Millie, their first trips to India are an important part of the story of how they become street food traders. They were made redundant a few years ago, and they were bored enough of their corporate jobs to start looking for work again. Instead, they decided to travel and went to India, as they were interested in the food and culture. They visited the Kerala region in the south of India and stayed in people's homes that they found through Airbnb¹⁰. Millie tells me about the importance of eating yogurt to protect yourself from stomach bugs. She also tells me about poverty and how she never thought about how privileged they are living in the UK, before starting to travel to remote destinations. She also tells me about regional differences in India, in religion, culture and food, how complicated it was to travel in packed trains

¹⁰ "Airbnb is an online community marketplace that connects people looking to rent their homes with people who are looking for accommodations". Available from: <http://www.investopedia.com/articles/personal-finance/032814/pros-and-cons-using-airbnb.asp#ixzz4U2jWaNkQ>

and how they prefer to use buses to move around. Millie also mentions how in some villages no one spoke English and they had to find other ways of communicating. She also remembers how kind and happy people are there, and how they felt welcomed wherever they were. Jack and Millie are white British, she is from England and he is from Wales. Neither of them have Indian heritage, but they both share a passion for Indian food. As most food traders that are part of EAT-LONDON, they do not have an ethnic background that corresponds with the cuisine they are selling. Most traders from a white middle class background usually take on a street food business depending on their personal preferences for cuisines, and develop their products accordingly.

Millie and Jack used this transformative and inspirational experience and their passion about Indian food to start their own business; as there was not much of an offer of southern Indian street food in London, they decided to start a dosa stall. After the first two years working as street food traders, they decided to make another trip to India for research and development purposes. They went away for ten weeks and were focussed on trying out different dishes and flavours, and learning about spices. They had to learn a significant about Indian food and the craft of making a dosa pancake quickly enough to serve at food markets, festivals and events. Their business developed, and they now have the capacity to run two stalls at the same time. While i work with Millie in a market, Jack is making dosas somewhere else in London. Jack also comments on how important it is to take care of your brand, and to oversee your own stall; their brand is their personal story, their own personal narrative, and not just any other dosa company.

According to James (2015) in creative professions, there needs to be a rationale to make sense of career changes, and is important to create a convincing story about selfhood and transformation. It is a performance of character through a personal and career narrative. This transition is performed with a “romantic idealisation” (McRobbie, 2007) about the career change. These narratives of the self are an important part on the performance of affective labour, where food traders develop a personal involvement and relationship with their customers by telling these stories. These transformational narratives are used by traders as affective labour, in which emotions and personal lives are used as a work device, and where the private domain

is brought to the public sphere (Lee, 2013). The use of these attributes is similar to what Pettinger (2004) describes as the use of aesthetics and workers' embodiment characteristics in retail and customer service. In this case, Pettinger claims that these attributed are an expression of the use of social and cultural capital, as well as age, gender and ethnicity as a branding tool that enhances economic performance.

Similarly, the broad narrative of the food traders' business intertwines with a personal narrative about change, discovery and passion, and it is used as an element to enhance economic performance and their suitability to be recruited by market organisers. Starting out as a street food trader means developing a commitment to the business, finding a logic that explains why their choice of a different career is valuable, and how their personal investment in their business is what gives it character. The community of practice of street food traders share similar motivations about changing careers, as well as similar educational and work backgrounds. As mentioned before, a trader's character and personality are important qualities of organisers' curatorial distinctions about professionalism in the scene.

The narrative of career change and passion for their work as a branding element for their business is one of the elements that food traders perform to align themselves with the curatorial distinctions of market organisers. In these economic and cultural calculations about markets and traders, organisers search for people who can perform an ideal of professionalism in which affective labour is a major component. In the street food scene, market organisers curate markets by evaluating these characteristics when picking traders, and re-evaluating them again on site, when traders work at their markets, and tell their stories to customers or on other media platforms.

5.4.2. Care

In addition to creating a personal and career narrative as part of their branding strategy, street food traders also need to care for their food product and the process of preparing and serving food as elements of professionalism. This idea of care intersects with issues such as health and safety, knowledgeability and demonstration

of expertise as core elements of professionalism. In the performance of care, traders highlight the quality of their food offering; a morality of quality (de Solier 2013; Goodman 2004) permeates the scene, and handmade or homemade or so called artisan products are the norm. Many street food traders highlight the sustainable or organic sourcing of their ingredients, the reliability of providers, as well as freshness and seasonality. Street food traders need to be able to communicate to customers and market organisers about how they source and prepare the food they are serving. They need to make sure they invest important amounts of manual work on crafting their food. In this case, they must perform a commitment to quality over profit.

The caring process includes the preparation and presentation of food. The process starts with the provision of ingredients from reliable providers that can deliver fresh and affordable products each week. Then goes the preparation, mixing and cooking of ingredients during the week before trading on the street. This involves intensive handmade and homemade manual labour that takes days and long hours, and that they usually do in their home kitchens or renting kitchen space. For example, making pulled pork takes between eight and twelve hours. Some traders also bake their own buns or cakes or get supplied daily from nearby bakeries, and some of them prepare their own sauces from scratch.

The revival of the importance of craft in creative work and in the drink and food industries has been discussed before in the case of, for example, microbreweries (Thurnell-Read, 2014), or arts and crafts (Luckman, 2016). Thurnell-Read (2014) explains that in the case of small-scale breweries, besides a passion for work as part of brewers' occupational identity, the skills and craft in the production of beer have an intrinsic value. An embodied craft and tangible involvement with the product is meaningful for the brewer and their customers. In this sense, and to counterpoint traditional sociological ideas about capitalism and alienation, craftwork is suggested as a reaction to mass-production, mass consumerism and industrialisation. There is an assumption that the use of skills and the caring process and craft knowledge to produce an object is a synonym of quality (Thurnell-Read, 2014; Cope, 2014) or authenticity (Smith Maguire, 2010), that produces "consumer distinction in a globalised marketplace (...) the handmade appeals to people in search of the unique" (Luckman, 2016, p. 69). Cope (2014) mentions that these values of caring and craft in

food production, exemplified by the return of the “‘small batch’ or ‘artisanal’ ethos” (Cope, 2014, p. 19), constitute a trend amongst young entrepreneurs, who aim to introduce their cultural values into existing economies and markets.

As with their traders’ narratives of personal investment in their business through their career change, the demonstration of care for the craft of producing handmade food is another form of projecting the self at work (Paxson, 2013). Luckman (2016) discusses the ways in which the value of craft resides not only in the product and its qualities, but in the process of making that connects crafters with consumers. Here, communicating care for their product and its process is another manifestation of traders’ affective labour that aims at generating an interpersonal relationship with the consumer. Furthermore, these relationships are part of a strategic construction of “connectedness” (Smith Maguire, 2010, p. 278) as part of their economic calculations and business model.

In the case of Kerala Dosa, the preparation process is particularly relevant for the product and for the communication of care in the craft of cooking food. They thought about practical issues to develop a business model that allows them to make good profit quickly enough. When working at Glastonbury, I observed how the preparation of ingredients and supplies before trading takes a long time. Preparation is done in advance to have enough time to talk to customers when they start arriving. Food traders need to combine these economic calculations to create a business along with the cultural distinctions that their food business needs to perform, like the brand narrative and the caring for their product and service. As Jack and Millie do not have a background in cooking Indian food, they had to make an extra effort to learn how to become a true *dosa wala*. In this case, sourcing the ingredients from the right provider of paneer cheese or spices is important. They do most of their shopping in Indian shops in South London, near where they live. Having a vegetarian product is more convenient, it is less expensive to produce and the losses are lower. As they use cheese that is produced in the UK, they can easily be supplied, and refrigerate the product for longer. Jack makes the dosa butter, the spicy paneer cheese mix, and chutneys at home. They also work on the set up of their food stall when on site. They commissioned the front of the stall from an Indian graffiti artist; it displays the name of their business in the colourful typography of Indian street painters in Delhi.

On one of my first regular trading days, after setting up the stall, Millie and I begin prepping for service on site. She teaches me how to prepare *bhel puri*¹¹ as a side dish for the dosa. We start by chopping fresh vegetables and then mixing them with the peanuts, puffed rice and the homemade tamarind sauce. It is lunchtime and people start gathering around the stall and queuing. I am in charge of taking orders and preparing the side dish carefully, mixing up enough ingredients to serve only three portions, to ensure the side dish remains fresh and crunchy while waiting to be served. Millie is skilfully making the dosas in three pans at the same time. She first spills in some oil, adds the dosa butter and starts spreading it in the pan with circular movements until there is a thin layer of butter. When the butter starts cooking, she adds their homemade tomato chutney, some red onions and the spicy paneer cheese, then she adds their masala mix and the tamarind sauce. She takes the dosa from the pan, folds it twice to form a roll, which is cut in half and placed in a cardboard box with the *bhel puri*. Millie works rapidly, but precisely, to cook and prep three dosas at the same time while customers line up waiting for their orders. They get to witness the whole cooking process, ask about the ingredients, request something special like taking out the onions or adding extra spice to their orders. While queuing and waiting, Millie chats with customers who are curious about the dish and about how they started their business. Millie tells her and Jack's transformational story of becoming entrepreneurs and their trips to India time and again in each market where we serve the dosas.

For market organisers raising the standards of the street food scene involves the quality of the food and service, which goes beyond complying with health and safety regulations. For street food traders, this is a combination of communicating and performing care, but also taking into consideration the practicalities of trading food to for a quality service and to make profit. Street food traders need to manage their business strategically, making sure that they are able to get enough trading spots, selling enough portions each week, dealing with providers, undertaking administrative work, and finding casual staff members to help them when needed. This is in addition to adhering to the intangible qualities required of a business to fit in with the scene.

¹¹ Snack served traditionally as street food in India. It can contain puffed rice, chutneys, aromatic seasonings, vegetables and garnishes.

Trading with care at a street food market also includes a process of learning through doing, meaning picking up lessons while working, that will secure that cooking and serving has been done properly. In this case, the dishes should be the right size, shape, colour, texture and temperature. There is a quality control process associated with the cooking of food before service. There needs to be a coordination in delivering dishes to customers and making sure they do not make mistakes (mixing up orders, or forgetting about food allergies) while serving on time, not leaving customers waiting for too long. Additionally, the packaging should be functional for eating on the street. Picking the right kind of container to serve food ensures that the product will retain its properties, and that it can be carried and used to eat directly from it. The presentation should also be impeccable in terms of aesthetics. The meal is arranged in order to look appetizing, enhancing the sensorial properties of aroma and flavour, but also increasing the chances of customers taking pictures of the meals and sharing and promoting their food on social media.

Whilst taking care of their product and the cooking and serving process is important to demonstrate the quality of their street food businesses, traders sometimes struggle with time investment versus monetary return. Even though their prices are usually high for a street food meal, at around £6 per portion, they need to balance the quality versus profit dichotomy by picking cheaper ingredients or outsourcing parts of the cooking process. Street food trading is a balancing act between learning the practicalities of street food to make profit, as well as the tacit rules of the street food scene in order to align themselves with market organisers' curatorial distinctions. This attention to both cultural and economic calculations has been examined before by Entwistle (2009), in the case of commercial and fashion modelling, where the former has more economic value than the latter. The calculated combination of both is what defines models' successful career journeys. This calculation needs to be conducted with anticipation and precision, because "cultural kudos, once gained, can also be lost if a model 'sells out' and becomes too 'down-market' (Entwistle, 2009, p. 65). In the case of street food traders, this is similar to the example of traders looking to join markets or festivals not only to get a trading spot, but also because of the organiser's status and the community of traders that could pass on value. It is the same with the case of defining a food offering; traders need to demonstrate professionalism by

managing and balancing both parts of the business, the economic aspect of selling enough portions and making money, as well as the cultural calculation of branding their business to continue being part of the street food scene.

The process of preparation and presentation with care is an important element of street food trading in the scene. Traders use their personal narrative about making their business as well as the story behind their handmade and homemade products. These stories are also disseminated through social media, by documenting the process of preparation at home or later at the market place. As well as taking pictures of finished dishes and promoting them mainly through Twitter and Instagram. Sharing these stories enhances the relationship between the traders and its customers, who generally expect to gain a deeper understanding and knowledge about what they are buying, obtaining an experience while buying food. As mentioned before, the narrative of passion along with the performance of care for the craft of cooking food are both forms of enacting affective labour. The curation of market organisers begins with a cultural calculation of professionalism in their traders, evaluating this affective labour performance on site when recruiting new people. A re-qualification is one over time when organisers re-evaluate the performance of a trader on site, where they expect these narrative enactments to be repeated and sustained.

5.4.3. Being creative

In addition to caring for the product and the process of their food business, street food traders need to plan and deliver a unique and creative food offer. Market organisers ideally pick traders who can offer an innovative menu, and who are constantly trying out new ideas and improving their recipes. In this way, market customers can have a different and fresh experience each time they visit and feel encouraged to continue going. Street food traders therefore need to develop their business with different strategies to invent creative menus and transform their offer regularly.

In the creative and cultural industries, creativity is a resource for economic and personal growth that relates to innovation and keeping yourself competitive. It can be defined as the “specific qualities that give rise to new thinking, new ideas upon which

innovation can build (...) drawing on a specific 'artistic' quality, something deemed to be intuitive rather than calculative" (O'Connor, 2010, pp. 36-37). In the UK context, McRobbie interprets this imperative of creativity as a form of contemporary governmentality (McRobbie, 2007) in a neoliberal context. Creative workers or entrepreneurs need to govern the self with creative productivity. Creativity is defined as an inherent personal characteristic "which has the potential to be turned into a set of capacities" (McRobbie, 2016, p. 11) that end up acting as a *dispositif* to continuously work on "self-actualization" and individualised self-improvement in a context of job precariousness and anxiety and ambivalence about the future.

In the street food scene, being creative is part of the performance of professionalism that organisers look for when curating markets. In this sense, there is an imperative to be creative and traders are aware of the need to constantly improve their business and prove themselves as entrepreneurial, and therefore relevant. There are different strategies for being creative in this business; for example, some of traders are creative in terms of the originality of their menus. In this case, street food traders perform creativity by combining different elements or cuisines to produce their menus, like Korean burritos¹² or burgers with fillings from Malaysian or Indian food. Food traders need to have tacit knowledge and cultural capital of the scene in order to negotiate this balance between traditional and new cuisines to generate creative recipes. In the scene, there is a valorisation of cultural forms outside the mainstream, and market organisers look for traders who escape the mass production of restaurant chains. The mainstream is too polished and street food markets need to be cutting edge, fresh, creative and overall not corporate. In this sense, the mainstream is seen as boring and not prestigious, and street food traders need to accommodate their business to produce food that is unique and original.

Being innovative is not just about coming up with new recipes or ideas, it requires the use of insider knowledge, tacit knowledge or a cultural capital of the street food scene. An example of this is reverting mainstream food forms such as a beef burger into a new product that could have value and be appreciated by the audience and organisers.

¹² According to Wikipedia "Korean–Mexican fusion is a type of fusion cuisine originally from Los Angeles that combines traditional elements of American-style Mexican food and Korean food. The earliest Korean-Mexican fusion featured Mexican or Tex-Mex dishes such as tacos or burritos filled with Korean-style barbecued meats and kimchi."

Getting into the main street food market organizations requires a business strategy that complies with standard requirements of health and safety and admin, but also the values and cultural forms that are part of the street food scene. For this reason, not all traders are selected by market organisers. They look for traders with an “understanding of the game”, or the capacity to transform something mainstream or cheap, like a burger, into something with greater value like an “ox heart burger”. In this case, using cheap cuts of meat to create an extra juicy burger gives a trader prestige by building a narrative about a sustainable and environmentally friendly food business that uses meat cuts that are usually wasted.

Another strategy for demonstrating creativity is to combine this newness, or originality with elements of authenticity. Jones et. al. (2005) argue that authenticity could be understood in two different ways, first as “the perpetuation of tradition and to copy canonical works” (Jones et. al., 2005, p. 893), or “to be original and offer a distinctive approach” (Ibid.). In the case of the street food scene, both elements seem to be mixed when food traders create menus for their businesses. Jones et. al. (2005) propose that authenticity is not inherent to an object or person, but is rather a claim, a narrative that is accepted by a third party with authority in the field. For example, in Beverland’s research (2005) on luxury wines, the author claims that the perception of authenticity is crucial for economic success. The idea of authenticity is linked with the concept of brand authenticity, which includes the products’ history, production process and *terroir*¹³. Authenticity is used to create commercial gain and cultural differentiation through “developing a sincere story that enabled the firms to maintain quality and relevance while appearing above commercial considerations” (Beverland, 2005, p. 1003). In the case of luxury wines, this narrative about authenticity tends to be partly true, when for example highlighting the qualities of a product or its production process, but it also contains myths or a rhetorical aspect. “This combination of real and stylized attributes helps create an aura around the brand (...) that differentiates these brands from mass-market firms by allowing them to appear committed to values that are above commercial considerations” (Beverland, 2005, p. 1008).

¹³ The definition of *terroir* in English by Oxford Dictionaries is “The complete natural environment in which a particular wine is produced, including factors such as the soil, topography, and climate”.

This idea of authenticity as a narrative to differentiate brands, is also mentioned by Marwick (2013) on a study on fashion bloggers. In this case, fashion bloggers describe their sites as authentic because of their difference to mainstream media; here, it means “a palpable sense of truthful self-expression; (...) a connection with and responsiveness to the audience and (...) an honest engagement with commodity goods and brands” (Marwick, 2013, p. 2). The difference between luxury wine and fashion bloggers is that with the latter, participants do not perceive authenticity as separate from commerce, but as part of the relationship between “individuals, audiences, and commodities. While the emphasis on fashion/beauty goods is somewhat specific to this community, authenticity as a boundary strategy between selfhood and neoliberal capitalism is a common feature of entrepreneurial online communities, such as self-branders, camgirls, and lifecasters” (Marwick, 2013, p. 2). In the street food scene, the narrative of authenticity is being used to perform creativity, and to differentiate their food offer from other traders. The performance of creativity through authenticity is definitely linked with the curation of economic and cultural aspects in the street food scene.

The combination of originality and authenticity in the street food scene can be exemplified with the case of Marcy who sells Malaysian burgers. This combination of originality and tradition is how she positions her business as creative and authentic given her ethnic background. Marcy was born in Malaysia and lived there for ten years before moving with her family to the UK. She quit her job as a corporate lawyer working in the City to find a more fulfilling job. She used her ethnic background and knowledge about Malay cuisine to develop her business idea and create “KL burgers”; most of her cooking knowledge comes from her mother. Marcy uses her mother’s recipes, cooking techniques and seasoning knowledge to produce a new version of Malaysian food. Marcy also does research and development trips to Malaysia to try new preparations and to bring in creative ideas for her business. She uses halal meat to cater for Malaysian Muslims. Marcy speaks Malay with customers when they recognise the food’s origin. When working in different markets, some of the customers ask her if she is selling “real Malaysian food”. She has developed her menu as Malaysian burgers, which use the burger format but with traditional Malaysian

preparations as fillings; she transformed the chicken satay recipe¹⁴ into chicken patties. She maintains the same seasoning and makes a homemade peanut sauce and sambal chili sauce with her mother's recipes.

Selling Malaysian burgers sometimes divides the audience, as when she was trading in a market dedicated to traditional Malaysian food, she received negative feedback from some customers who accused her of denigrating their traditional cuisine. However, conversely in markets such as Vibes Feast her burgers are highly popular. Marcy argues that her food is truly Malaysian because she focuses on using authentic spices for seasoning and the manual and lengthy process of, for example, slow cooking the beef for over six hours for the beef rendang. She then introduces other plates, serving the filling with rice instead of a burger, and other more traditional trimmings. This new format is an innovation that allows her to cater for a wider audience (such as gluten free and vegan customers), adding a new item to her menu, and is more connected with traditional Malaysian cuisine.

Another way of performing creativity in the scene is when traders form collaborations with other traders or other brands. As previously mentioned, there is an imperative for creativity in the scene, and traders need to bring dynamism through their food offer to get continuously selected by market organisers. Market organisers are constantly changing the line ups of markets according to the freshness and excitement that traders could offer. Being creative requires the possession of knowledge about the product and cuisine they are selling and how to develop new recipes that could fit with the scene. Food traders therefore need to develop new recipes, playing with the seasonality of products or doing side projects such as collaborations with other traders or other businesses. For example, Marcy from KL burgers collaborated with other traders to create a special menu that uses part of her dish with part of theirs, in this case, creating a beef rendang and mac and cheese burger. Using collaboration as a tool for creativity and differentiation in cultural work could be connected with the interdependency of the cultural industries such as music and fashion (Hauge and Hracs, 2010). Creative entrepreneurs see collaboration as a strategic tool to enhance their competitiveness in their scenes, to get noticed and to differentiate their offering from other scene members.

¹⁴ Traditionally, these are grilled chicken skewers marinated with spices and served with peanut sauce.

In addition to being innovative and creative with one's business so as to be picked up by market organisers, it is also necessary to maintain relevance so as to be offered more pitches and opportunities in the future. Jack and Millie from Kerala Dosa say they are no longer regularly featured in the press. When they first started, they would be in magazines and blogs as their product was different and people wanted to know more about south Indian food. But after a couple of years they need to work more to gain attention. Jack says they are not public relations experts, but they are trying to improve their offer by introducing innovations to their business. For example, they develop recipes using beers in collaboration with a craft brewery, or try new fillings for their dosas like vegan recipes. They expect these innovations will get them more tweets and bring in more customers. They are concerned that new vegetarian traders are going to displace them from the position they have gained at EAT-LONDON's markets. They have heard recently about a new falafel trader with a powerful personal story, being an ex- professional footballer, and then refugee, who ended up in London founding a street food business. Jack and Millie think that a new vegetarian trader with an interesting story to be featured in the press could be a threat to their position in EAT-LONDON's line-ups. This is an incentive to get more creative with the dosa fillings and trying other southern Indian recipes.

Being constantly innovative or creative is not always easy for street food traders, they need to find time and space to try new recipes, test them with customers, sell enough portions, get attention on social media, and then eventually find more trading opportunities that will pay for the effort. At the same time, creative street food traders encounter imitators that steal their ideas. Jack tells me that in the past 2 years he has encountered a couple of imitators; a trader in a different country copied their name, logo and menu; and a trader in Manchester also copied their menu. Jack describes how he had to confront the "copycat" through Twitter. He also describes how one of EAT-LONDON's most famous burrito traders had his brand completely copied by some other trader in the UK, who copied the typography of his logo, the menu, and even the graffiti art of his van. Street food traders need to deal with these difficulties and add additional work to their trading schedule to be creative and to secure a place at upcoming events and the most popular street food markets.

The imperative of creativity is another way in which professionalism is performed by food traders when they are hoping to get into the markets of the main organisers. The curatorial distinctions about professionalism include an evaluation of the economic aspects of the business, as well as the qualification of a traders' personal character. An entrepreneurial mentality is required, one that is explicitly enacted through trading forms. In this case, traders enacting affective labour and a performance of creativity and innovation are those who tend to be selected by these organisers. However, not all traders constitute themselves accurately as curatorial tools, otherwise they would always be selected and retained. Some traders fail to get into these organisations, as in the case of Marcy with EAT-LONDON. Some traders decide not to continue working with them after being selected for various reasons; such as not obtaining enough pitches to trade weekly, or disagreements about the pitch fee payment based on percentages of their intakes. Others who do not get in usually search for other markets with different requirements and standards to trade at. As the street food market scene in London is growing, opportunities to trade in different places have increased in the past two years.

5.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analysed how the curatorial distinctions of market organisers are performed by street food traders to get into the street food scene. Food traders need to perform professionalism to get selected, which includes making economic and cultural calculations to align their businesses with the requirements of the most popular market organizations. Performing professionalism entails achieving economic success while at the same time enacting the intangible qualities and values of the street food scene. Food traders struggle when navigating these subjective distinctions of professionalism, especially when they need to adjust practical business decisions with other aspects of performing affective labour and creativity. These rules of the game are tacit, and understanding these distinctions requires that traders experience and negotiate many different elements to sell their food and their brand. The curatorial distinctions of market organisers produce hierarchies in the scene, and not

all traders manage to get in. Those who understand and follow these distinctions are more likely to get picked by EAT-LONDON or Vibes Feast.

The performance of professionalism usually entails taking into consideration three aspects of trading beyond selling food. First, there is a narrative about transformation, change and passion for their job to brand their businesses. Traders' career change experience is similar to the experiences of market organisers, who have changed careers from the corporate world to organising markets. This narrative of passion creates a distinction amongst street food traders, separating them from other business that only work for profit. It also creates a separation between this kind of educated trader, and others. As explained in Chapter Four, organisers look for 'new school traders', those who are educated and entrepreneurial, and who can conduct their business with high standards.

Street food traders also need to perform care and affective labour. They need to practically demonstrate the amount of work and attention they put into preparing, cooking and serving food. This means preparing food with attention to sourcing ingredients, the cooking process, form, and aesthetics, and serving on the street with a trading performance that is attractive for customers. Traders conduct their business as a form of affective labour, in terms of building a relationship with customers on site or on social media, who want to obtain an experience from their food consumption; not just a meal, but a story about the product, the cooking process, and a performance at the market. This is a complex process for these small businesses when they need to evaluate and balance attention to their product and process, with other practical elements such as the relationship between work, time invested, and the economic return they will receive for these efforts. The professionalism that organisers curate at their markets is highly dependent on this affective labour performance. Their markets are supposed to be a combination of good food, good place and good people. Having street food traders with characters, who can establish a positive relation with their audience is highly relevant. In this case, market organisers look for this quality, and constantly re-evaluate traders' performances in terms of caring for their product and service.

Finally, a trader's performance of professionalism also needs to align with the value of creativity in the scene. I have described how street food traders need to perform a

food business creatively in order to be selected by market organisers, and to remain relevant in the scene as time passes. Street food traders need to show a capacity to invent creative dishes, re-invent their menus regularly and work on collaborations with other members of the scene. By planning these initiatives, they expect to be featured in the press or be talked about in social media, as well as getting attention from organisers, customers or potential investors. In this sense, street food traders need to invest time not only in developing their business initially, but also in playing the game of the street food scene, where uniqueness and freshness are highly valued.

In the curation of street food markets, traders need to align their business with the scene in economic and cultural terms. This means not only working to make profit, but also complying with the intangible qualities of the scene. Following these curatorial distinctions is not always easy, as it demands making economic calculations to make a profitable business, but also cultural calculations to negotiate and evaluate how to develop a performance according to the scene's cultural forms, values and expectations. The performance of professionalism by traders is relevant to give these markets their particular cultural form; market organisers define qualities for their markets, and these qualities need to be evaluated on site to pick traders, and then re-evaluated over time. The curatorial process is continuous and is not only about determining a set of qualities, but also about managing uncertainty and making these qualities stable through time. The curatorial process is a constant evaluation and negotiation of qualities, which can be exemplified in the task of recruiting traders. This process demonstrates the inequalities in the scene, where market organisers hold more power to make decisions about standards and requirements, and traders do not necessarily can challenge them. Those traders who fail to comply with these requirements are forced to search for other less prestigious organisations with whom to trade their food; to some extent, this means less promotion and recognition in the press, fewer customers and therefore fewer opportunities to grow their business.

In the next chapter, the analysis of the curatorial distinctions of market organisers focuses on their cultural calculation of marketplaces and the picking of locations for their markets. Here, market organisers also define a set of qualities for their marketplaces, which need to be made stable through negotiations with other urban actors.

Chapter 6. Negotiating place and value.

6.1. Introduction

In the previous chapters I analysed the curatorial process with a focus on market formation. In this and the following chapter, I focus on the curation of marketplaces. This decision has been made for the purpose of presentation and analysis only. Both processes, the curation of markets and marketplaces, are inseparable; a market needs a spatialised form to operate. In this chapter, I examine the curatorial practices conducted by market organisers to qualify place as a localised urban form with specific purposes. This chapter analyses the first tasks in the curation of marketplaces, aimed at finding partners and locations for the setup of market. Chapter Seven presents the curation of the internal qualities of the marketplace to create brand experiences.

The curation of marketplaces is a form of placemaking, where a planned and organised process is carried out to create and transform place. Markets are instrumental for the generation of place, and market organisers work to add value to the urban landscape through these markets. The curation of marketplaces can be interpreted as the formation of an urban assemblage (Farías 2010, 2011; McFarlane, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c). In this process a series of associations and connections between place, actors, materials and symbols are put together to create a marketplace with specific qualities. One of the major contributions of using the idea of assemblage to understand the curation of marketplaces lies in its descriptive power. It offers potential for an analysis based on ethnographic findings that could reveal the operations through which these marketplaces are formed; the actors involved in this process and their interrelationships, including looking at hierarchies and inequalities.

This discussion of the curation of marketplaces interrogates how market organisers as placemakers determine the value of place through economic and cultural calculations. It raises questions about how places get transformed, and what values prevail. This curatorial process reveals how market organisers, by setting up street food markets, are creating new places in the city; and how their working practices contribute to the process of adding or changing value to urban places in London. Their street food

markets can improve the perception of certain deprived areas or add economic value to private land or properties, enhancing the offer of development companies and landowners in London.

This discussion about the curation of marketplaces as placemaking challenges how markets get discussed from an urban planning perspective. In policy recommendations (Regeneris Consulting, 2010; Cross river partnership, 2014; Colin Buchanan, 2008), markets are frequently mentioned as instruments for placemaking and the transformation of place for the public good, in processes of regeneration to activate public spaces, or to create local economic opportunities. However, the evidence gathered and analysed in this chapter describes a process where private actors define values and create and transform place for their own interest, defining the possibilities of generation and use of place. More specifically, the curation of marketplaces creates places for certain audiences, and creates economic opportunities for the organisers, traders (see Chapters 4 and 5), and landowners. In a different way to the idea of placemaking from an urban planning perspective, the curation of marketplaces incentivises and increases the economic and cultural value of the land or properties where these are located, where limiting these places for certain uses is more relevant than opening them for the public good. Market organisers as placemakers curate their marketplaces by assembling a series of elements that create place with specific qualities for private interests and purposes.

In this chapter I analyse the curation of marketplaces by examining how organisers conceptualise markets as place, and conduct a series of curatorial tasks to set up markets in different locations. First, I examine organisers' narratives about the value of their markets for the generation of place; this conceptualisation refers to the generation of economic and cultural or symbolic value in urban space. These different definitions of value are then negotiated with landowners or landlords to find suitable market locations. Here, the flexibility of the curatorial process is tested, as market organisers need to adapt to the requirements and demands of other urban actors. For this reason, finding partners that share similar visions and values about the purpose of these marketplaces is highly relevant. After these partnerships are established and negotiated, a series of other practical curatorial decisions are made to find suitable locations and venues in which to set up these markets, where elements such as timing,

regulations, infrastructure, size, transport links or audience are evaluated. This curation process involves the economic and cultural calculation of all these elements combined so places get assembled as marketplaces with specific qualities.

6.2. Narratives about markets and place

Market organisers curate marketplaces by qualifying a series of characteristics of place in order to establish markets as profitable businesses. Market organisers need a place that fits their curatorial strategy; their curatorial distinctions are a vision for place, as well as a promise for those using or owning it. This process of curation as cultural calculation depends on their different visions or narratives about the relationship between their street food markets and place. Different market organisers have different thoughts about how their markets transform or contribute to urban processes in London. Market organisers construct this narrative according to their understanding of the role of street food markets and their own role in shaping the experience of place in the locations where their markets are set up. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the curation of the street food scene is a process that involves making decisions about good food, good people and good place. For this reason, finding suitable locations and venues, and assembling a marketplace with specific qualities is important to differentiate the scene from other forms of food trading or retail spaces.

These different visions about the relationship between markets and place have something in common. In all cases market organisers understand the role of street food markets as adding value to the urban landscape. They consider themselves as “value generators” for the places where their markets are located. However, this idea of adding value varies according to the narratives and styles of different market organisers and companies. Some organisers think of their business as an added value to the process of regeneration or community making in the city; while other organisers see the value of their street food markets as enhancing the retail offer of existing commercial spaces or improving the appearance of abandoned or disused places and transforming them into entertainment destinations. These different narratives are discussed in the following sections.

6.2.1. Tactical urbanism

EAT-LONDON, and particularly its founder Perla and Head of Markets Nick, strongly believe that their line of work is a form of “*tactical urbanism*”. They have planned their business organising street food markets with the clear aim of communicating this value to landowners or developers. They claim that they want to intervene in urban space, opening up places for public use or creating new associations for these places. Perla mentions that the idea behind creating EAT-LONDON was to expand her food truck business and to make urban interventions with food. What is distinctive about EAT-LONDON is the aim of opening up public space, where everyone can have access to good food. Although, most of their markets are located in private land with public access, they see themselves differently from other market organisers. They talk about their work as creating a culture from the street, while according to Perla, other organisers only look for “*what's hip and the hip places to do events*”. Perla mentions they have an important role to play in the city, bringing people together in communal relationships, animating the spaces where their markets are located. Their marketplaces are more than just about food, and organisers and traders have a function, a role to play in the city. From this perspective, their role as placemakers is to contribute to developing new relationships and associations between people and place. Perla says:

“I’ve been getting very into urbanism and I mean I’ve always travelled but, I’ve been to America quite a few times, checking what they were doing in New York and San Francisco and really felt that something interesting was going on and I wanted to bring it here... so I started doing the Masters in 2010, where I met Nick... and really got me a new perspective on the whole idea of urbanism, a new perspective of what I wanted to do with this, that it wasn’t just a nice little market with food traders it was actually a sort of urban intervention”
(Perla, EAT-LONDON).

Perla sees their curatorial work as value creation. They are transforming places through the relationship that people establish with food, and creating new places for socialising. In Perla’s idea of street food markets as tactical urbanism, market

organisers play the role of humanising agents who bring life, culture and atmosphere to these places, making them more accessible and interesting for the public. Perla's narrative and vision about the role of street food markets is connected with the idea of creating convivial spaces (Parham, 2015; Amin, 2008) or spaces of encounter (Watson, 2009) in public space. However, in practical terms the way in which these convivial places are created is by finding private land and private landowners to set up their markets. Perla's idea of tactical urbanism is more connected with generating business opportunities from urban space than only creating conviviality and encounter.

After creating EAT-LONDON, Perla intended to form partnerships with different landowners and development companies in London. EAT-LONDON started to look for iconic places in the city to set up their markets; places where they could find significant footfall and benefit from this exposure. Perla understands their curatorial role also as creating a *"new narrative"* by putting food and a human face to these developments. For example, The Gherkin building, a cold and distant building becomes a social destination in the middle of the City. The cranes and dust of the construction site in King's Cross give way to a place for socialising and encounter. In terms of their role as placemakers, Perla says:

"whether councils or private owners or landlords it's people who are looking for a value proposition for the space, so they recognise that street food brings street life and humanises an area, brings concrete into something more liveable, malleable, more interesting... It's placemaking, like I said it, it's kind of like tactical urbanism, yeah, you associate your experience of eating that delicious whatever it was with being in that place, and you come to associate that place with that food and that's a great thing" (Perla, EAT-LONDON).

Perla says that landowners look for street food markets with the purpose of *"enlivening the space"*. One example of this is the case of their market at King's Cross. This area next to the railways "had become a series of disused buildings, railway sidings, warehouses and contaminated land" (King's Cross, 2017). A redevelopment plan started in 1996 to transform this 67-acre site and erect buildings and homes, create streets and public parks. The construction of the new King's Cross development started in 2008 and has been carried by the Kings Cross Central Limited Partnership,

formed by the companies Argent, London and Continental Railways, and DHL as the single land owners of King's Cross (King's Cross, 2017). In 2011, many offices, shops, restaurants and a University had moved to the area. Around that time, Argent who manages the Estate, wanted to bring people into the recently built new site, especially to a new street named King's Boulevard. They did not know how to attract people and transform this new street into an established and enjoyable path for pedestrians in the middle of a massive construction site. Argent contacted Perla, who was starting with EAT-LONDON and in need of a place to set up their first market. In her meetings with the development company, negotiations had to be made to bring in food traders in a coherent way, not just placing them randomly in the Estate, but as a cluster, as an organised group. EAT-LONDON launched their market in October 2012 with a night event, congregating thousands of people. Since then, the market has been established at King's Cross every day during lunch time, moving locations across the Estate depending on the progress of the construction plans (see Chapter 7). The curation of marketplaces in this case is a form of placemaking that enlivens space for private interests. In this case, EAT-LONDON market has been used as tool to open socialising spaces for development companies, and has served to promote the developers' new private squares with public access for tenants and students, as in the case of Lewis Cubitt Square, and Granary Square (see Figure 9).



Figure 9: EAT-LONDON market at King's Cross, Granary Square. 14 May 2014.

According to Perla, after four years organising markets and events with landowners and development companies, street food is being integrated as part of their placemaking tools for tactical urbanism. This kind of street food market is becoming

ordinary, which brings more opportunities to find venues, making their business more sustainable. It also creates more competition, which puts pressure on market organisers to continue innovating and making attractive places for food trading and consumption. Perla claims that these days, eating from a van or a stall in London is becoming more normal and *“it’s normal for spaces to have these markets, with a human driver rather than chains [fast food and restaurant chains]”*.

6.2.2. Community development

In a similar way to Perla’s vision about markets and tactical urbanism, there are other organisers curating markets in local areas as part of strategies for community development. For example, Harringay Market (see Figure 10) used to be located at a primary school yard every Sunday morning until lunchtime. The market was highly popular with local people, and it had traders selling produce and hot meals. Local people used to go and buy their weekly vegetables, fish, meat, and have coffee, cake or brunch. During the summer of 2014, the school needed to remodel the yard and the market had to move. Jennifer, the market organiser was looking for new places; it needed to be a place not far away, in order not to lose their customer base. Her idea was to find another school, but the project did not flourish and the market closed.



Figure 10: Harringay market. 25 May 2014.

However, Jennifer was already in conversations with the Haringey Council to take over a new market in Tottenham Green (see Figure 11), near Tottenham Town Hall. She was planning to take the Haringay market traders to this new site. Tottenham Green market was part of a regeneration project for the area; it is close to Seven Sisters tube station, where they have live music, activities for children, and arts and craft traders on the weekends. At the beginning, the market was also supported by Alan, market organiser of Vibes Feast, who was in charge of promoting the market and attracting media attention. In this way, both markets were being used as a placemaking tools to promote community gatherings in local areas; Haringay market as an independent market bringing together local people towards the School, and Tottenham Green as a pilot to launch a larger regeneration project in the area.



Figure 11. Tottenham Green market. 12 July 2014.

As mentioned by Parham (2015), the use of food markets for regeneration projects is a popular solution in the UK context. The idea is to attract a middle-class public or investor to certain areas by creating new consumptions destinations. For the markets mentioned before, the purpose was to establish a place for neighbours to meet, and where the Council could disseminate information about their regeneration projects. Another similar example is in North Finchley, where neighbours participated in a public consultation about Barnet Council's regeneration plan for the area. This plan included improving the pavement and sidewalks and façade of some buildings, planting new trees and creating an art gallery. In these meetings, the Council and neighbours

decided that having a street food market in the area, in addition to the traditional retail market in the High Street, was a good idea to establish a socialisation place to communicate progress of the regeneration project. Alice volunteered to organise a monthly market, which has been running since 2013.

6.2.3. Commercial development

Rosie, on the other hand, sees her street food markets as adding value to commercial developments in London. She thinks that other market organisers, like EAT-LONDON and the community markets, are interesting initiatives for opening up new places for trading where there is a need for local food consumption destinations. Rosie says these serve as a tool that *“enlivens that piece of land and that community”*, as well as contributing to make street food more popular and raise the standards of quality of these markets across London.

However, Rosie’s strategy is different and aims to establish a different kind of relationship with development companies and landowners. She sees their role as adding a value with a new food offer to established commercial or retail spaces. Differently from the idea of using markets for placemaking to create and promote local economic opportunities, Rosie’s narrative describes markets as instrumental for creating commercial spaces. For Rosie, their business offering of street food for retail spaces at big office buildings in the City of London has a very different connotation of markets making place. In this case, she does not see her markets as tools for tactical urbanism or opening up spaces with food, but her role as organiser is to deliver a solution that enhances the offer of private retail spaces with public access. She considers that placing street food traders in these developments is a win-win strategy, where organisers can obtain a secure location with enough footfall, security measures, water and electricity. In this way, the developments gain a new food offer for their corporate tenants that differentiates them from other office spaces in the City. Rosie talks about street food as a source of distinction for these developments, she says:

“every big commercial development in London they have a lot of Starbucks, Pret, and Eat and all kinds of regular stuff, so the street food obviously gives

them a point of difference, the other benefit by street food is that it changes with the seasons much more, and it's much more in line with London's trends and how London is moving, so essentially their tenants, the people who work in the offices have a greater spread of choice" (Rosie, market organiser).

6.2.4. Entertainment destinations

Aligned with this idea of street food markets adding value to private land as commercial spaces, Vibes Feast is interested in creating entertainment destinations partnering with private landowners and major development companies. Alan describes Vibes Feast's role as creating events that they, as organisers, would like to go to, using their taste as reference (Cronin, 2004) for curating markets with specific qualities where audiences with similar interests could gather. They aim to create night markets for an audience of middle-class professionals who could pay an entrance fee on top of food and drinks. Each market needs to be curated with a festive atmosphere (see Chapter 7). Alan says *"a Shangri-La kind of atmosphere (...) where there are secret parts, you can find the whisky bar, there's a gin store, and each one of these mini places has their own vibe"*.

During the transformation of these street food markets as entertainment destinations, Vibes Feast usually establishes partnerships with private landowners and development companies. For example, for their market in Lewisham they signed a deal with developers Land Securities. This company is one of the UK's largest commercial development companies, with 16.7 million square feet in their portfolio, they develop, sell, manage and buy leisure, residential, and retail properties, workspaces, retail parks and shopping centres (Land Securities, 2017). In 2014, Vibes Feast and Land Securities partnered to bring in a new food concept to Model Market (see Figure 12) next to the Lewisham Shopping Centre, as a tool to improve their retail offer and to encourage new people to visit the area. In a press release about this partnership, the developers claim that *"it's always rewarding when retail initiatives contribute to wider placemaking. The success of [Vibes Feast] indicates a shift in consumer sentiment towards local experiences and independent outlets which will continue to benefit up-and-coming locations as it has benefitted Lewisham"* (Peterson, 2014).

Alan from Vibes Feast comments that this kind of partnership shows that the developers are “*forward thinking*” and trying to make profit out of lots of empty or not fully-occupied properties. In dealing with market organisers, they can secure a short-term lease with a high return rate. Additionally, they gain from the refurbishing of abandoned places, publicity and from bringing people to their development areas. The economic opportunities that these street food markets create are very different from those mentioned in business reports (Regeneris Consulting, 2010; Cross river partnership, 2014; Colin Buchanan, 2008) and policy recommendations about markets as tools for placemaking. In this case, Vibes Feast creates a business opportunity out of partnerships intended to occupy or use abandoned or empty private land, making profit and enhancing the profile of developers and landowners. In the case of Model Market, this space was left empty and unused from 2011. Alan comments on Model Market:

“we kind of hoovered up the last piece of land that people have forgotten about, there’s no office going into Model Market, what they are doing with the property it’s just holding it, maybe hoping to converted into real estate one day, not sure” (Alan, Vibes Feast).



Figure 12: Model Market. 17 April 2015.

Market organisers have different narratives about the connection between markets and place. They see street food markets as instrumental for the generation of place, and as tools that add value to the urban landscape in different ways; organisers use

these different narratives to pitch their offering to landlords or Councils. As mentioned before, through these different narratives it is possible to interpret that the curation of marketplaces as a tool for placemaking differs from how it is conceptualised in urban planning. In these narratives, the curation of marketplaces generates economic and symbolic value for organisers, traders and private landowners and developers. It is not necessarily oriented towards opening up spaces for the public good or for generating local economic opportunities, but towards generating economic profit from the urban landscape. Depending on these different ideas about place and value, organisers curate these marketplaces with specific qualities that are negotiated with other urban actors. The curation of marketplaces can be described as a form of placemaking in which, to assemble place, many elements need to be considered, such as the practicalities of finding locations and venues, or the requirements of Councils and landowners. These curatorial tasks of placemaking are discussed in the following section.

6.3. Curatorial tasks for placemaking

Street food markets sometimes appear to proliferate spontaneously or even erratically through different areas in London, but the process of setting up markets is highly regulated by the curatorial decisions of market organisers. Market organisers curate their markets by qualifying place in economic and cultural terms. In this case, they need to evaluate a series of characteristics of place to determine its suitability for setting up street food markets. The curatorial work of Market organisers is a form of placemaking, where a series of qualities and elements are evaluated and assembled to transform place into a marketplace.

These curatorial tasks for placemaking include finding locations or venues to set up street food markets, considering infrastructure, permissions, audience, and timeframes. For this task, organisers establish relationships with Councils and private landowners, and negotiate some of these qualities of place depending on their requirements. From these negotiations, economic and cultural calculation about place

are made, and curatorial decisions adapt and change to assemble marketplaces with different forms in various locations.

6.3.1. Location and time

Street food markets in London are located in an extended geographical area, in a variety of places, but with a distinct logic. These markets do not necessarily grow organically, but they are set up by organisers depending on the availability of cheap land to rent. This logic follows what is often described as commercial gentrification (Zukin et. al., 2009) in which new commercial spaces occupy low rent zones to make a bigger profit. Market organisers follow this trend and tend to find and occupy available empty, abandoned or disused spaces that are being lined up for regeneration. Table 2 shows the details of the fourteen markets where I conducted research, as well as the organisers, location, owner or management company, and the type of venue in which these markets were located. In most cases with private landlords, after the market season has finished, the space is regenerated and transformed into offices or flats. These markets are distributed mainly in Central London, where most lunchtime markets serve office workers; and in specific areas with on-going regeneration plans, such as Dalston and Kingsland Road, in the borough of Hackney (Hackney Council, 2009), Haringay Green Lanes (London Borough of Haringey, 2017), Tottenham (Greater London Authority and London Borough of Haringey, 2014), and Lewisham Town Centre (Lewisham Council, 2014).

Market ¹⁵	Time	Organiser ¹⁶	Location	Owner/Management.	Venue
King's Cross	From 2012 - ongoing.	EAT-LONDON	Kings Cross area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • King's Boulevard. • Granary Square. • Cubitt Square. 	Owner: King's Cross Central Limited Partnership.	The market moves across the Estate, according to the construction progress on site.
The Gherkin	From 2012 - ongoing.	EAT-LONDON	The Gherkin building (30 Mary Axe).	Owner: The Safra Group. Leasing agents: GM Real Estate and CBRE.	The market is located in the foyer area of the building.
Canary Wharf ¹⁷	2013 - 2014.	EAT-LONDON	Wood Wharf	Canary Wharf Group	The market was initially located in the Wood Wharf. That area is now being developed to create new mixed use, working and

¹⁵ In this table, I mention the fourteen markets where I conducted ethnography during 2014.

¹⁶ In this table, I only mention organisers I met or had contact with during fieldwork.

¹⁷ Since 2015 EAT-LONDON opened a new market in the Canary Wharf area; they are now located in West India Quay. This retail space is owned by Land Securities.

Market ¹⁵	Time	Organiser ¹⁶	Location	Owner/Management.	Venue
					residential properties.
Southbank	2014 - 2016.	EAT-LONDON	Southbank Centre	Southbank Centre	The market was located in the Royal Festival Hall and occasionally on the riverside.
UCL	2013 - 2015	EAT-LONDON	Bloomsbury	UCL	Main Quad
Dalston Yard	From 2012 - ongoing.	Vibes Feast	Dalston	Private landlord.	This was a parking space, which closed on the days the market is set up. The place was bought in 2016 and is now being developed into flats.

Market ¹⁵	Time	Organiser ¹⁶	Location	Owner/Management.	Venue
Hawker House ¹⁸	2014 - ongoing.	Vibes Feast	Different locations: 2014: Pritchard's Road, Tower Hamlets. 2015: Kingsland Road, Hackney.	Private landlord.	Both years, the market was located in a covered space. In 2014 in a warehouse, which is now converted into a co-working space. In 2015, on an empty floor of an office building, now converted into a co-working and exhibition space.
Lewisham	2014 - ongoing.	Vibes Feast	Lewisham Central	Land Securities	This market is located in the former "Model Market" in Lewisham,

¹⁸ In 2016, the market was still open in a different location, near Canada Water station.

Market ¹⁵	Time	Organiser ¹⁶	Location	Owner/Management.	Venue
					which was closed in 2011 and re-opened by Vibes Feast in 2014.
Street Food Union	2012 - ongoing.	Street Food Union	Rupert Street	Westminster Council, supported by Soho Estates.	The market is located on a public street; permission was given by the Council, and the operation is managed privately by a group of food traders.
Harringay	2014	Jennifer	Harringay Primary School, Matthew Road	Harringay Primary School, Matthew Road. Supported by Haringey Council	Market was located in a School yard.
Tottenham Green	2014 - ongoing.	Jennifer	Tottenham Green	Haringey Council	Market is located in a green area.

Market ¹⁵	Time	Organiser ¹⁶	Location	Owner/Management.	Venue
The Stock MKT	2014		Bermondsey Square	Aviva Investors Igloo Fund in partnership with Southwark Council and the London Development Agency.	Bermondsey Square is a private space with public access.
Malaysia night	2014		Trafalgar Square	Greater London Authority	Trafalgar Square.
Brazil day	2014		Trafalgar Square	Greater London Authority	Trafalgar Square.

Table 2: Markets and place ownership/management

In most cases, the street food markets that are part of this research are located on private land with public access, in partnership with Councils, private landowners or major development companies. The availability of spaces varies each year, and depending on the regeneration and development plans, markets are set up in pop-up logic. In this case, the curation of marketplaces follows a seasonal or temporal logic that is not necessarily planned, but depends on the practical issue of finding available spaces with cheap rent. For market organisers, finding venues that are suitable to set up a market, in terms of landlord and rent, infrastructure, and location where their intended audiences live or work, is a complicated and lengthy process. For this curatorial task to be completed, these practical elements need to be evaluated, as well as finding partnerships with landowners and developers with a similar understanding of the value of these marketplaces.

6.3.2. Venues

The curation of marketplaces as a form of placemaking requires making economic and cultural calculations about the venues where these markets will be located. Elements for the qualification of venues include location, assessing issues such as residential or non-residential occupation, transport links, footfall etc. Other elements include: infrastructure, the amount of space available, electricity and water supply, covered areas, facilities; and aesthetic elements as well as character (see Chapter 7). Marketplaces are assembled with consideration for whether these elements would make a suitable venue, where economic calculations about rent, size and investment return are evaluated as well as cultural calculations about place and audience, aesthetics and character.

When working at the EAT-LONDON office, Perla is usually out at meetings with potential clients, talking with landowners, developing companies and checking out new places. There is a list in one of the boards on the wall with “Hot Spots” (see Figure 13), or places to look at. Along with the ones where they already have markets, I can read “St Katherine Docks; British Museum; Paddington, Grosvenor Estate, Leather Lane...”. At the EAT-LONDON office, each week there are more places on the board.

There is a list entitled “Opportunities (night spaces)” where I can read: Victoria/Westminster, Lambeth, Deptford, Peckham, Burgess Park, Great Eastern Street, Paddington Fire Station, Vauxhall Fire Station, Stratford, Greenwich, Leather Lane in Camden, Chalton Street and the British Museum. They are constantly looking for new places and opportunities to set up their markets, as developer agents in other lines of work also do.



Figure 13: Hot spots in a board at EAT-LONDON office. 10 February 2014.

For example, EAT-LONDON was looking for venues or business opportunities to establish a presence in Hackney, where other organisers have markets. After lunch one day, Perla and Anna came back from visiting a place near Hackney Central where they were invited to collaborate on an arts festival, with talks and screenings. This could be their first thematic, and they need to evaluate costs, and how much profit they could make by selling alcohol at the event. The place offered was small, with allocated space for only three traders. Nick says that those small places are not lucrative, that he has been to some of these arts festivals with his girlfriend (who is a food trader) and sometimes she sells only ten portions in a day. He says that it might work out only if they bring two traders and a bar on a Friday and Saturday, and he is not sure if any traders will want to join such a risky project. Perla says it's fantastic connecting with

these people, but setting up a market in that venue is too much effort for little profit and they should be focussing their energy somewhere else. Anna asks Perla “do you know what you want in Hackney?” Perla responds that she will spend a couple of days thinking about new ideas for EAT-LONDON, but this venue is not the right space for EAT-LONDON.

In a different occasion, Nick tells me that Perla was in a meeting in Croydon, looking for a potential place to set up a market. He says Perla has a romantic vision about that place because it represents a challenge. It is an area that is not necessarily centrally located, where there are not many cultural activities, and she thinks EAT-LONDON can enliven and transform that place with a market. Nick says that Croydon is “*culturally empty*”, and that any culture that they could bring in would get “*sucked up by the place*”. In these examples, market organisers make economic and cultural calculations about a venue’s suitability to set up a market. This evaluation includes understanding the relationship between, for example, whether the size is big enough to allocate more traders and charge a bigger pitch fee, whether the location is appropriate in terms of transport links and getting enough footfall from middle class professionals with disposable income to pay for their food and drinks. As mentioned in Chapter 4, a marketplace needs to combine good food, good people and good place.

At the EAT-LONDON office most conversations are either about food, or about new places to get food. One day during lunchtime, I was talking with Nick and Ron about different locations for markets in London, and they told me a story about one of their failed markets. In 2013, they organised a weekend market in Maida Hill Place near Paddington, in West London. Nick says, “*our street food markets don’t work in West London.*” This market was set up to support a Westminster Council regeneration project, but what started as a pilot in Maida Hill Place did not continue. The market was a failure because people were only stopping to look at the food; they were not buying or staying to eat. Nick says the configuration of the neighbourhood is different, meaning the kind of people who live or pass by is not their intended audience. The market was also located in the wrong place, in a corner with high footfall, and also large amounts of traffic and noise. People were not seeing the market as a destination to stay and socialise. In this instance, even though the economic and logistic aspects of

setting up the market were covered with funding and support from the Council, the other elements that needed to be present to assemble a marketplace were not there.

As mentioned before, to curate marketplaces, organisers need to find suitable venues with a series of qualities. Also, organisers need to partner with Councils and landowners who share a similar understanding of the value of their markets for the urban landscape. According to Perla, curating a marketplace in the right location is a matter of “*aligned values*” with other actors involved in this process. When EAT-LONDON looks for venues to set up their markets, they also consider that their partners have a positive vision about markets transforming urban space. Perla says they usually look for “*iconic places*” in a certain way. She says they like to be aligned with organisations that share their values and that are aiming to be outstanding in what they do, in making a difference with their work. For example, she mentions:

“we consider ourselves to be offering the most brilliant selection of food offers in our markets, really brilliant selection of traders and personalities and everything and so it feels right that we go to places that, spaces, urban spaces that are significant, so that we are significant (...) an iconic space to be, fully be, somewhere less obvious, so we’re up for going to anywhere that will allow us to do what we can do in the most wonderful setting that we could find”
(Perla, EAT-LONDON).

In Perla’s vision the issue with values is not only in terms of the aims that organisers and developers share, but in the economic and symbolic value that could be passed on between them. Organisers look for venues where landowners or Councils could pass on distinction for their marketplaces, and where their marketplaces could bring in footfall or new people into certain areas. In this sense, an economic and cultural calculation to assemble marketplaces includes establishing and managing relationships with good people, with the right kind of urban actors.

Alan from Vibes Feast also describes the process of finding venues for their markets as an economic and cultural calculation of many different elements. Vibes Feast needs to find venues where a short-term lease would allow them to cover the cost of refurbishing and setting up and still make profit during the planned season (usually

four or five months during the summer). For this purpose, they use different strategies and devices to find suitable venues, like for example searching in Google Maps and conducting online searches, as well as walking down the street looking for places and then contacting the owners. This initial search serves them to evaluate size, to calculate how many traders they can bring in to their markets, and connection to public transport, to estimate footfall. According to this evaluation about size and accessibility, Vibes Feast would contact the landowner to find out the price and the possibility of a short-term lease for the place. Further explorations of the venue are needed as well. Alan says, *“then we go and if it meets our criteria, like it’s got character, it’s got lots of space, it’s got lot of potential for us to do something cool, it’s got good ventilation,”* they would sign a contract.

For Rosie, the location of the venue in terms of access to public transport and footfall are the most important elements when curating markets. As their markets are located in office buildings in the City, one of these next to Liverpool Street Station, they have secured demand from workers in the area and the passing footfall, like tourists coming from Tower Bridge. For Rosie’s market, the practical requirements of the venue are more important than other elements such as character or audience. Rosie says they look for places with the necessary infrastructure like electricity and water supply to park food trucks, cleaning, security and managerial staff on site. For Rosie, the partnership with landowners needs to match in terms of standards and degrees of professionalization of their work.

In these different cases, market organisers qualify venues through a combination of economic and cultural elements to assemble marketplaces. A series of elements are evaluated to determine when place could be transformed into a marketplace with success. Organisers look for the material and practical conditions for the market to function, but also for other elements such as the aesthetics, the character of place, the audience in the surrounding area, and the landowners with similar values and standards. Finding suitable venues is definitely linked with finding good people to work with. Establishing partnerships with Councils and landowners is also a complex process that needs to be considered when curating marketplaces. The negotiation with these other urban actors is examined in the next section.

6.4. Negotiating partnerships

Establishing relationships with landowners, developers and Councils is an important issue when curating street food markets. Market organisers evaluate their relationship with these actors in terms of sharing values, or sharing similar standards or a business vision, which is similar to finding traders with the same entrepreneurial flair (see Chapters 4 and 5). To curate marketplaces, organisers deal with Councils in terms of permissions, or health and safety regulations, even if their markets are on private land. They also need to negotiate short-term leases with landowners. In the relationship market organisers have with these other actors, further economic and cultural calculations are made to adapt, adjust or change their curatorial decisions according to their requirements. There are occasions when the curatorial decisions and other actors' demands don't match, and markets are destined to fail, like in the case of EAT-LONDON in Maida Hill Place. But generally, marketplaces are assembled contingently from a multiplicity of associations with actors like traders, landowners, Council, and with material elements like transport links, infrastructure, aesthetics of place and many others that create their marketplaces as specific localized urban forms.

6.4.1. Market organisers and Councils

The Hawker House controversy

In the relationship between market organisers and Councils, issues arise in relation to permissions, regulations and the relation between these marketplaces and local areas. As mentioned before, Vibes Feast prefers to find venues in non-residential areas, where the disturbance with their night markets could be kept to the minimum. They have taken this decision, because having problems with the neighbours of a market could be detrimental and ruin the initial investment they usually put in to refurbish the venues before opening to the public. In these calculations, they consider that the return on investment will be obtained after several consecutive weekends, therefore having issues with the Council or neighbours, and having to close a market, is risky. Some of the issues they need to negotiate with Councils are around alcohol licensing,

health and safety requirements for food preparation, and for the place itself such as toilets and fire escapes, as well as permission to have any kind of music on site. For this, they need to manage noise, fumes coming from the food stalls, clear entrances and exits, not to exceed the capacity of people in enclosed spaces, and to ensure customer leave quietly.

In February 2014, Vibes Feast announced on their Twitter account that they had a problem keeping their covered night market called “Hawker House”¹⁹ in Pritchard’s Road open because of difficulties in dealing with Tower Hamlets Council. They created the hashtag #SaveHawkerHouse to call for support from their customers and sign a petition to keep the place open. According to their Twitter posts, the issue seemed to be around planning permission and complaints from local residents about excessive noise. In this thread of tweets, it was also stated that if they were having this market in Hackney none of these problems would have happened. Their Twitter followers (or customers) sent messages of support directed to Tower Hamlets’ Councillors, stating how important the market is for the area, and how it creates jobs, although not necessarily for local people. Alan comments that some Councils and residents are more reluctant to accept night markets due to “*not having the same values*”. This means they do not see any worth in opening up new commercial spaces in certain areas.

Alan says Tower Hamlets Council is not particularly receptive to what they do, nor is the community. He says “*they don’t have the same values, they are not supportive of events involving alcohol*”. In his interview, he does not mention that Tower Hamlets has the highest percentage of Muslim residents in England and Wales with thirty-eight per cent, with a national average of 5 per cent (Tower Hamlets Council, 2015). Vibes Feast might have experienced this resistance from the Council and residents because they picked a venue that was not suitable for them in terms of audience. As mentioned in Chapter 4, when they curate marketplaces, they take decisions to include and therefore exclude certain people from coming to their markets. Alan says they “*try to*

¹⁹ “A hawker centre or cooked food centre... is an open-air complex in Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and the Riau Islands, housing many stalls that sell a variety of inexpensive food. They are typically found in city centres, near public housing estates or transport” Source: Wikipedia.

create events that we want to go to (...), it's where me and [other Vibes Feast partners] are every weekend (...) we basically want to be somewhere that we like and if we like it then hopefully other people will too". Therefore, the curation of these marketplaces is not necessarily a placemaking strategy to serve the Muslim population of Tower Hamlets, but more likely the middle-class professionals living nearby in the London Fields area.

To manage these difficulties, Vibes Feast had to adjust the curation of Hawker House to reduce noise complaints. Alan says they put cameras up to see where people congregate outside the area, taking decibel readings every ten minutes with microphones in strategic places to prove that the noise was no louder than the traffic. Their efforts were enough to convince the Council to keep Hawker House opened, but only during that winter season. Alan says about their relationship with Tower Hamlets:

"we kind of don't want to work there anymore because people need to understand that we are a good thing for the area, we're taking unused space that could otherwise be squatted in, we always take pictures before and after we leave the site and it has always improved" (Alan, Vibes Feast).

Councils requirements

To curate marketplaces the negotiating of a prosperous relationship with Councils and their residents is a matter of *"aligned values"*, which in the case of Vibes Feast and Tower Hamlets did not occur. From 2015 onwards, Vibes Feast moved their covered night markets to regeneration areas in the boroughs of Hackney and Southwark which they say are more receptive to their plans and ideas. However, they still need to negotiate planning permissions and to adapt the curation of their marketplaces accordingly. For example, Vibes Feast had to deal with a regulatory change in the Dalston Area that, in 2014, became a 'Special Policy Area' (SPA), with the purpose of reducing litter and waste, antisocial behaviour and public nuisance caused by customers of alcohol licensed premises (Hackney Council, 2014). This meant that for their market in a carpark near Dalston Junction station, permanent licenses were not granted anymore. They needed to set up their night market on temporary event

notices, which required them to limit the premise license to sell alcohol only between 17:00 and 23:00 hrs on Friday and Saturday. With these temporary licenses, they were unable to have music performances or DJ's on site as they did in previous years. They had to invest in speakers to play background music to maintain the festive atmosphere (see Chapter 7).

Something similar happened in the case of Alice's market in North Finchley in the borough of Barnet. The market started as a community side project to support the regeneration plan in the area. Although this initiative was in part planned and supported by the Council, they found many issues when trying to set up the market, especially in terms of licensing, budget, technical requirements and in managing the relationship with the stallholders from the traditional produce market on the high street. Alice says that although the Council was supportive of the market and gave them funds for the first year, they did not give out new street trading licenses and the only public piece of land available was taken over by the traditional retail market. Alice and the organising group had to find a private venue and pay for rent after the first year of funding was over. She says they were in a "Catch 22" situation, explaining:

"if not enough people come to the market then the traders start to leave and if not enough traders are there, then people won't go (...) the rent for that piece of land is £650 [per day], it's crazy (...) if the Council gives us the license to trade, you know, some boroughs are amazing at encouraging street life and encouraging street food, but Barnett it's not one of those boroughs, I think they kind of want it, but they don't want to do anything and it seems to be quite a lot of red tape to go anywhere" (Alice, market organiser).

To assemble marketplaces, organisers need to adapt and negotiate their curatorial decisions with other urban actors, especially with Councils. Perla comments that each actor has a *"pain that needs to be soothed"*, and their street food market's offer can collaborate in finding planning or business solutions for these spaces. For example, King's Cross needed to bring more footfall, The Gherkin was looking for a new retail offer for their development, Westminster Council was looking for a new use of space in Maida Hill Place. Each one of these landowners has different agendas, Perla says:

“Councils in particular (...) there’s definitely a common threat of a corporate social responsibility agenda, they need to be seen to be embracing and helping young businesses, young people, you know and making the city work better and give opportunities and stuff like that, and EAT-LONDON is very good at providing that solution” (Perla, EAT-LONDON).

In the curation of marketplaces as a tool for placemaking, economic calculations about the sustainability of these businesses are mixed with other cultural calculations about competitors, traders and audiences for their markets. These calculative operations are contingent and depend on a series of elements to curate marketplaces with success. The curatorial decisions of market organisers need to be flexible enough to negotiate these issues while organising a market; organisers need to reflect on these decisions and come up with new strategies to continue conducting business.

6.4.2. Market organisers, developers and landowners

To curate marketplaces with specific qualities, market organisers also need to deal with landowners and their requirements about the use of place. For this, organisers use their embodied knowledge of the scene, their networks and communication skills to sell a pitch about the value of their markets for the urban landscape. When curating markets, organisers create a value strategy that could benefit them and the landowners with the economic and symbolic value of their markets. In economic terms, the idea of short term lease contracts and pop-up or seasonal style of occupancy of their spaces is beneficial to landowners and developers. This strategy allows both organisers and landowners to try and test out for a short period what these markets could bring to their land. Alan from Vibes Feast comments that there are lots of opportunities to find new venues given the number of landowners looking for quick return opportunities, with several properties lingering around unoccupied in London. He says *“there is a higher rate of return on those, I think they’re kind of dealers, it shows there is space that needs to be filled (...) and they can transform spaces without investing too much money in them”*.

Along with the immediate economic return, landowners and developers are interested in the symbolic value that street food markets can bring and pass on to their land. Perla from EAT-LONDON says that developers are interested in the narratives they create for their markets to create new meaning and associations for their places. Perla says, for example, for the case of Kings Boulevard in King's Cross, people used to associate this area with drugs and prostitution and now with their market *"we create a human face to the development, where often it would not be that human"*.

The relationship with property developers and landowners is varied and changes over time. For EAT-LONDON, their partnership with Argent, developer of King's Cross area, changed when a new managerial team came in. Nick says that the former manager was more aligned with the values of *"creativity and culture"*, and the current team is more about *"finance and efficiency"*. With the previous manager, they could get along and pitch new ideas for the market that were well received. In this case, Nick says that their relationship was more fluent because of their *"aligned values"*.

As with the case of King's Cross, organisers could take advantage of Council and developers' plans for rebranding certain areas and use their markets as a way of changing the associations and meanings of a place. For example, in 2013 a group of traders approached Westminster Council with the idea of occupying Rupert Street in Soho more permanently with a weekly street food market. The Council granted permission and recommended them to get in touch with the developing company Soho Estates²⁰. Soho Estates gave the market organisers £10,000 to work on a branding strategy for the market and to buy new gazebos and seating. According to Michael, a market organiser, the Council and the developers were interested in setting up a market in Rupert Street because it would *"clean the street from drunk people and drug addicts"*. By having the market there, the Council and developers expected to change the perception of this street and Soho more broadly, where office workers in the area and tourists could gather for lunch on weekdays and Saturday.

This new set of meanings and associations that street food markets bring to place repeats in the case of developing companies, for example, the relationship between EAT-LONDON and The Gherkin building. Perla says that this building with a carved glass

²⁰ This partnership is stated in the market's website <http://streetfoodunion.com/>

structure is seen as a cold, distant space and the EAT-LONDON market makes it *“more accessible and flexible”*. Market organisers offer developing companies a new value proposition for their spaces, which could be interpreted as a new offer or source of differentiation from other properties to stand out against the competition. Perla says the developing environment in London is very competitive, and companies ask how could they distinguish themselves beyond *“creating the wackiest shaped building. How do you actually make something that’s appealing to the people who live in the city rather than just planners, (...) everyone is looking for ways to distinguish themselves (...) in a time of increasing kind of homogenization”*. Perla thinks their street food markets create *“cultural value”* and can pass this on to the spaces where they are located. In this sense, she describes these partnerships as beneficial to both in terms of increasing value for their businesses and brands.

Similarly, the EAT-LONDON market in Canary Wharf used to occupy a space then known as Wood Wharf. This market was set up through a partnership with the Canary Wharf Group. This development company was enthusiastic about having a street food market that could offer a new lunchtime alternative to the thousands of office workers in this area. The market flourished for a couple of years with three or more days of trading per week. During my first visit, the on-site manager requested that the traders continue serving at least until 15:00 hrs. The landowners were showing office space to potential new tenants until that time and they wanted to show them the market as part of their offer. EAT-LONDON market was used as a differentiation element in their offer; the market at Wood Wharf lasted until the end of 2014; the site is now being redeveloped with a new project called *“Canary Wharf New District”* (Canary Wharf Group PLC, n.d.), and the market was moved to a different area within the Estate near West India Quay station.

It is possible to observe that the curation of marketplaces requires that market organisers define a series of qualities for their places, making economic and cultural calculations for their businesses. For these marketplaces to get assembled, the qualities and values of these places need to be made stable by establishing a relationship with other urban actors who share similar visions. In terms of Councils and landowners, they are looking for markets with particular qualities that could pass on value and create new meanings for their land. These marketplaces are assembled in a

series of negotiations and associations between multiple actors, characteristics of place like infrastructure, size, location and transport; and activities, such as obtaining licensing and permissions, and negotiating contracts or funding. The process of curating markets as a form of placemaking is a flexible and contingent assemblage of urban elements, which needs to adapt depending on associations between different actors.

The Gherkin controversy

For Perla, establishing a partnership with a development company or with a landowner to set up a market is more normal than before. These actors are increasingly recognising the value of street food markets for their land. However, cultivating these relationships could prove to be difficult and the curatorial decisions of market organisers need to adapt to an increasing number of demands. In 2013, when EAT-LONDON was first setting up their market in the foyer area of The Gherkin building, they experienced some problems in keeping the place open. There were complaints from nearby restaurants that did not like the extra competition for lunchtime customers. The market opened Thursday and Friday at lunch time, and attracted around a thousand customers each day. Complaints were heard by the City of London Corporation, and they shut down the market alleging that they did not have the necessary permissions to trade in the City.

Apparently, the complaints were not only about the market attracting potential customers from nearby restaurants, but also about the aesthetics and design of the market. An Evening Standard story (see Figure 14) suggested that *“the market was forced to come to a sudden end after the City of London Corporation told ...the Gherkin... that it did not have planning permission for it... The Corporation is understood to have said the market was “inappropriate”, “of cluttered appearance” and “unsightly”, and there was a “lack of quality of design”* (Bryant and Stewart, 2013).

News | London

Gherkin street food market in a pickle after it's told to close

MIRANDA BRYANT AND VICTORIA STEWART | Wednesday 14 August 2013 | [View comments](#)



"Save our street food": One of the stalls outside the Gherkin (Thomas Bowles)

A street food market outside the Gherkin serving up everything from burritos to fresh doughnuts to City workers has shut down after it was accused of being "unsightly".

The weekly Thursday and Friday market, run by street food group KERB, attracted 50 traders on the plaza outside the landmark building and had become a popular fixture since it started last November.

MOST POPULAR

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Figure 14: Evening Standard on the closing of The Gherkin market. 16 August 2013.

On my first visit to The Gherkin market, Ron the onsite manager, told me this story and explained how they had to introduce some changes due to the requirements of the property managers. In this negotiation, the landowners requested to have a standardized gazebo for all traders, preferably black, that would match with the style of the building. There was also a green carpet, simulating grass, which the organisers used to cover the floor from oil spills. The property management company also requested that this carpet be removed and changed for a grey carpet that could also match the style of the building. The negotiation continued and EAT-LONDON was willing to change the carpet, but argued against the black gazebos. In this case, they wanted to ensure that each trader could use their own set up and branding. In addition, they changed their choice of traders, picking those with a cleaner operation (such as less fried food), that could match the standards The Gherkin requested for the market on their site.

When negotiating partnerships with developers and landowners, market organisers need to match their qualifications about their markets with those of these actors. The

curation of marketplaces requires flexibility to respond to the demands of landowners, while at the same time maintaining stable market qualities. Organisers develop a value strategy to find potential landowners interested in offering a place, but the most important task in finding venues is to make sure they have *“aligned values”*.

6.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the process of curation of marketplaces as a form of placemaking. Market organisers create and transform place with their markets, adding value to the urban landscape. In this case, a marketplace is analysed as the emergence of an urban assemblage (Farías 2010, 2011; McFarlane, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c), where a multiplicity of actors, materials, symbols and relationships need to be brought in to create a place as a localised urban form. Market organisers have a relevant role in defining a narrative about the value of their markets, to then negotiate these curatorial distinctions with a series of actors and through a series of tasks.

In particular, this chapter discusses how the process of placemaking with markets differs from what urban planners and policy makers usually claim. Placemaking refers to the idea of generating place with specific qualities, and that serves private interests. With street food markets, organisers, traders and landowners create economic and symbolic value for certain areas and establish beneficial business partnerships. These actors as placemakers are the ones who define which places are valued, their purposes and the kind of audience most suitable to use them. Therefore, placemaking with street food markets looks different from the idea of placemaking for the public good or for generating local economic opportunities.

For the curation of marketplaces, a place with specific qualities is defined through a series of economic and cultural calculations that organisers negotiate with landowners. As the empirical material shows, organisers evaluate a series of practical issues about location, venues, permissions, audiences and contracts with landowners to curate marketplaces with specific qualities and purposes. Depending on the different curatorial styles of organisers, these marketplaces could be used as tools for tactical urbanism, regeneration projects, or commercial development. In this process, establishing an appropriate partnership with landowners is crucial. The idea of “aligned

values” has been used to describe how market organisers look for partners with similar ideas about the value of marketplaces for their land. Here, the partnership need to be beneficial for all actors involved, in economic and symbolic terms. Marketplaces are used to create economic value through bringing in middle class people to certain areas, and symbolic values in terms of animating and creating distinction for certain properties or land.

With this chapter, I investigated the curation of marketplaces as a tool for placemaking, and explained the main tasks that organisers perform to define and negotiate the qualities and value of a place. I explored the curatorial tasks necessary to create marketplaces in terms of locations, venues and the relationship with other urban actors. This process requires the assemblage of multiple elements to create marketplaces as specific urban forms. It not only requires the finding of venues or partners, but curating the internal elements of these marketplaces to perform a brand identity. The curation of these internal elements also entails a process of qualification, in which other economic and cultural calculations are performed to assemble marketplaces with specific forms. The curation of the internal elements of marketplaces is discussed in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7. Marketplaces and brand experiences.

7.1. Introduction

Curators as placemakers negotiate value through a series of economic and cultural calculations to assemble marketplaces. Through curation, organisers create a marketplace as an assemblage of actors, venues, materials and sensorial elements. As mentioned in Chapter 6, this process defines the value of marketplaces for the urban landscape, evaluating locations and finding venues, as well as managing relationships with other urban actors like Councils and landowners. However, this process of assembling marketplaces continues with the curation of, what I call, the internal elements of place (material aspects, atmospheres, aesthetics). This chapter explores the curation of marketplaces as a form of branding, where organisers use their taste and cultural capital to make economic and cultural calculations to determine the inner qualities of a place, so as to generate a brand experience. The curation of these internal elements entails the orchestration and negotiation of different elements to create a marketplace, such as the material aspects of place, and the atmospheric conditions that are important for the performance of a brand experience.

In this chapter, I examine how these curatorial tasks are performed by market organisers. To assemble marketplaces, organisers use their embodied knowledge of the scene and their taste to perform the necessary economic and cultural calculations to curate a marketplace. The curatorial work involves considering practicalities and logistics, and the use of their cultural capital and knowledge of the scene to align their taste distinctions with the intended audience of each market. Organisers look to create marketplaces with distinctive qualities that their audiences could recognise as part of the identity of the street food scene, and as part of the brand identity of specific organisers or companies.

The curatorial tasks required to assemble a marketplace as a localised urban form that performs a brand include logistical aspects of placing good food and good people (see Chapter 4 and 5) on site, which entails the planning and sorting of lists of food traders depending on the audience. Other logistical aspects have to do with the spatial

features of the marketplace, such as distribution and flows. The curation of aesthetic and sensorial, or atmospheric, elements of place, such as decoration, lighting, music, heating and smells are also important; curatorial decisions to make the marketplace work for their intended audience.

7.2. Assembling the marketplace

Market organisers curate the internal aspects of marketplaces with specific qualities to perform a brand experience. For this aim, they strategically curate place with a style that is recognizable as their brand identity. Market organisers develop a narrative about the purpose of their marketplaces (see Chapter 6), and also sense of place, in terms of how their markets have to look and feel. In street food markets, organisers curate place mainly for eating and socializing, creating festive atmospheres that contribute to a sense of relaxation and enjoyment, and especially so that people might spend more time in place consuming.

As discussed in Chapter 6, in the curation of marketplaces as a tool for placemaking, organisers create a narrative about the value of their marketplaces and negotiate their locations, and other elements of place, with urban actors such as Councils, landowners and developing companies. Economic and cultural calculations are conducted to define qualities of place, which are then negotiated with these actors. These practical and logistical issues include evaluations about profit and revenue, as well as taste and audience. In the curation of the internal elements of marketplaces, all these elements combined are used when defining a place's qualities for a brand experience. The curation of marketplaces entails managing, evaluating and assembling a series of elements such as distinctions about place, actors, venues, materiality of place and its sensorial and aesthetic qualities. Market organisers curate marketplaces as form of placemaking when generating value in the urban landscape, and as a form of branding by defining the qualities and style that their markets should perform. Marketplaces emerge as an assemblage that is formed by the many associations and calculations that the curation process entails. The practical tasks for curating the internal elements of a marketplace are discussed in the following sections.

7.2.1. Line-ups of traders

As described in Chapter 4, market organisers define a set of qualities for the traders they would like to invite to join their markets. This definition of quality, that includes various ideas of professionalism and its performance (see Chapter 5) is tested continuously on-site, when traders are part of a line-up or list for each market. In a similar way to music festivals, line-ups refer to the listing of the most suitable performers for specific events. Market organisers put together a list with a distinct food offering according to their evaluations of elements such as location and audience, in terms of numbers of attendants and their preferences, and the requirements of landowners (see Chapter 6). The curation of marketplaces is a case that depicts the issues raised by the literature on the cultural economy (Du Gay and Pryke 2000; Entwistle, 2009; Slater, 2002a, 2002b; McFall, 2002, 2009; Law, 2000; Negus, 2002) and how market actors perform both economic and cultural calculations as part of their work. For the case of curating marketplaces, definitions and qualities of place also entail the performance of economic and cultural calculations to create line-ups of traders suitable to be on-site in specific marketplaces.

For example, in terms of organising The Gherkin market, Nick from EAT-LONDON explains that given the demand of approximately a thousand people for lunchtime, they need to select at least five traders on site. These traders, selling about two hundred portions of food each, are enough to feed the crowd coming from the building and nearby offices rapidly during the two hours of service. Nick explains that creating the line-up of five traders out of their group of fifty, and to rotate this list each week is a crucial task. Nick needs to evaluate demand; how many portions need to be sold during the two hours. He also needs to evaluate the variety of the offering, by picking traders with different kinds of food. The line-up rotates each week, to bring in different things so their audience does not get bored; as well as allowing for more traders to have the chance to work at this site. Other evaluations about the food offering meeting the requirements of the landowners and audience are made. For example, Nick evaluates that the City customers are mainly male, and for that reason, it is important to have at least two meat traders (burgers, barbeque meat, fried chicken) and other options, including traders who have at least one vegetarian option

in their menus. In this case, Asian food, usually Indian, Chinese, Korean or fusion offers, proves to be highly popular with the audience at The Gherkin. This kind of food provides vegetarian options preferred by female customers, and also targets the important number of Asian bankers in the area.

Even though the line-up is prepared well in advance, it still needs to be flexible. The curation of the marketplace in terms of finding the most suitable line-up for each location includes taking precautions and responding to changes. For example, although line-ups are defined well in advance, there needs to be a back-up trader in case someone fails to attend on the day due to traffic, problems with their suppliers or illness. Changes to the line-up could be introduced depending on the season, the demand, audience or landowners' requirements. During the spring/summer of 2014, Nick was thinking about bringing in more traders to The Gherkin. With sunnier days coming, the market is busier and with an additional trader they could meet the demand and serve their customers on time avoiding long queues. Nick usually visits the market to ask for feedback from the customers; some have mentioned that they would like to have a sweet or desert option added to the market. In organising The Gherkin market, Nick makes economic calculations in terms of profit-making during service in the number of portions, length of time for service, and avoiding long queues. And cultural calculations in terms of matching the selection of traders based on his understanding of the audience's taste in relation to gender and race. Nick has also used his embodied knowledge about setting up markets in terms of the use of the space in the foyer area outside The Gherkin (see Figure 15) to make the market look tidy, and taken into consideration the requirements of the management company of the building (see Chapter 6), to assemble a marketplace that looks clean, and orderly, but that could also deliver a fun and interesting offering for its audience.



Figure 15: Line-up on site at The Gherkin market. 8 May 2014.

There are other EAT-LONDON markets that are more challenging in terms of generating a line-up. Nick explains that Canary Wharf is a more complex site, and they are launching the market for the season with four trading days in two consecutive weeks. Given the amount of offices in the area, they need at least twelve traders on site per day during lunchtime. For this market, they not only need to find twelve traders per day, but to rotate them per day and week to deliver a new offering to their audience each time, and keep the market interesting and appealing for office workers to visit daily if possible. The generation of a line-up needs to consider their capacity with fifty traders associated with EAT-LONDON, their availability, the demand, and infrastructure issues that are particularly relevant for this site. Nick uses a spreadsheet to evaluate most of these elements together, but other practical issues need to be considered. Most of these things he has learned “on the job”, by trial and error when curating marketplaces. Nick comments about the line-up task:

“there’s lots of things again which is very hard to do if you’re new, is thinking spaces, preventing any clashes in terms of food offering, we try to avoid that, (...) and this is a big line up, in this case we are affected by wind in this site what means that we want lots of vans (...) the current problem with the gazebos is that if it’s too windy they have to shut down and that’s the food offering gone, they’ll waste their food, the customers are going to queue

longer (...) and it might not be enough food with people in the vans, so, it's constantly weighing up lots of things" (Nick, EAT-LONDON).

These calculated practical variables are important to bring the market to a place, because they connect some of the curatorial decisions such as picking traders (see Chapter 4), with the qualities and practical issues of place (see Chapter 6). Each site is different, in terms of its location, infrastructure, size, configuration, audience and landowner requirements. The constant evaluation and calculation of all these economic and cultural elements together is what makes the curation of marketplaces a complicated process. At the EAT-LONDON office, Nick works to prepare line-ups for the whole summer season. EAT-LONDON will be running more than two lunchtime markets at the same time during that summer, and Nick explains that they need to plan in advance to have suitable line-ups for each of them. Being prepared is important because the spring/summer season is the busiest time of the year for traders, who might decide to leave London to work on festivals or private events. Additionally, Vibes Feast has expanded that year, and they will be curating three night markets. As EAT-LONDON shares almost forty per cent of their traders with Vibes Feast, they need to move fast to book as many traders as possible and fill in their line-ups for the season. However, planning in advance could not be enough to fill in the line-ups and they might need to recruit new traders to join their organisation. Spring/summer is the season where new traders start their businesses given there are more markets opening and more customers eating out. With this plan in place, Nick knows which trader is going where, whether they need to bring in more traders to EAT-LONDON, and which kind of food offer they will be looking for when recruiting.

The task of creating a line-up to assemble a street food market then requires the use of different kinds of knowledge, such as economic and cultural knowledge to calculate profitability in relation to location and potential audience, as well as planning for the future. An embodied knowledge of organising markets, to understand the characteristics of each site and create a suitable line-up for each place, is also required. The generation of line-ups is a balanced calculation between economic and logistical factors, with the subjective definitions of professionalism and branding when picking traders (see Chapter 4). On some occasions, such as, for example, when they do not

have enough traders for the summer, they change their priorities, focussing on efficiency and finding someone to cover a spot. In general, organisers attempt to create line-ups that take into consideration the logistical aspects of markets, with their criteria about traders and professionalism.

7.2.2. Set-up

The curation of a marketplace entails creating a place with specific qualities; it demands taking care of multiple elements that could transform a site into a marketplace that offers a brand experience to their audience. Perla describes how their role curating the marketplace is to show care to their audience, that they could perceive that some attention has been put into purposefully creating a place. Perla explains:

“[the place needs to look like] somebody has taking some care and attention (...) I would hope they would come here and they feel like it was really lovingly put together, well thought out, a group of traders selected for their menus and for the way they’ve been laid out in the space and it kind of feels like they’re in good hands. And they’re going to have a good time and get well fed and even if it’s just a lunchtime market like the Gherkin, it beats going to one of the chains” (Perla, EAT-LONDON).

To assemble a “*lovingly put together*” marketplace, a multiplicity of elements need to be consider. The curation of a marketplace is a combination of logistical aspects of the site, which could be relevant depending on the location, audience and type of event. In other cases, considerations about the aesthetics and sensorial elements of place to perform a brand identity are more important. As mentioned in Chapter 6, organisers evaluate locations and find venues considering different elements such as access, infrastructure or size. However, when on site, other considerations need to be taken to curate the internal quality of a market for traders to conduct their business, and to perform a brand identity for their audience. Market organisers use their embodied knowledge about curating markets to deal with landowners regarding a series of practical issues about place.

For example, at EAT-LONDON market in King's Cross, logistical aspects about the site seem to be more relevant than aesthetic or sensorial qualities of place. The market is located in the middle of a construction site; this area has different access routes where pedestrians walk in different directions, usually to and from the tube station. Dust, noise, footfall, availability of space and technical conditions like electricity or water supply are important issues to consider when setting up the market in the Estate. At King's Cross, the EAT-LONDON market is divided into two locations, with a couple of traders selling tea and coffee by the tube station exit from early in the morning, and a group of four or five traders located on King's Boulevard for lunchtime. King's Boulevard is a pedestrian street with a high footfall, but it is still a corridor where people pass by. It has a narrow sidewalk where only a few tables and chairs can be placed. In March of 2014, the landowners asked EAT-LONDON to move across the street to Granary Square, given the construction plan in which they had to close part of King's Boulevard. Granary Square, located at the back of the King's Cross development site and in front of the University of the Arts London- Central St Martins, is a wide site with a water fountain, Wi-Fi, more chairs and tables and other seating space, a view to Regent's Canal and public toilets nearby.

This change to Granary Square was an opportunity for EAT-LONDON to have a more central and established place within the Estate. After a week in the new location, sales increased by thirty per cent. This location on site has better qualities for encouraging people to gather and to socialise during lunchtime. Because there is also more seating, groups of people from the offices or students go together to have lunch at the market, which increases sales. However, the location of EAT-LONDON market at King's Cross depends on the landowners planning and conditions about using certain areas. From the beginning, the market was in Battle Bridge Place, closer to King's Cross tube station, and then it moved to King's Boulevard. In 2014, they moved to Granary Square, then in to Lewis Cubitt Square in 2015, and finally back to King's Boulevard in 2016. (see Figure 16). According to the construction plans, they need to adjust and advertise these moves each time so not to lose customers, or to engage new customers that walk past the area.



Figure 16: EAT-LONDON various locations in King's Cross

Although the market has moved permanently to the Boulevard, EAT-LONDON still asks the developers for permission to use Granary Square for special events on the weekends. This other location on site has proved to be more appropriate to curate a marketplace where the socialisation aspects are more important than the logistics. The setting up of this marketplace requires that organisers take into consideration the logistical elements of their operation, and balance these with other qualities of place. In this market, EAT-LONDON aims to curate a marketplace that could deliver lunches to people on the Estate, but that could also create a place that brings people together to enjoy the surrounding area.

Other changes in the setting up of a marketplace include thinking on the particular characteristics and preferences of the audience in the surrounding area. For example, they first set up a market in 2013 in a University in central London; the location was in the middle of Campus taking advantage of a high footfall during lunchtime. But from 2014 the market moved to an open area near the entrance in Gower Street. This location is disconnected from the teaching rooms and the main areas where students pass by. The strategy to bring in more footfall to the marketplace was to target a wider audience for lunchtime. The market location is visible from the street and the access is not restricted. At the office, Nick and Toby were discussing how to design the flyer to promote the new market. They were picking pictures from other markets, trying to

find one with men in suits eating or queuing next to the stalls. Toby says *“It’s very hard to change the psychology of a place”*, meaning it is very hard to target this market to office workers in the area, because the market is located inside the University, people tend to think of it as a student event instead of an open market.

Market organisers calculate these functional elements of a marketplace to curate a market that is profitable and complies with the requirements of landowners. More planning is needed in terms of the use of space at marketplaces and how the audience will experience the market assemblage. This thoroughly planned curation process includes thinking about place size, traders’ placement on site, people’s movements and preferences. For this purpose, organisers create a floorplan with indications about where each stall and van should be positioned at the marketplace. Especially for markets with a long line-up, market organisers work hard to create a floorplan that makes the marketplace function well.

An example of a floor plan for EAT-LONDON Southbank market is presented in Figure 17, with twenty-eight traders on site. In this case, they take into consideration that more popular traders usually have longer queues, and might need more space for customers to gather around. They need to consider aspects like health and safety requirements, access routes and flow within the market, that the seating space does not interrupt customers’ movement through the site and that each trader has enough space to set up their gazebos, vans, tables, utensils and menus. Other considerations are, for example, having enough parking space for vans, to locate the stalls and vans near to the electricity points. As well as other issues about the food offering, such as not placing traders with similar menus together such as two vegetarian or two burger stalls, but to spread them across the site to avoid direct competition.



Figure 17: Floor plan EAT-LONDON market at the Southbank Centre. 31 March 2014.

When curating street food markets, organisers make use of their embodied knowledge about the scene and how markets are set up to negotiate with landowners about the use of these spaces. These calculations about traders, decisions about line ups, places where they can install traders, routes that they can use to park, transport supplies or dispose of waste are all part of the agreements and negotiations with landowners (see Chapter 6). For example, Rosie explains that their deal with the landowner of their place near Liverpool Street Station took ten months to complete. During this time, they had to assure the landowners about different elements before they could come into the site. For example, they have strict rules about timing to unload vans, permissions and security measures to park on site such as vehicle registration, and supplying the health and safety documentation a week in advance before traders come into the site.

The curation of marketplaces involves the assemble of material and people on site, where organisers perform economic and cultural calculations to define the place's internal qualities. To perform these calculations, organisers use their embodied

knowledge of the scene in terms of understanding how a marketplace works for their traders, audiences and landowners; understanding timing, placing, flows, and all the other regulatory and practical issues they need to negotiate with landowners. Both processes, line ups and set ups serve to analyse how organisers curate marketplaces with distinctive qualities.

7.2.3. Audiences

As mentioned before, the curation of a marketplace entails taking into consideration the logistical elements of sites as well as other issues such as aesthetics, audiences and branding. Depending on the duration of the market, the location, or the requirements of landowners the curation process could prioritise certain elements over others. Another curatorial task to assemble a marketplace is to think about the audiences in each location, and how the internal qualities of the place should adjust accordingly. Market organisers think about the audiences of their marketplaces and interpret their tastes, preferences and needs using different strategies. As in the case of cultural intermediaries in branding agencies (Moor, 2013; Cronin, 2004), market organisers generate these curatorial distinctions using different sources of information, and their own personal experiences, taste and embodied knowledge of the scene to make these decisions.

For example, Vibes Feast uses different mechanisms to gather information about their customers' profiles and evaluations about their markets. The Vibes Feast organisers' strategy consists of visiting their markets and observing their customers, the queues, sometimes requesting feedback directly from customers while at their markets. It also involves listening to conversations, talking to the on-site manager or other member of staff, talking to traders; checking their social media accounts in Twitter and Instagram mainly, looking at what people share online. Taking into consideration this information and their own interpretation about the audience of each location, they curate the internal qualities of a marketplace differently. In this case, Alan describes their imaginary audience with a distinction between the more "*sophisticated*" audiences for the West End crowd in the case of their market at Battersea Power Station. Here, Alan

interprets that the audience with higher income and cultural capital would enjoy having a champagne bar. On the other hand, when curating their marketplace in Lewisham, he mentions the need of creating something local, that the people from the area could enjoy. In places like Dalston for example, they know that given its more central location people might come from different areas of the city. Alan explains about these curatorial distinctions:

“with Lewisham, we wanted to create something for the people of Lewisham, a local place where they can hang out, because there’s nothing to do there, it’s a borough of the size of Newcastle and there’s nothing to do, there’s not even a cinema, lots of young people, so there’s lots of demand in that neighbourhood, we looked at it in like case by case basis” (Alan, Vibes Feast).

In Alan’s vision, the idea of curating a marketplace for the local people of Lewisham entails taking into consideration their own interpretation of who the audience for this marketplace is, and what are their preferences. In this case, there is no clear definition of what the “local” is or what kind of local people are they expecting to attract, besides the young audience from that area. Lewisham town centre, where Vibes Feast Model Market is located, is one of the twenty per cent most deprived areas in England; and the borough of Lewisham is the fifteenth most ethnically diverse in the country, with forty-seven per cent of their population from a black or ethnic minority (Lewisham Council, 2014). However, this information does not count for Vibes Feast’s interpretation of the local people of Lewisham. As mentioned before by Alan, they curate marketplaces where people “like us” would want to hang out. In many ways, the curation of marketplaces resembles what branding and design agencies do when they put together material elements, product semantics and audiences to create brand strategies. Moor (2013) explains in the case of branding agencies, these cultural intermediaries usually use their own habitus and experiences as a point of reference to understand the taste and preferences of their target audience. In the curation of marketplaces, organisers also use their understanding to curate the qualities of place according to their intended audience, making a distinction between people in an exclusionary manner.

Other organisers such as EAT-LONDON planned to conduct studies or surveys to obtain information about the audience of their marketplaces. During my ethnographic work with EAT-LONDON, I was asked to create a database of commercial spaces and offices around the Southbank Centre, in preparation for setting up a marketplace there. The aim was to make a list of the offices in the area, so they could target these customers specifically sending invitations to their buildings or flyering in the surrounding area to promote their weekend market at Southbank, open from Friday lunchtime until the evening, and then during the whole day on Saturday and Sunday.

Perla also asked me to prepare and conduct a customer survey that they could apply in the various marketplaces for that spring-summer season. For the customer survey, they were interested in knowing if their customers live or work nearby, how they get to their markets, how they have heard about them, and how they evaluate the food and service. Perla tells me that they had conducted an audit in September 2013, supported by funding received through the GLA London Food High Streets programme as one of four pilot projects. The data collected through an onsite survey of their King's Cross market consisted of footfall through the market, an estimate of number of customers, customer views of the market, distance travelled by customers, the value of the market and general impressions of the market. This information was used to give EAT-LONDON information about the value of their markets, and the potential opportunities to develop the market for special events on the weekends more frequently²¹.

Perla asked me to replicate the audit in four markets, but focussing on capturing the audience experience and their evaluations about the traders and the set up. In this case, she was interested in knowing the footfall, customer's address or place of work, how they heard about the market and especially their email address. She thought of using this opportunity to obtain feedback from customers, but also to collect their data so as to add them to their promotional mailing list. One of the main findings of the audit is that more than fifty per cent of people at their marketplaces were visiting for the first time, and they heard about the place because a friend was recommended. Up to that point, most of EAT-LONDON's publicity was focussed on using Twitter, or other

²¹ The audit revealed that on one Saturday at King's Cross, the marketplace had a footfall of 5281 people, with an estimated 1150 customers being served on the day. The average customer spends £14, and the value of the market was an estimated of £16,200 per day.

social media platforms, to engage with their audiences. As their traders use social media to take pictures and document the experience of being on a marketplace, they had reason to believe that an audience could be attracted using a similar tool. Therefore, after obtaining this information through the auditing process, they planned to introduce other dissemination strategies for publicity, such as flyering in the surrounding area of each one of their marketplaces, inviting people to visit.

In these examples from the curation of marketplaces depending on audience, both organisations, EAT-LONDON and Vibes Feast, interpret their imaginary audience in different ways, and also differently for each market location. An embodied knowledge of the scene, a definition of the purpose of their markets, assumptions about audiences based on their organisers' cultural capital to make taste distinctions about place, are all used when curating marketplaces with specific internal qualities. As mentioned before, the curation of marketplaces involves associations between many different elements such as venues, actors, permissions, regulations, logistical elements, traders, audiences and aesthetic and sensorial elements that organisers put together to generate a place with distinctive qualities. In the case of defining the internal qualities of the marketplace, the curatorial process resembles studies on branding agencies (Moor, 2013), where cultural intermediaries assemble materialities and semantics for their target audiences. As analysed so far, the curation of marketplaces entails economic and cultural calculations taking into consideration all these elements, logistics, audience, and materials to generate a place with specific qualities, that performs a brand identity. In the next section, I describe how the curation of aesthetics and atmospheres is also important for the generation of marketplaces that perform a brand experience.

7.2.4. Aesthetics and atmospheres

The curation of marketplaces also entails making aesthetics decisions about the internal material and sensorial elements that give each organiser and their markets a brand identity. Market organisers curate their marketplaces to perform specific qualities of place, which their imaginary audience could interpret as part of the identity of the street food scene and of their organisation. Through the curation of

aesthetic and atmospheric elements, organisers aim to create an experience at their marketplaces that is highly sensorial and that stimulates socialization and consumption. As in the case of branding agencies, market organisers curate material elements to perform the identity and values of their brand with a “design coherence”. For this, organisers use their taste distinctions to make decisions about decoration, lights, music, smells, layout at their marketplaces, as well as working to preserve the intended atmosphere in time, disciplining the audience on the use of place at their different locations. This process entails not only designing an experience through putting together different elements in their markets, but they work in place in order to maintain this atmosphere, in a way, disciplining the use of the market place by traders and customers.

The curation of aesthetic elements and atmospheres in these marketplaces not only depends on the organiser’s decisions, but on the negotiation of the requirements of landowners as well. As mentioned in Chapter 6, market organisers negotiate with landowners, developing companies and other urban actors, many elements to set up a market, including the aesthetics of their markets. For example, in the EAT-LONDON - The Gherkin controversy, organisers were asked to improve the image of the market in order to match with The Gherkin style and branding. Even though the market atmosphere is considered a positive element to differentiate this building from others in The City, the marketplace needs to be curated in tune with the landlord’s expectations about aesthetics and branding.

The curation of the aesthetics of a marketplace as an element for branding means to perform through the material arrangement of the place, the values that both EAT-LONDON and The Gherkin hold. As in the idea of “product semantics”, The Gherkin market needs to demonstrate quality through a clean and tidy operation. Therefore, the site manager regularly checks the floor for oil spills and asks cleaners to empty the bins frequently during service. The aesthetic considerations of the stalls or vans are also important. EAT-LONDON asks their traders to wash their vans and gazebos regularly, and to keep a clean counter. Additionally, it is expected that traders have a distinctive branding with a logo or other identifiable features like the trader’s name, logo, matching aprons. Furthermore, the aesthetic considerations of place include managing the queues during service, this contributed to the care of the appearance of

the market as an orderly operation. Additionally, other sensorial elements such as fumes and smells of the food need to be controlled, and in this case, organisers prefer traders that do not serve fried food. The curation of the marketplace at The Gherkin entails evaluating and selecting these internal qualities of place, and managing the aesthetics and atmosphere of the market to perform the intended brand identity for EAT-LONDON and the landowner.

In Vibes Feast night markets, the use of aesthetic elements and the curation of atmospheres are important to create a brand identity that separates the company from other organisers of lunch time markets. This organisation aims to create a festive atmosphere at their marketplaces, something that they usually call “Vibes”. To obtain the atmosphere that gives their brand an identity, organisers evaluate venues beyond the practicalities of location and infrastructure for service. In this case, organisers look for specific aesthetic qualities to create a night market concept that gives them a specific identity. Vibes Feast is known for using abandoned or empty venues that can be transformed according to their taste judgements, replicating their brand identity simultaneously at their markets in London.

As explained in Chapter 6, finding the right kind of venue for street food markets requires the evaluation of different elements such as location and infrastructure, but also aesthetic elements and “character”. When picking venues, Vibes Feast identifies “character” as a quality of the places they would like to occupy. Their definition of “character” is not clear, but it seems to mean finding a place with history, abandoned or unoccupied, that has evidence of “*residual features*” of occupation. Vibes Feast uses these aesthetic features that give their marketplaces “character”, as foundational elements to assemble the marketplace around. Therefore, an empty space with adequate infrastructure, size or location is not necessarily suitable unless it holds these elements of character. Alan comments on character:

“we were offered a car park in Earl’s Court, it’s not any good because it has no walls (...) we have to come and create the vibe ourselves, with Hawker House... it had like exposed pipes, like old phone units, had lots of character, so we like going to places where we can kind of fit in around what’s already there” (Alan, Vibes Feast).

For the Battersea Power Station market, Vibes Feast had to work more on the aesthetic elements of the marketplace to secure the intended atmosphere, or Vibes, that is representative of their markets. In this venue, which was a flat open area outside the power station, they located around 10 “*trademark sea containers*”, some of them stacked on top of each other to create a rum bar with a view to the river. As in the case of Hawker House with exposed pipes and old phone units, they decided to use Battersea Power Station because it also has historical features such as the exposed and rusty listed craned, also famous for being in the cover of one of Pink Floyd album²². Alan says about their choice, “*so that was a no brainer really because it has such great character*” (**Alan, Vibes Feast**).

In Vibes Feast, curatorial decisions for their marketplaces, the aesthetic attributes of character, are materialized as the combination of foundational or residual features like old pipes, old phone units, sea containers or graffiti paintings, with their own added features. Vibes Feast builds new roofs for certain locations, place different units for the food stalls and bars, and create differentiated areas at their marketplaces, sometimes with different themes or styles, and with special decoration like graffiti painting, lighting and music. In the middle of the marketplace they put oil drums with fires and oil drums as bins. Parts of the new features include light bulbs, a disco ball, wooden chairs and tables, and signs painted in the walls. The aesthetic elements of the marketplace combine with the design elements of each trader, with kitchen utensils hanging, jars with ingredients and neon signs with their name or logo. In the curation of the internal aesthetic elements of the marketplace, organisers work to create a brand identity out of the materiality of the place. Market organisers create brand experiences by putting together these features, attempting to differentiate their marketplaces from other entertainment destinations in London.

On my first visit to Vibes Feast site in Dalston (Figure 18²³), I was accompanying Marcy, a Malaysian trader, to get familiarized with her pitch before the Vibes Feast Chili event that weekend. The site manager gave us an overall tour of the site and explained the

²² Animals, 1977.

²³ Pictures clockwise show: marketplace location in a carpark; Vibes Feast builds inside the market; communal tables and sea containers are part of the furniture and decoration of the marketplace; graffiti painting on the wall and oil drums across the site.

requirements of the day, like arrival time, service, who to talk to in case of problems, among other things. He also showed us the music speakers in various corners facing inwards, so the music can be heard in the parking space and not by the nearby neighbour. A series of sea containers are on site, which are used permanently as office space, a storage room, or kitchens by other traders during the week. These sea containers remain in place for the market and some of them are painted with graffiti, which contributes to decorate the place with an industrial and urban aesthetic. The site manager shows us the back of the site, where his team and builders are still preparing features for the market. He points at a couple of long burned timbers and explains that they are building a long communal table, and the organisers asked them to burn it first to get an edgy look that fits in with the aesthetic of the market. They are also painting empty oil drums with the Vibes Feast logo. These drums will be located across the site as bins, or to light a fireplace after it gets dark.

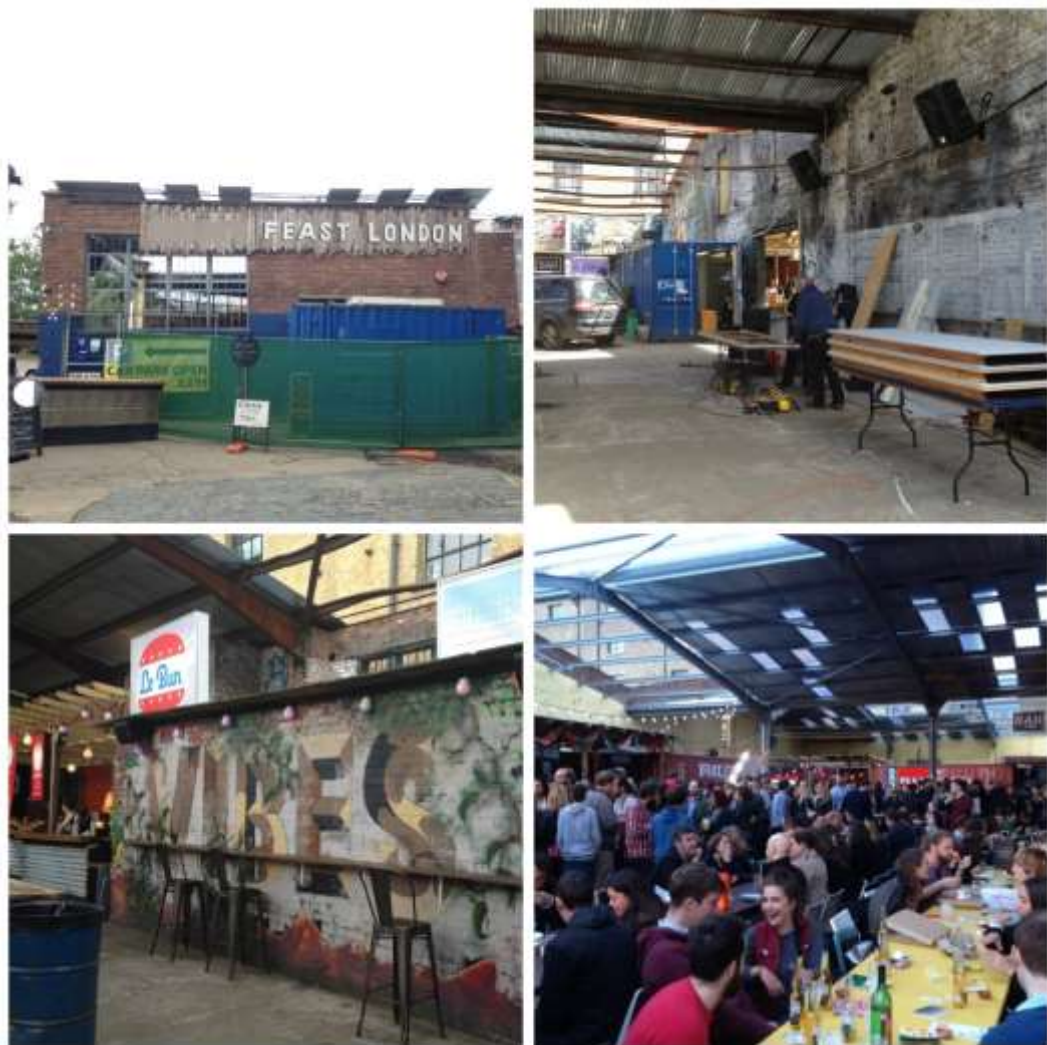


Figure 18: Vibes Feast Dalston Market.

Besides curating the aesthetic elements that give Vibes Feast their brand identity, Alan claims that their night market concept consists of creating a festive atmosphere through the combination of different socializing activities in one place. For this purpose, they curate the layout of the market and the design of the marketplace with differentiated micro-spaces, such as a rum bar, a wine bar, a beer bar, micro-diners with restricted seating for some traders, or different lighting and music to separate spaces within the market. Alan says they like to create an atmosphere of discovery, where their audience could explore different areas, making their visit more exciting, fun and enjoyable with these customised micro-spaces. Having different activities and separated spaces in their marketplace also contributes to the length of stay, and enhances people's consumption on site. Alan claims that they curate the aesthetics and atmospheres of their marketplaces attempting to create something unique, that escapes the homogenization of other entertainment destinations that seem too staged. Alan says:

“most places you go to you have that kind of feeling that it's kind of purpose built for what they're doing, these buildings that we occupy they are places that you can't go most of the time, it's a new environment I think where you really get to explore empty warehouses, that kind of thing, there's a feeling that you're in a forgotten place, it's kind of cool, it's exciting, you're exploring the hidden archaeology of the city” (Alan, Vibes Feast).

This idea of curating a marketplace aesthetic and atmospheres as part of the development of a brand identity repeats in other Vibes Feast marketplaces. In the summer of 2014, I travelled to Lewisham every weekend from end of June until the end of September to work with Marcy at their newly open Model Market located near the train station (see Figure 19). This place dates from the 1950's and before closing in 2011 it was known as “The Black Market”²⁴. As mentioned in Chapter 6, the development company Land Securities bought the place, and after being abandoned for a few years, they signed a short-term lease with Vibes Feast to refurbish and re-open the space as a street food market. Vibes Feast cleaned up and re-build part of the

²⁴ With a diverse range of local traders, this market used to cater for the Afro-Caribbean community in Lewisham. Some of the shops used to jerk chicken, flowers, records and do TV repairs and a salon for Afro hair.

setting to create a main bar area and seating space and added fittings and equipment in the units for food preparation and storage (refrigerators, sinks, and counters). The original market used to have two entrances and a path in the middle that was used by local people as a shortcut between the Shopping Centre exit and Lewisham High Street. The market now has only one entrance in Molesworth Street where security personal can control the queues. The market maintains its layout and traders locate their stalls in the former shops, where graffiti and old painting remains. These paths, food units, seating space and other micro-dining areas create a labyrinth for customers to explore while putting together the remains of Model Market with the new aesthetic elements of a Vibes Feast market.



Figure 19: Model Market location

Marcy's stall is located inside the old Morp's Music record store, right next to the market entrance (see Figure 20)²⁵. We are sharing the unit space with another trader selling Mexican vegetarian food. Next to our unit is the old Jerk chicken shop, now occupied by a young jerk chicken entrepreneur. The Brownie Bar is in front of us inside the TV repairs store. The lightning, signs and the stalls' names combine with the names of the old stores creating a multiplicity of writing, fonts and messages at a first glance.

²⁵ Pictures clockwise: Marcy's unit inside the old record store; the brownie bar across; a path with food stalls, bins and tables; the main bar area and communal tables outside the former hair studio.

Each stall uses the aesthetic elements from the previous shops, adding their own branding features and decoration. Walking down the entrance path there is the main seating area with a disco ball, a beer bar, a wine bar and a DJ, along with communal tables, including a secluded area with dining booths. In the other paths inside the market there is extra seating space and oil drums as bins or to light a fire and roast marshmallows after dark.



Figure 20: Vibes Feast Model Market.

Besides the aesthetic elements in the curation of their markets, Vibes Feast also takes into consideration other sensorial features to create a signature atmosphere in these locations. For example, they pay special attention to music and they place speakers in different areas to play selected playlists and customise these micro-spaces. The music combines with other elements such as the fireplaces inside the oil drums as improvised

heating, where customers usually gather around and chat if the night is cold. As for the sensorial qualities of the food, customers can explore the market by looking at the preparation of the dishes and the samples that most traders put at the front of their units. As traders work on an open kitchen, the audience of the marketplace can experience the cooking process and evaluate the size of the portions, ingredients or smell. The open space is usually filled with the fumes and spices from barbequing meat and the cooking and frying of food. Food is the main socializing and sensorial element in these markets, and organisers aim to bring traders who can offer small portions of food, so customers can try different things in one evening, or share with friends. As mentioned in Chapter 5 traders need to deliver an affective labour performance and engage the audience with their stories during service, in a friendly manner.

At Model Market, customers walk by looking at the stalls, bar, the signs and hanging menus with the prices; they ask traders about the food, what is it? What's in it? Or what's the taste like? Marcy's offer of Malaysian sliders seems to be convenient, three mini burgers for £10. She is usually chatty and friendly with customers and takes her time to explain the flavours pointing at the little burger sample at the front of her stall. Behind each unit traders keep moving, cooking, re-stocking, washing up, taking orders and serving. From each stall is possible to hear someone shouting numbers or names to deliver dishes. Most of the time the shouting is loud because customers go wandering around or go for a drink instead of waiting in the queue, and therefore might be further away from the stall when their number is called. While the food is being cooked, the place gets filled in with smoke and fumes that smell like fried chicken and spices; it sounds like sizzling pans. The place it's very loud, the music is loud, customers chatting and laughing, the sounds from the kitchen, and the playlist in the main area, the same music playlist every weekend keeps going to the sound of "Red, Red wine" from UB40. When it starts getting dark, staff from the organisation light the bonfires inside the drums and give away some marshmallows to customers. When cleaning the griddle, water is sizzling and steam spreads across the main path, catching customer's attention. People take pictures of their food and drinks, of the place and selfies. The party continues and most people walk, talk and eat standing up.

Alan describes Vibes Feast's atmosphere at their markets as diverse and open, made

up of a combination of different things in one place, like different cuisines, bars, micro-spaces, music and seating areas (see Figure 21)²⁶. To achieve the intended vibe at their markets, organisers make constant changes and adjustments according to audience response, such as rotating traders every week or month to keep the offer fresh or re-converting some of their micro-spaces for a different purpose; for example, when getting sponsorship from a brand that pays them to dedicate a particular section of the market to advertise their products. In the second year of Model Market, Vibes Feast opened a new terrace called the “Lewisham Highline”, which had extra seating space, fake grass and a dedicated bar selling buckets of *So/* beer (see Figure 21).



Figure 21: Spaces at Vibes Feast Model Market.

Alan comments that their markets are open, meaning they are “*not being exclusive*”, but open for families, large groups of friends, or couples: “*I couldn’t round up ten of my friends just to go to the pub, or to go to the cinema, or to go to the football, but you*

²⁶ Pictures clockwise: the Lewisham Highline, a roof terrace; a micro-dining space; roasting marshmallows in the fireplace; private dining booths for groups.

can get ten friends to come along to Vibes Feast". At their simultaneous locations, Vibes Feast organisers put in an effort to replicate this kind of atmosphere, as a way of making sure their brand identity is consistent in their marketplaces. Each market is not identical to the other but they share similarities in terms of the aesthetic and material configurations and the atmosphere described by Alan. However, no place is identical, and the curatorial role of market organisers is important to give each marketplace its own special features. For example, Alan comments that they were asked to provide only traders to the Battersea Power Station night market, but they refused given that their brand "isn't just a franchise, it's a kind of vibe, it's gotta have a certain kind of atmosphere... it has to feel kind of festival atmosphere, has to be done our way and have our signature on everything".

The atmospheric features of Vibes Feast markets are purposefully curated for their marketplaces, taking into consideration how their brand will be experienced by the audience. Here, the atmosphere of their market does not only need to be replicated in their various locations, but sustained on time. The atmosphere needs to be maintained during the season, or even during each night. For this purpose, the market organisers' role also implies educating and disciplining the audience on the intended use of the place. This disciplining includes different strategies to, on the one hand maintain the intended atmosphere and intended audience for their markets. For example, at their Hawker House indoor market in Haggerston, there was a sign (see Figure 22)²⁷ near the communal tables asking customers *"to share"*, mentioning a hashtag for Twitter *#sharesies*. Organisers were recommending to their customers not to stay too long occupying tables, couches or booths and to either rotate or share space with strangers. Under this Twitter thread they published a "How to" guidelines to use the space in their night market; *"Clause 6: Don't hog a seat. Jump on, have a spin and then let someone else have a go"*, and a sign on site read, *"sofas are for sharing and not for coats and bags please"*. Similarly at Model Market, one of the entrances to the market was permanently closed and therefore the place could no longer be used by local people as a shortcut to Lewisham High Street. From Marcy's stall, near to the entrance,

²⁷ On the right-hand side, a picture from Vibes Feast Twitter account, some clauses for the use of their indoor market Hawker House. On the left-hand side, Model Market entrance sign "No access. No cut through to High Street".

I could see people walking in and then shortly coming back with puzzled faces after they realized the other end is now closed. Sometimes security staff at the entrance used to alert customers “*there is no short cut to the high street*” before they could step in. When visiting the market in 2015, I’ve noticed a cardboard sign (see Figure 23) on the door enforcing the message, “NO ACCESS. NO CUT THROUGH TO HIGH ST”.



Figure 22: Vibes Feast signs.

In these Vibes Feast markets, market organisers curate the internal aesthetics and atmospheres in their marketplaces to secure a particular brand identity. The curation of the internal qualities of a marketplace serves to differentiate these markets from other night entertainment destinations. This process requires the organisers to make a series of economic and cultural calculations to define the qualities of a marketplace, assembling a multiplicity of elements such as venues, traders, audiences, layout, decoration and music, among others. These marketplaces are curated according to the organisers’ embodied knowledge of the scene, and negotiations with landowners’ different requirements. But ultimately, the curatorial role of market organisers is to secure a brand identity through the making of marketplaces.

7.3. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analysed the curation of marketplaces in terms of their aesthetics and atmospheric characteristics to perform a brand experience. The

curation of marketplaces involves making economic and cultural calculations to define the qualities of place, and to assemble these properties coherently and consistently in different market locations. The curatorial process for placemaking involves the use of organisers' embodied knowledge of the scene to define a place's value, and to find the correct venues and partners to transform it into a marketplace (see Chapter 6). It also includes balancing economic, logistical, and cultural decisions about the internal qualities of place to perform a brand identity for the scene and the markets of each organisation.

In this chapter, the analysis has focussed on the curation of marketplaces for their aesthetic and sensorial elements. However, as explained in previous chapters, the curation of marketplaces also includes assembling a marketplace by bringing food traders, complying with urban planning requirements, finding suitable venues with the correct infrastructure, size and access; and, defining an intended audience for their markets. Market organisers with a role as cultural intermediaries and market actors curate marketplace using different kinds of knowledges and performing different sorts of calculations to define the qualities of a place, which stabilize and secure over time. Their curatorial practices demand the use of economic and cultural knowledge to make these taste distinctions, and some spatial awareness to find venues and transform them into marketplaces aimed to attend to specific audiences while complying with other actors' different requirements.

Their curatorial work to assemble marketplaces involves carrying out practical tasks that are permeated by their taste distinctions when selecting aesthetic elements and when creating atmospheres. Organisers use different aesthetic elements in their markets to create a particular brand or identity that is recognisable and differentiates their offer from other food consumption spaces. This particular atmosphere is generated through the careful curation of the place in terms of its material elements such as decoration, lighting and fittings that contribute to socializing, but also through other sensorial elements such as heating, music and smells from the food. The atmosphere in these markets then needs to be curated and sustained consistently in different locations to create a brand, but also maintained by disciplining the audience in the correct use of these market places.

These curatorial tasks are performed to create a marketplace as an assemblage (Farías, 2010; McFarlane, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c), as an association of multiple actors and materials that are made stable as a localised and distinguishable urban form. These marketplaces as an assemblage are made stable to perform and replicate a style that is recognised as their brand identity. This curatorial process is a form of placemaking that generates marketplaces with specific qualities and purposes, where certain groups can participate. The curation of process aims to combine good food, good people and good place through a series of economic and cultural calculations to assemble marketplaces in London's street food scene.

In this thesis, the curation of the street food scene has been analysed as a process of value generation carried out by cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu, 1984). They culturally calculate markets (Callon, 1998; Callon, Méadel and Rabeharisoa, 2002; Slater, 2002) and assemble marketplaces (Farias, 2010; McFarlane, 2011), putting together knowledge, people, objects, aesthetics and other materials that configure the scene. This ethnography used the native concept of curation as an analytical vehicle or explanatory idea to examine how markets are formed as cultural economies, and how markets create places. I have shown how street food markets represent a key example of how markets are constructed through a process of placemaking. Traditionally curation has been related to other forms of cultural production and not necessarily to the making of markets, such as curation in the art world or in the context of digital media. In these fields, curation entails organising, framing, interpreting and arranging exhibitions, performances or content, and curating cultural capital. To complete these tasks, curators use their knowledge and skills to translate and contextualise materials for specific audiences (Gaskill, 2011). As mentioned by Evans (2015) and other commentators, recently the overuse of the term curation to describe any kind of organising activity dilutes its explanatory potential and does not address the phenomenon of curation as a social practice with specific meanings. It dilutes the hierarchies that are being produced by the work of curators when defining a cultural scene. The curatorial power of their decisions gets obscured by an un-reflexive use of the concept that does not address curators' knowledge and how it is used.

As mentioned in the introduction of the thesis, my understanding of curation departs from its traditional use in the art world, or the recently popular use in the online and media context. Differently from these previous definitions of curation, this research has conceptualised curation from the practices of social actors as a process of cultural calculation of markets and places in which the economic and the cultural intertwine to configure and define the street food scene. In this field, curation shapes the way that markets are assembled and the way place is experienced. The practice of curation reveals how economic calculations are also configured by cultural distinctions and how place is assembled and emerges from multiple actors' relationships and negotiations of

value. In this case, I have explained how in curatorial practices, the use of economic and cultural knowledge is a dynamic process. There is a configuration or assemblage of different elements, people, materialities and places that are put together and made to work to create markets and marketplaces with distinctive qualities.

The concept of curation has been used before in academic research with a similar definition to the one that has been discussed in this thesis. For example, curation has been used to analyse the practices of cultural production, focussing on the many different forms it takes in the field of local food (Joosse and Hracs, 2015), or in the music industry (Jansen and Hracs, forthcoming; Wade Morris, 2015). In these studies, curation follows the idea of qualification (Callon, 1998), but with an emphasis on generalising and creating typologies of curation. Here, my understanding of curation differs; my analysis of curation has focussed on examining this practice from the specificity of the field of study. Ethnographic data has been used as evidence to illustrate the practices involved in the curation of street food markets, which are highly contingent and specific of the phenomena, location and time of this research. In this sense, my analysis and definition of curation is not aimed at building a theory of curation, but it is contextual and relies on how actors perform curation in this field, and how they understand their role as curators in the scene. In this research, curation has been explained as a practice that involves multiple actors in the mediation of multiple relationships for the production of markets and places.

This research has demonstrated how a detailed analysis of curation reveals the assumptions and knowledges that curators use to shape the street food scene. Although, market organisers claim to take part in a democratic, open and organically configured field, the ethnographic material has proved differently. In this way, the distinction between discourse and practice is clear, with a narrative of the scene that does not recognise its practice of curation as creating boundaries to include and exclude people to participate in it. My analysis of the curatorial practices of market organisers reveals the hierarchies that are being produced in this cultural field, and the power imbalance between organisers and traders. It also reveals how the curation of marketplaces is not democratic, open and creating public places, but it is a controlled and staged process, aimed at generating value for private actors. Curators are actors that shape the social using their embodied knowledge and social assumptions to

discriminate businesses, audiences or places, based on the distinction of this cultural scene (Johnston and Baumann, 2015; Naccarato and Lebesco, 2012; Newman and Burnett, 2013; Cronin et al., 2014,). The street food scene case resembles the analysis of Naccarato and Lebesco (2012) about “foodies” and culinary capital, where cultural distinction usually emerges from a tension between inclusion and diversity (in cuisines or styles), and exclusion based on taste. This tacit and embodied knowledge or cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) is used to differentiate and discipline the field with taste distinctions. In this case, actors are framing (Lash and Urry, 1993) the scene by defining markets, goods, services and places and negotiating their value with other actors, opening and closing opportunities for people to participate in these networks of value.

My analysis of the curation of the street food scene unpacks the relation between the economy and the cultural, and the assumptions that underlie the framing of the market. This research has looked at the phenomena of market formation as a dense and extensive network of calculated elements that are not purely an economic form, but also a cultural one. In this sense, the thesis has analysed curation as a contingent process and practice, following previous research on the relationship between culture and the economy from the detailed study of micro-economic practices (Slater, 2002a). My approach connects and follows previous research in the field of study of the cultural economy and the aesthetic economy (Du Gay and Pryke, 2002; Entwistle, 2009; Slater, 2002a, 2002b; McFall, 2000, 2002, 2004; Law, 2000; Negus, 2000, 2002) and contributes to the area of study of market formation in creative economies, which has been insufficiently explored (Entwistle, 2009). The contribution of this research relies on studying market formation from the detailed analysis of the organisational and working practices through which these are made. The argument proposed follows the idea of investigating the cultural economy (Du Gay, 1997; Du Gay and Pryke, 2002) by looking at economic activity as a practice that is already cultural. It engages with conducting ethnographic research that could understand the micro-economic practices carried out to qualify products, objects and places.

In particular, this research looks at how markets are made, and conceptualises curation as a process of cultural calculation, following previous research on qualification (Callon et al., 2002; Muniesa et al., 2007), and adding an analysis of the cultural elements that intertwine with economic elements for making business

decisions (Slater, 2002a). As mentioned by McFall (2009), a focus on calculative practices reveals the quantitative and qualitative elements, techniques and materials that form specific markets, as well as the conditions for these markets to emerge. An analysis of this sort, escapes generalisations to describe market processes from practice. In this case, an analysis focussed on cultural calculation also tells us about market actors and their priorities, purposes, skills and performance.

My approach to the study of market formation, although it has a theoretical background in market performativity and the work of Callon and colleagues, departs from this perspective in some ways. My analysis of curation follows more specifically human actors, and it focuses on their calculative practices and relationships with other actors in the field, with an emphasis not only on the techniques, materials, skills and knowledge employed, but on the wider social context where this curation is possible. This research has focussed more strongly on analysing curatorial practices as the combination of use of taste and cultural capital, as well as economic and cultural calculation to make business decisions. I have been exploring how curation shapes the social and the effects of making markets and making places in the way these actors do.

This research also connects with the idea of a *culturalization* of the economy (Du Gay and Pryke, 2002) by looking at an industry in which the cultural aspects of its formation are essential for economic activity to exist. In the street food scene, the generation of branded experiences is at the core of the business. This reflects not only on how both cultural and economic decisions are intertwined in the curation of markets, but also on the exclusionary mechanisms and labour inequalities in this sector. In this sense, in addition to looking at market formation from a cultural economy perspective, this research reflects on the political aspects that make up this practice that is convoluted and complicated, and that responds to the wider social context where it operates. As exposed by McRobbie (2011, 2015) and others (Smith Maguire and Matthews, 2014) my research points to the inequalities within the creative sector by uncovering the curatorial mechanisms that create markets and places. In this case, curation implies separating and differentiating people; for example, by exposing curatorial work as disciplining and constraining the work of food traders, or how a market organiser's work responds to their business interests in partnership with specific groups such as private landowners, developing companies and Councils. In this case, an analysis of

curation is relevant and politically informed because it shows what kinds of market agents participate and in which ways, and what kind of values are being defined with specific purposes, having a clear effect on how businesses can be made and places can be experienced.

There is also extant research and literature on the relationship between cultural economies, creative industries and urban space, such as studies on cultural or creative hubs and clusters (Pratt, 2008; Pratt et al., 2016; Evans, 2009; McRobbie, 2013) or creative gentrification (Zukin, 1982) which relate to explanations of how cultural consumption changes urban space. Although, some of these case studies are useful to understand the context of where street food markets are instrumental to changing place or building a sense of place, my research is not particularly focussed on major processes of urban change and its relationship with policy. This research focuses on the specifics of making place with particular qualities. My research contributes to expanding the idea of placemaking, not just as a form of urban planning (Parham, 2009, 2012, 2015; Watson, 2009; Watson and Studdert, 2009; Project for Public Spaces, 2009) developed by formal institutions and professionals, but in connection to how place is made from practice by the working practices of different actors on the ground.

As mentioned by several authors (Parham, 2015; Wessel, 2012; Siu, 2013; Newman and Burnett, 2013; Bell and Binnie, 2005; Bell, 2007), food markets have become a trend to plan and develop regeneration projects in the United Kingdom. These plans use the idea of food quarters, mainly because these spaces agglutinate infrastructure and perform the symbolic elements that boost processes of urban regeneration. These markets supposedly facilitating the encounter of communities, are helpful for the activation or animation of space, and are instrumental for performing conviviality and sustainability by opening opportunities for entrepreneurs and the public. The evidence gathered in this research about the street food scene in London does not entirely align with policy recommendations for regeneration using markets (Regeneris Consulting, 2010; Cross river partnership, 2014; Colin Buchanan, 2008). This research has revealed how placemaking with markets has many different functions and purposes, depending on the network of actors involved, as well as the vision of market organisers. It reveals how the making of marketplaces does not necessarily create open and public spaces,

but there is a reality of control and planning for generating places that could create economic and symbolic value for private actors.

Although street food markets are mainly defined by market organisers as liminal spaces that bring conviviality and open the city in a democratic way, the analysis of their working practices shows differently. In the detailed analysis of how places are made using markets, the practical curatorial work shows a placemaking process through a thoroughly planned and organised set up to achieve an aesthetic style and a brand experience in these places. Although this curatorial process does not always achieve its aims, and curation in practice is messy and complicated, this research demonstrates how markets are instrumental for the generation of place. It also shows how actors such as market organisers work as *placemakers* and contribute to develop London' urban landscape with their businesses.

The policy recommendations exposed in recent reports that match consuming food on the street with the positive effects for the public good are challenged by the evidence encountered in the working practices of market organisers in the street food scene. As mentioned in Chapter 6, the cases in this research show how markets are instrumental to the generation of place in connection with the interests of major development companies, private landowners or Councils. Additionally, most of these markets do not generate local entrepreneurship opportunities, as explained in Chapter 4 with the process of picking professional traders for street food markets. These markets are not necessarily curated to serve the local community, but are purposefully used to attract specific audiences to certain areas, mainly middle class people with disposable income to afford these products. In this sense, street food markets work as an incentive to revitalise and add on economic value to private land or properties, a case that has been described before with other food consumption places and retail gentrification (Zukin, 1991; Gonzalez and Waley, 2013). These are examples of how street food markets are instrumental to the generation of place, to domesticate streets and places mainly located in private land through different retail strategies that are recognised as legitimate by organisers and landowners, Councils and developers.

Therefore, the curation of marketplaces has been analysed not as a process of placemaking from an urban planning perspective, but linked to the emergence of an urban assemblage (Farias 2010, 2011; McFarlane, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c) in which place

is made through the associations and connections between materials, objects, spaces, symbols, and interpretations that are put together through the curatorial practices of market organisers. This perspective allows for an understanding of how the city is formed by a multiplicity of configurations, where heterogeneous and dispersed elements are put together and stabilised to generate different places. In the particular case of the street food scene, an assemblage thinking perspective is useful because it illuminates the practices that create specific and localised urban forms, in this case, the curatorial practices of market organisers to make place. This process highlights the relationships between market organisers and other urban actors, the negotiations of value, and the taste distinctions through which material and sensorial elements are assembled to create a brand experience in these marketplaces. In addition to this, my analysis of the curation of marketplaces interrogates the politics of this process, and explores the different hierarchies and inequalities in the emergence of markets as assemblages. This analysis questions who is involved in this process, what is valued and how, and what kind of sociotechnical materials can or cannot be part of these associations.

In this research, I have focussed on curation as practice, as the curatorial practices of making markets and place and the relationship between market organisers and other actors that intervene in this process. In the first part of this thesis, I have analysed curation as qualification or cultural calculation to understand how markets are being made, and what knowledges are employed by market organisers to make cultural and economic decisions. Also, how food traders respond and struggle with the curation process by using different business strategies to make similar decisions. In the last two empirical chapters of the thesis I have focussed on analysing curation as placemaking, how place is made and negotiated with other actors in the field, and how place is stylised and transformed to produce the brand experience of the scene.

Firstly, I aimed to understand the working practices of market organisers as curation. I focussed on analysing the use of economic and cultural knowledge to make taste distinctions about street food markets by picking what organisers understand as 'good traders'. I have conducted an analysis of the narratives of market organisers about the meaning of the street food scene. and their markets in London, and compare them and contrast them with their curatorial work in practice. They conceptualise their working

practices as a work of value generation, and describe the street food scene as performing a set of values like independence, openness, collaboration, creating culture and quality, that they aim to protect and promote through their markets. In this sense, their conceptualisation of the street food scene is aligned with an organic growth of entrepreneurial activity that generates a positive effect in the social. However, when analysing their curatorial work, it is possible to attest that the making of markets is a calculated, organised and staged activity that encloses the scene. The outcome of these cultural calculations is exemplified by the task of recruiting traders to join their markets. By using the example of picking good traders, I define curation as cultural calculation of markets where a series of qualities like good food and good people are identified and used for these markets. This process of value generation by selecting traders that fit into this idea of professionalism and quality is a subjective process, and as such, it intertwines with the subjective dispositions of these cultural intermediaries. The curation of markets as quality offer and professional markets is connected with an organiser's preferences of age, class and cultural capital when picking young, educated and entrepreneurial traders.

To understand an organiser's working practices, I focussed on the required knowledges that are obtained "on the job" (Entwistle, 2009) to make curatorial decisions, by looking at how organisers acquire their taste and knowledge through their personal involvement and affective investment in the production of markets by being rooted in the field. Knowledge is not only practical but embedded with assumptions of the social and taste distinctions (Bourdieu, 1984) to shape these markets, enclosing them and inevitably including and excluding people in the process. The debate looks at curation as value creation that inevitably produces differentiation. By creating an idea of professionalism to pick traders for their markets, organisers qualify their markets as a product with characteristics or properties that need to be evaluated and tested continuously in a process of qualification-requalification (Callon et al. 2002). In this sense, these distinctions of quality or professionalism are not always clear and are mainly contingent, relying on their personal and subjective evaluations about style in the scene, audience' preferences or underlying assumptions about the social context where they operate, like when they pick traders according to the location of their markets. In this curatorial process, market organisers perform their work by qualifying

a product and managing the ambivalences between choices informed by the values of the scene, such as those based on style or audience preferences, with those rational choices in terms of profit, such as picking traders that could sell more, and could bring in more people to their markets.

There are tensions and conflicts in the way organisers' curatorial distinctions are performed in the making of markets. The curatorial work depends on how street food traders conform, adapt or resist these disciplining instructions to perform their trading job at these markets. In this case, I have analysed the path and genealogies of food traders to join the street food markets that are part of this research, to depict how they use their own economic and cultural knowledge to participate in the scene. Through different strategies, traders work to align their businesses with the taste distinctions of organisers to perform the qualification of professionalism made by market organisers. This process is highly contested, and some of them struggle to make themselves fit for these markets. Some of them are more successful in understanding and playing the rules of the game in terms of both selling food and brand experiences, and they work to develop their personal narrative, affective labour performance and creativity according to these distinctions. Other traders fail to shape their business under these curatorial demands and are excluded from participating in these markets.

The performance of professionalism by food traders is complicated and entails economic calculations to make a business and cultural calculations to develop their performance in relation to the scene's forms, values and expectations set by market organisers. This analysis depicted the consequences of the curatorial process as a mechanism for inclusion and exclusion of businesses, and how food traders deal with and negotiate this issue. As for example, how affective labour is performed in the preparation and serving of food; how the individual experiences and entrepreneurial narratives of food traders are needed to perform passion translated as professionalism at these markets. Food traders that accommodate their businesses to fit in the scene end up connected with market organisers in a network of value that reinforces the exclusionary effect of the practices of curation. This chapter reveals the hierarchies of the curatorial process, where organisers have more power to discipline the scene according to their calculations and assumptions.

Following on from the idea of markets being instrumental for the generation of place, I have explored curation as placemaking, and the varied and complicated range of decisions and tasks that are performed to make place. I have analysed how organisers conceptualise their markets as value additions to the urban landscape; in this case, they evaluate markets' economic and cultural value to negotiate with urban actors such as landowners, developers and Councils. Organisers have different strategies to create a narrative about the street food scene and the value of their markets, like conceptualising them as a form of tactical urbanism, or a community development tool, or an add-on of commercial distinction for developers or for the generation of new entertainment destinations. To create market places, organisers evaluate these ideas of place according to the convenience of other urban actors for potential partnerships, as well as the practicalities of making place that fits in with their expectations of style and audience to create a brand experience.

In this analysis of the curation of place, I have focussed on how these organisers identify and negotiate the economic and symbolic values of these markets with other urban actors. According to the different narratives on markets and place, curation as the cultural calculation of place creates marketplaces as bounded entities with specific qualities and purposes. These processes of valuation, negotiations and strategies that usually involved specific private actors are usually hidden from the public eye or in the generation of planning mechanisms for these markets (Regeneris Consulting, 2010; Cross river partnership, 2014; Colin Buchanan, 2008). The ethnographic work conducted has been useful for a political and evaluative understanding of the role of markets in the urban realm. It raises questions about these marketplaces just being tools for fostering and profiting from middle class gentrification and a way of channelling it into up-market placemaking, or if these street markets can actually create convivial places for the wider public. This research has shown evidence of how this is a complicated power dynamic, where the analysis of the curation of marketplaces raises questions about who gets to define the values of places and act on them, and who gets to determine the uses of certain areas, or specific places in London. Through the empirical evidence of this research it is clear that negotiations of private interests take a main role in defining values and uses of place; and the making

of markets could be interpreted as a form of curating political options for public and private space.

In practical terms, in order to create markets as places, different tasks are carried out to determine suitable venues and specific conditions of place, like size, transport links and appropriate location in terms of audience. These issues of place are calculated through the organiser's embodied knowledge, and are aimed at bounding these markets as places with specific qualities, which again serve to fulfil the needs of particular actors like their partnering organisations and their intended audience.

The curation of the internal elements of markets is highly relevant to create places with distinctive qualities and purposes; in this case I have analysed the on-site placemaking activities and how organisers' knowledges are employed to qualify place to perform a brand experience that gives the scene its particular style. In this way curation of market places also functions to create branded experiences of place. In this case, it is shown how organisers curate places to perform a distinct style as part of the street food scene. In this task, the generation of a place with internal specific qualities is reviewed through the case of setting up markets in different locations; organisers sort out and negotiate the food offer, line-ups of traders, and the place aesthetic and sensorial qualities that appeal to their intended audience. These characteristics of place are curated so markets perform a particular brand or identity that differentiates them from other retail spaces or food businesses. This brand experience needs to be sustained across time and locations in order to maintain the value standard of their markets for their partners and audience.

In this effort, economic and cultural calculations are used to make distinctions about style, aesthetics or sensorial qualities of place. Curation connects these rational and logistical aspects of making place with the aesthetic and sensorial elements. To a great extent, the brand experience is performed according to the scene values of quality and professionalism in a way that could be replicated consistently in different places. In the ideal curation of place, the qualifications and decisions are carried carefully, but the process is not always smooth, and complications and conflict emerge from the practicalities of making place. This process of curation is also depicting the calculative

approach to creating places using markets, and how these are planned and arranged carefully and consciously to maintain the boundaries of the scene bounded, including particular actors and audiences while excluding others.

Through this research, I have shown that street food markets matter, they tell us key aspects about contemporary urban change. My analysis on the curation of the street food scene in London has opened various possibilities for further research. It is possible to develop a further exploration of curation more extensively by looking at the practices of other actors participating in this process. For example, what is the role of audiences or consumers that participate in these curated marketplaces? As we have seen so far, other urban actors are highly involved in the process of making markets and making place. Is there a possibility for co-curation, or creative engagement in the shape and change of these places? Are Councils, developers and landowners engaging actively in the curation of markets? It would be fruitful to explore if this curatorial process expands and takes different forms if we wanted to analyse other actors' practices in relation to the making of markets and place.

This research also opens questions about curation in different fields of cultural production. Generalising curation as an explanatory process that could explain most organising and selecting activity in the cultural economies is detrimental to understanding the specifics of a practice. It would be worth reflecting on the use of curation as a native term in other fields, and analysing it from the specific practices performed by actors in areas such as the music or fashion industry. Although qualification in cultural economies has been used before to explain similar process to the curation of street food markets, these different analyses highlight different aspects according to the specificity of their empirical material. For example, Entwistle's (2009) research includes an analysis of qualification through the unpacking of auditing practices in the organising and picking of lines of garments in a major fashion retail store. Additionally, other research based on qualification in the making of markets focused its attention on the use of devices to create markets (Callon and Muniesa, 2005; Muniesa, Millo and Callon, 2007; Ariztía, 2015, 2016; and McFall 2015). In these different cases, qualification in the making of markets takes different forms and entails different practices. I consider my analysis on curation particularly relevant to

understanding markets in the cultural economy, especially aesthetic markets, where taste and cultural calculation are employed. Therefore, more research could contribute to the analysis of curation in other fields so as to understand the specificity of this practice in the making of markets in other areas of cultural production.

Additionally, it is relevant to expand research on the making of markets and place in other fields. It would be thought provoking to investigate and use the ideas brought up by the theoretical framework that has guided this research, and to conceptualise curation in connection with the making of place in other fields or industries. In this way, there is a possibility to expand on the idea of curation to conduct research on how cultural economies contribute to making place; and how creative markets can create place or change the experience of places. This can be further explored with, for example, case studies on creative hubs, fashion districts or cultural districts, creative incubators or urban interventions to open spaces, and to question to what extent the curation of these places could contribute to the processes of commercial gentrification and/or social conviviality in urban space.

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